



OPERATIONAL SELECTION POLICY OSP41

FOR THE RECORDS CREATED IN THE
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD
BETWEEN 1945 AND 2000 INHERITED BY THE
FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY

February 2007

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1. Authority

The National Archives' Acquisition policy statement announced the Archive's intention of developing Operational selection policies across government. These policies would apply the collection themes described in the statement to the records of individual departments and agencies.

This Operational selection policy has been drawn up by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) under The National Archives' guidance.

Operational selection policies are intended to be working tools for those involved in the selection of public records. This policy may, therefore, be reviewed and revised in the light of comments received from the users of the records, from archive professionals, as a result of the department's experience of using the policy, or as a result of newly discovered information. There is no formal cycle of review but FSA would welcome comments at any time. The extent of any review and revision exercise will be determined according to the nature of the comments received.

Operational selection policies **do not** provide guidance on public access to selected records.

1.1 If you have any comments upon this policy, please email records-management@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Or write to:

Acquisition and Disposition Policy Manager
Records Management Department
The National Archives
Kew, Richmond
Surrey
TW9 4DU

2. Scope

This Operational selection policy relates to the food production and standards functions undertaken by the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF) between 1945 and 2000.

The white paper 'A Force for Change' (Cm 3830) envisaged an organisation with a clear focus on protecting the public with a powerful statutory remit across the whole food chain. Food functions were transferred from MAFF when the Joint Food Standards and Safety Group within the ministry was re-constituted in 2000 as the independent Food Standards Agency.

The Food Standards Agency took possession of all surviving MAFF files relating to food – many of which had never been reviewed – and the OSP covers all food functions from 1945 up to the inception of the Food Standards Agency in 2000.

The records were generated by the Food Science Group within MAFF and were originally left with MAFF. After two years of non-referral they were passed to the Food Standards Agency for review.

This policy provides guidance for those making selection decisions on files about food events prior to 2000. Review will identify records for preservation that will trace the events - positive and negative - that eventually led to the setting up of an independent agency for food. However, it is not an exhaustive statement of all of the records that will be acquired in the future on food subjects.

Selected files created in various other areas of central government which had a responsibility for (or an interest in) aspects of nutrition are already available in The National Archives. The following are relevant: those of the Department for Scientific and Industrial Research; The Food Investigation Board (The National Archives Catalogue code DSIR); Medical Research Council (FD); Ministry, (later Department) of Health (MH); Ministry of Agriculture Scientific Advisers Division (MAF).

3. The National Archives Acquisition policy themes

The Acquisition policy statement outlines the relevant collection themes, which form the basis of The National Archives' appraisal and selection decisions. The following National Archives Acquisition policy theme applies:

- 2.1 Policy and administrative processes of the state
- 2.1.5 Formulation and delivery of social policies

4. The records series and events in food standards development

THE ADDITIVES AND NOVEL FOODS DIVISION

had eight series as follows:

- ADF** Food Additives
- FSF** Food Composition, Additives, Materials, Articles in Contact with food
- BIN** Biotechnology, Radiation and Novel Foods
- BTU** The Work of the Biotechnology Unit and all general aspects of Biotechnology
- FAD** Food Additives
- FCM** Materials and Articles in Contact with food
- FSK** The storage and retrieval of information relevant to Food Science division and the Waste Surveys Policy
- NFB** Novel Foods and Processes and biotechnology

Relevant events:

1951

Preservatives in food reviewed.

1955

Radical limiting of use of food colours recommended.

1956

- i. Controversy over use of refined flour

- ii. BIBRA formed to investigate effects of chemicals in food
- iii. Vitamin B1 addition to bread/ restricted bleaching agents advised

1964

FAC established to assess current scientific evidence and regulations under the Food and Drugs Act.

1975

FAC seek curbs on lead in food.

1976

FAC recommend restrictions on use of flavourings.

1980

Trials for the new process of preserving food with antibiotics and ionising radiation.

1964

UK ban on cyclamates signalled.

1964

Government to curtail some aldrin and dieldrin used in fertilisers.

1968

Retail groups boycott government decision and ban cyclamate artificial sweetener.

1969

Minister announced ban of cyclamates under the Artificial Sweeteners in Food Regulations 1964.

1970

Government announced ban on food dye Poncea MX.

1971

Five-year exemption from E.C regulations on additives requested.

1972

MAFF announce safety regulations for canned baby foods after lead content found.

1973

UK becomes member of European Economic Community.

1974

EEC proposes new directives on additives to feeding stuffs.

1975

Food Additive and Contaminants Committee sought stricter curbs on lead in food.

1976

Food Additives and Contaminants Committee recommend food companies adopt new restrictions on flavouring use.

1977

- i. EC agreed to tighten consumer protection laws in relation to additives
- ii. Additives and Contaminants Committee said benefits of saccharine use greater than risks for diabetics

1978

Government justified secrecy over inspection procedures for novel foods under existing safeguards of the Food and Drugs Act.

1982

- i. Minister for Consumer affairs promised investigation into ingredients added to processed meats

- ii. Food Additives and Contaminants Committee review remaining classes of food additives and enzyme preparations
- iii. Food Additives and Contaminants Committee gave approval for five new sweeteners; cyclamates not to be re-introduced; saccharine not to be added to baby food

1985

Jonathan Aitken, MP supports a campaign to restrict use of food additives. He voices concern over secrecy of research results.

1986

- i. MPs urged government to ban unnecessary additives from foods liable to be consumed by children under five - particularly tartrazine
- ii. A study into effects of food additives commissioned by MAFF concluded that adverse reactions were not a 'common problem'
- iii. Consumer Association demanded more information about 3,500 additives

1987

- i. Minister announced ban on colouring in baby foods
- ii. Controls to be introduced to impose statutory maximum levels of colouring in all foodstuffs, on advice from Food Advisory Committee

1990

- i. The Food Surveillance Group called for more research into the plasticiser ATBC (acetyl tributyl citrate)
- ii. Parliamentary Secretary announced food produced by genetic manipulation to be specifically approved before it is sold

1991

Minister gave strong backing for irradiated food. Regulations allowing its sale came into force on January 1.

1993

MAFF criticised for not revealing that a quarter of the cloudy apple juices tested had higher levels of patulin.

1998

- i. Ministers rejected calls from consumer groups for genetic foods ban
- ii. Review of rules governing research in biotechnology and genetic modification signalled

1999

Tom Sanders (Kings College, London) criticised the negative GM food report by Dr Arpad Pusztai.

2000

Establishment of the Food Standards Agency.

THE FOOD CONTAMINANTS DIVISION

was the largest division in JFSSG responsible for fourteen series:

CCB Fertilisers And Feeding Stuffs Act 1926 Commercial Control
(All held at The National Archives)

DW Agriculture Act 1970, (Part Iv) Fertilizers and Feeding Stuffs

FAC Fertilizers Advisory Committee. Series Held By The National Archives

FCN Food Contaminants

FSS Food Contaminants and Surveillance

NTP Naturally Occurring Toxicants

RCM Richmond Committee on Microbiological Safety of Food

AFE Animal Feeding Stuffs. All Held at The National Archives

EPA Environmental Protection Act
RMF Risk Management and Food Tolerance Research
RSK Risk Assessment
OMS Food contaminants, EC member states - not including UK
FNT Food Intolerance
EUR Scientific committee food papers

Relevant events:

1955

Food and Drugs Act 1955.

1960

Forming of British Industrial Biological Research Association to investigate effects upon human health of chemicals in food and drink.

1961

- i. Minister announced that regulations on lead content of food to come into operation in England and Wales in April 1962.
- ii. About one hundred cases of streptococcus food poisoning traced to cheese supplied to Tooting Bec hospital.

1964

Government announced intention to curtail some aldrin and dieldrin use on advice from its Advisory Committee on Poisonous Substances.

1968

- i. NFU instigate cattle 'pool' to ensure enough stock available to cover huge losses in foot and mouth epidemic
- ii. Opposition backbenchers table Commons motion against the government for refusing to retain the ban on imports of meat from countries where foot and mouth had been endemic
- iii. Minister announced that the ban on imported meat imposed in December would remain pending a veterinary report
- iv. Former MAFF minister criticised for 'barbarous measures and chronic ineptitude' in the handling of foot and mouth epidemic, recommends changes to government policy in future in the light of new vaccines
- v. New meat import restrictions to reduce risk of foot and mouth disease announced

1970

Medical and scientific tests by Government Chemist for Minister of Agriculture concluded levels of methyl-mercury in tinned fish were extremely low.

1971

Prohibition on use of antibiotics in animal food and veterinary medicines from March 1 announced by Minister of Agriculture. From September the restrictions also to apply to tylosin and sulphonamides and four nitrofurans (Section 129 of Medicines Act 1123).

1973

UK becomes member of European Economic Community.

1976

Ministers began to prepare new food policy aimed at making EEC farm policy compatible with British interests.

1977

- i. EEC reacts sharply as MAFF moves to subsidise pig farmers.
- ii. Minister chaired discussion on new EEC poultry rules with representatives of poultry industry, environmental health officers and veterinary officers, to 'iron out' difficulties.
- iii. Ministers began to prepare new food policy aimed at making EEC farm policy compatible with British interests.

1980

- i. Minister confirmed in Commons that the UK agrochemical industry had sold 58 tonnes of controversial herbicide trichlorophenoy acetic acid.
- ii. Parliamentary Secretary stated that Advisory Committee on Pesticides did strict tests and gave the 'best advice available'. There was no scientific evidence to justify the agricultural workers union banning use of all pesticides.

1981

- i. Advisory Committee on Pesticides accused of failure to take account of evidence from US on dioxin weed killer.
- ii. Dr Bernard Rowe of Central Public Health Laboratory reported a serious threat to the nation from the food poisoning germ 'salmonella typhimurium' that was adapting to combat all drugs used against it.
- iii. Mr Richard Gilbert, Director of Government Food Hygiene Laboratory, told a Conference of Health Officers that tests prove that nearly eighty per cent of shop chickens contained salmonella.

1982

Minister for Consumer affairs promised investigation into ingredients added to processed meats.

1986

- i. An inquiry committee strongly condemned hospital hygiene regulations, after E.Coli killed 19 patients at Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield.
- ii. National Health Service hospitals with unhygienic and infested kitchens no longer to be immune from criminal prosecution.
- iii. Scientists at Liverpool University claimed salmonella strain 204C had become resistant to many antibiotics. MAFF may need to restrict the movement of young calves around the country spreading the infection.

1987

Formal removal of Crown immunity from hospital kitchens, following E.Coli outbreak.

1988

- i. British Medical Association announced intention to investigate dangers of pesticide poisoning
- ii. The Crown Estate announced research programme into Scotland's burgeoning fish farm industry
- iii. MAFF announced Ministry reorganisation plans that will revoke grant for research into eggs and salmonella
- iv. Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety of Food within MAFF constituted

1996

Studies by Public Health Laboratory Service for Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food found salmonella contamination in a third of chilled fresh chicken.

2000

Establishment of the Food Standards Agency.

THE FOOD SCIENCE DIVISION

CX food technology & nutrition (research admin connected with research associations)

CHF Food Research and development

MKH Milk Hygiene. Held at The National Archives

Relevant events:

1959

Agricultural Research Council (ARC) took over three DSIR food research establishments.

1963

Milk hygiene sub committee report on antibiotics in milk points to the high use of antibiotics against mastitis.

1970

Milk Marketing Board tested 3,700 milk herds for brucellosis closely following the compulsory tests pioneered successfully in Northern Ireland.

1971

- i. Government reorganised its funding of civil scientific research and development to reflect the customer/contractor principle (Cmd 4814)
- ii. ILEA opposed Secretary of State for Education Margaret Thatcher 's intention to abolish free school milk. Leader of ILEA stressed importance of milk to children between 7 and 11

1973

UK becomes member of European Economic Community.

1980

Milk Marketing Board imposed financial penalties on dairy farmers in attempt to curb production of milk with high levels of antibiotic.

1982

Advisory Committee on Applied Research and Development report on Food Industry and Food Technology

1983

MAFF announced legislation to ensure imports of UHT milk meet the same health and hygiene requirements as UK milk.

THE MEAT HYGIENE DIVISION

FH Food Hygiene opened in 1948. Held at The National Archives.

PM Poultry Meat Hygiene

Relevant Events:

1947 (all subjects under FH)

- i. Ministry of Food set up first Food Standards Committee; appointed sub committees to deal with Food Additives and Food Contaminants
- ii. Government made long-term agreements with overseas governments to ensure future supplies of basic foodstuffs. GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) concluded in 1947
- iii. The National Food Survey introduced to provide information on diets and food budgets

1948 (all subjects under FH)

- i. Poultry and pig feed shortage – also fishmeal shortage. Meat and fishmeal for poultry and pigs substituted with grain and potato
- ii. William Committee on Milk Distribution recommended that milk heat treatment is made compulsory
- iii. Quality of Food Standards Committee set up to advise on food safeguards
- iv. Milk (Special Designations) Bill introduced in the House of Lords to give the Ministry of Food more power to ensure that all milk is tuberculin tested certified and/or accredited

1950

Milk Marketing Board campaign to encourage dairy farmers to have herds accredited.

1951

Milk Marketing Board report growing proportion of tuberculin tested herds.

1952

- i. New slaughtering system experimental building opened by Minister of Food
- ii. DSIR announced sterilisation of food using high velocity electrons to kill

1954

- i. Changes in welfare milk scheme
- ii. New food hygiene powers for local authorities
- iii. Dismantling of food controls by the Minister of Food and end of fourteen years of food rationing
- iv. Amalgamation of the Food Ministry with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries signalled
- v. Regulations laid before Parliament by MAFF provided for new powers to strengthen the hands of local authorities in securing higher standards of hygiene

1955

Parliamentary approval given for the Ministry of Food to join the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

1962

- i. Minister stated that food would be dearer in the Common and there would be inevitable changes to farm subsidies
- ii. In talks' on EEC common agriculture policy the Council of Ministers for the six agreed future policy on dairy products

1963

- i. Minister told NFU that there would be a measure of protection for farmers on prices, after his discussion with Common Market agriculture ministers
- ii. Proposed changes to agriculture subsidies are criticised by NFU
- iii. Parliamentary Secretary answered questions in Commons on numbers of pigs slaughtered due to swine fever and how much paid in compensation

1964

- i. MAFF Parliamentary Secretary stated that probable source of outbreaks of anthrax in farm animals was meat and bone meal within compounded foodstuff
- ii. Outbreak of typhoid fever at Harlow traced to tin of corned beef; examination suggested post sterilisation infection

1965

- i. National Farmers Union flag up recommendations by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare to improve factory-farming methods
- ii. Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Health to give specific powers to health officers for detention of consignments of imported meat while samples are taken

1973

UK becomes member of European Economic Community.

1975

President of British Veterinary Association advised MAFF to deal with 'abysmal' meat hygiene controls in slaughterhouses.

1990

- i. Parliamentary Secretary resisted renewed pressure from both sides of Commons to give 100 per cent compensation to farmers with animals suffering from bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)
- ii. Department of Health officials ordered investigation into human brain disorder related to mad cow disease
- iii. Commons Agriculture Committee reported no evidence existed to prove beef infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was threat to human health

1995

UK supported by European Commission as Germany threatened to ban imports of beef and veal claiming BSE measures in Britain were inadequate.

1996

- i. National Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) surveillance research team published full research data warning further cases of CJD likely
- ii. MAFF have admitted that cows can pass on BSE to their calves
- iii. Minister of Agriculture told the Commons that European ban on British beef would not be lifted despite additional cull of 100,000 cattle. Thirteen people have died from new strain of CJD
- iv. President of the British Veterinary Association called for public inquiry into Government's 'incompetent handling of the BSE crisis' which 'has reduced farming to its knees'

1997

- i. Professor Hugh Pennington said that MAFF and the DoE should shoulder the blame for the E. coli deaths
- ii. Members of the Pennington inquiry into food poisoning stated that the recommended improvements in food hygiene - including improved slaughtering methods, better training for food handlers and clear labelling of food - were rarely carried out
- iii. PM Tony Blair promised to 'rebuild trust' in British food after the BSE and E coli crises as the Government announced proposals for an independent Food Standards Agency

2000

Establishment of the Food Standards Agency.

THE FOOD LABELLING AND STANDARDS DIVISION

- FS** Food and Drugs act – labelling, advertising and additives
- MM** Merchandise Marks Act 1926. Held by The National Archives
- SCF** Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs
- SCH** Food Composition, Codex alimentarius co-ordination

SFL Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs
FSH Food Science
FLD Consumer Protection
TSO Food Law Enforcement
FLC Codex and other Food Standards

Relevant events:

1973

UK becomes member of European Economic Community.

1977

EEC directive on food labelling changes criticised by House of Lords select committee.

1978

Food Standards Committee advised Minister change to confusing laws on food labelling needed urgently.

1982

Ministers signal EEC agreement to subsidised school milk.

1984

- i. Government proposed new food labelling rules for meat in response to recommendations made in 1980 food study by the Head of Food Standards at MAFF
- ii. MAFF announced legislation to ensure imports of UHT milk meet the same health and hygiene requirements as UK milk

1984

- i. Government proposed wide-ranging powers to bring existing food legislation up to date with new food products, eating habits and distribution methods
- ii. Report by Friends of the Earth called for statutory controls to reduce pesticide use
- iii. Minister told Commons that the Government would introduce statutory controls on the sale of pesticides

1985

- i. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to analyse food poisoning cases in response to the steep rise in numbers between 1980 -1985
- ii. The advice on diet published by the Joint Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education leads the food industry to fear lower sales of butter, milk and meat
- iii. Parliamentary Secretary for MAFF announced the government intention to introduce statutory instruments for the labelling of food

1986

Consumer Association demanded more information about 3,500 additives.

1989

- i. Calls for a separate Ministry of Food or for a senior minister in charge of food policy came from BMA and the National Consumer Council
- ii. Government proposed legislation to strengthen the food safety laws to protect consumers

1991

MPs have urged that domestic microwave ovens should be labelled as unsuitable for commercial use to try to cut the risk of food poisoning.

1992

- i. MAFF voluntary labelling system came into effect on both ovens and food packs.
- ii. European Community farm ministers agreed to begin reforming the common agricultural policy (CAP).

2000

Establishment of the Food Standards Agency.

THE RESEARCH POLICY AND NUTRITION DIVISION

FSN Human Nutrition

HAN Nutrition and Health matters

NE Peaceful use of atomic energy held by The National Archives

FMP Food Waste Management and Pollution

EPF Environmental Protection of Food

Relevant events:

1957

- i. An accident at Windscale put the UK Atomic Energy Authority's reactor out of action, with risk of herbage contamination: all local milk disposed of until area risk free
- ii. Further milk ban over extra 200 square miles as further safeguard after Windscale reactor accident
- iii. DSIR unit resumed its activities in food radiation on new process of preserving food with antibiotics and ionising radiation

1960

Nutrition scientists and farmers asked the Agricultural Research Council to set up a committee to study animal nutrition.

1964

Committee on Medical and Nutritional Aspects of Food Policy reported that preservation of food by irradiation would not constitute hazard to human health.

1967

Minister of Health and Minister of Agriculture agreed that regulations should be put in place to prohibit food irradiation.

1973

UK becomes member of European Economic Community.

1975

Radiation leaked at UK Atomic Energy Authority reactor Windscale.

1976

International Atomic Energy Agency experts addressing World Health Organisation in Geneva stated irradiation for preserving foodstuffs was safe.

1980

Government signalled intention to use radiation techniques to test meat in slaughterhouses for residues of hormone implants.

1983

- i. National Advisory Committee on Nutritional Education highlighted need for radical changes to prevent thousands of unnecessary deaths from the British traditional high calorie diet
- ii. British Nutrition Foundation stated that preservation of food using irradiation was inevitable because United Nations committee had declared it safe

1989

Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said that the Food Safety Bill allowed for food irradiation because it had a useful role to play in enhancing food safety.

1998

Acheson Report on Health Inequality stated that many people in certain areas of Britain were still unable to purchase nutritious foods.

2000

Establishment of the Food Standards Agency.

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY DIVISION

The division was created at the implementation stage of the independent Food Standards Agency. Three series dealt with the implementation of the Food Standards Agency. However the new division also took on two old series that gave some administrative background information.

FSA Administration of Food Science division

CPA Consumer Business

FSA1 Implementation Arrangements

ABT Administration of FSA

FSAXC External Communications Strategy of Food Standards Agency

1973

UK becomes member of European Economic Community.

1981

Ministers signal EEC agreement to subsidised school milk.

1997

Government announced proposals for an independent Food Standards Agency.

1999

The Food Standards Act established the Food Standards Agency and made provision as to its functions.

2000

- i. BSE – Lord Philips report published
- ii. Establishment of the Food Standards Agency

5. Committees

One of the major roles of the Food Safety Directorate was to monitor and control the occurrence of a wide range of possible chemical and microbiological hazards in the food supply. This led to the setting up of a number of independent expert advisory committees: the major committees were:

Steering Group on Chemical Aspects of Food Surveillance (SGCAFS)

Food Advisory Committee (FAC)

Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food

Steering Group on the Microbiological Safety of Food Surveillance

Advisory Committee on Novel Food and Processes

Advisory Committee on Pesticides

A record set of the minutes and circulated papers of each of these committees will be preserved.

6. Legislation and Enforcement

The government was responsible for establishing legislation within which the food industry, food producers, manufacturers and retailers would operate to produce safe food. Responsibilities for enforcement lay with local authorities, with MAFF having monitoring and final enforcement powers.

The purpose of the **Food Safety Act** 1990 was to harmonise, strengthened and update national law to ensure that all food that was prepared for human consumption was never rendered injurious or unfit for human consumption, nor contaminated, falsely labelled or falsely presented.

The following acts provide the legal framework for the control of chemicals within the food supply.

Veterinary Medicines Act 1968
Agriculture Act 1970
Food and Environment Protection Act 1985
European Communities Act

7. Research and Development

The MAFF **Priority Board** maintained an overview of the R&D programme receiving advice from the food advisory group. The research that MAFF commissioned provided the scientific basis for consumer protection policies, for national food policies, and for the effective implementation of such policies through statutory and non-statutory controls.

8. Education and Publicity

MAFF aimed to stimulate technological innovation and competition in the food industry. Such innovation often emerged after the independent expert committees had addressed issues.

Finally, MAFF was actively involved in providing educational resource material to schools and joined with the British Nutrition Foundation in a major venture in the early 1990's to convey information to the public on all aspects of food and nutrition.

Kay Wolf
Food Standards
May 2006