



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 5th July 2013

FSA cuts to monitoring radioactivity in food is a retrograde step

Following its analysis of the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) decisions around its monitoring regime for radioactivity levels in foodstuffs, the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) believes the announced cuts to the system is a retrograde step (1).

The NFLA submission to the FSA's consultation (2) on the monitoring regime brought forward a range of evidence related to 10 major areas of weaknesses in the monitoring of UK foodstuffs contaminated by man made radioactive wastes discharged to sea via pipelines from Nuclear Power Stations, nuclear fuel reprocessing plants and other nuclear installations.

In the context of the FSA claim, that after 25 years of food monitoring "no food safety risks have been identified", the NFLA submission presented scientific evidence in support of its contention that:

- the FSA statement was based on the outcomes of hypothetical dose assessment computer modelling rather than factual/empirical data and
- that having reviewed both the volume and quantity of data inputs upon which the "modelling" relied for its accuracy and relevance, the NFLA submission concluded that the available data could not possibly provide enough data to justify the FSA claims and thus the FSA's current programme was not fit for purpose:
- on this basis the NFLA urged that rather than "optimising" their food monitoring programme by reducing monitoring effort the FSA should actually adopt a more stringent and intense monitoring programme for the future.

Following a board meeting on June 4th 2013, the Food Standards Agency decided to proceed with its proposal to "optimise" the food monitoring programme by "reducing background monitoring away from nuclear sites" while "continuing to monitor food around all licensed nuclear sites". Additionally, the FSA decided to withdraw financial support for monitoring radioactivity in foodstuffs in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man on the grounds that ongoing support for those programmes was not consistent with the "risk based approach" applied elsewhere in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In his analysis of the decision, Tim Deere-Jones (author of the NFLA Submission) said:

"The FSA decision to cut monitoring away from nuclear sites is a retrograde move, reducing even further the effectiveness of the already flawed monitoring of marine radioactivity in food. It is particularly bad news for those UK island and coastal communities, distant from nuclear sites, which the NFLA submission has shown to be in receipt of higher dietary doses of marine radioactivity than many communities around nuclear sites."

NFLA Chair, Councillor Mark Hackett said:

"The NFLA submitted detailed comments to the FSA seeking for it to improve its monitoring regime. The FSA's response and new policy is disappointing, particularly cuts to the monitoring regime around the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. The NFLA encourages the FSA to rethink this decision and engage with groups like the NFLA on improvements rather than cuts to a very important monitoring regime."

Ends

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Notes to editors:

- (1) NFLA Radioactive Waste Policy Briefing 37 on FSA consultation on Radioactivity in Food Monitoring Regime, March 2013
http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/radwaste/NFLA_RWB_37_FSA_Radioactivity_in_food.pdf
- (2) Food Standard Agency, 'Consultation on Radioactivity in Food', December 2012
<http://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/consultations/consultations-england/2012/radioactivity-consult>.

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