

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He congratulated Professor Renwick on his OBE for services to UK medicine licensing authorities and to pharmacology.

Agenda Item 2: Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence had been received from Professor Davies, Professor Jackson, Professor Kirby, Dr Mitchell (Northern Ireland), Dr Skinner (Scotland), Dr Tromans (Welsh Assembly) and Mr Wenlock (DH).

Agenda Item 3: Minutes of the previous meeting

3. The minutes were agreed subject to the following amendments:
Agenda item 8: to read “Professor Aggett declared a non-personal interest and Professor Renwick declared a lapsed personal interest”.
Minute 17: to read “The Group considered diabetics and those with haemochromatosis as potential vulnerable groups due to altered glycosylation and greater susceptibility to zinc-induced copper deficiency, respectively”.

Agenda Item 4: Matters arising

4.1 MAFF Antioxidant Research Programme

4. At the meeting held on 7 July the Group requested details on the MAFF Antioxidant Research Programme. A paper (EVM/00/01) had been produced for information.

4.2 Testing of levels of vitamins and minerals in dietary supplements

5. At the previous meeting the Group discussed a paper on the testing of vitamin levels in dietary supplements which highlighted the fact that there was no consensus between dietary supplement manufacturers on analytical methods. It was agreed at that meeting that the issue should be referred to the Food Advisory Committee for consideration. The Chairman informed members that he had now written to the Chairman of the Food Advisory Committee about the issue. The Group were also informed that a meeting between dietary supplement trade associations and the Consumers’ Association would be held to discuss the issue and a possible way forward.

4.3 Declarations of interests

6. The Chairman reminded the Group about the procedure agreed at the last meeting about declarations of personal and non-personal interests. All interests should be declared at the beginning of discussions on the nutrient concerned. All members and observers can take part in the discussion about the reviews and the risk assessment

food fortificant and the effects of this on total β -carotene intake. Information on bioavailability from different foods was also lacking.

11. The Group discussed whether their advice should be directed at the vulnerable groups e.g. smokers and asbestos workers only or the whole population. It was noted that some people may not know if they have been exposed to asbestos, the effects of passive smoking have not been investigated and the position of recent ex-smokers was unclear. In the absence of an acceptable mechanism for the increase in lung cancer in cigarette smokers, the Group was unable to determine if an increased cancer risk could apply to other sites.

Agenda Item 7: Review of vanadium EVM/00/04

12. The Group were generally content with this review and risk assessment (EVM/00/04). They noted that there are relatively few data on the oral toxicity of vanadium. The Group agreed that data from animal studies suggested that vanadium had adverse effects on both male and female reproduction and on the development of the subsequent offspring. There is also little evidence to suggest that vanadium is an essential nutrient and there is some evidence that it is very potent since adverse effects occurred despite low oral absorption. Members asked whether vanadium was a common contaminant in vitamin and mineral supplements and were informed that a paper on contamination of dietary supplements would be presented at the next meeting.

Agenda Item 8: Any other business

13. Observers were reminded about the request for information on the market availability of vitamin and mineral supplements.

Agenda Item 9: Date of next meeting

14. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 29 March at 10:30am in room 137B Skipton House.