

Royal Society of Chemistry Food Group Chairman's Report 2006-2007

Aim of the Group: To arrange meetings for the membership on topics of current interest to those working within all segments of the food chain from basic research to final consumption

The Committee

The following members have attended Committee meetings of the Food Group at Burlington House during the past year:

Dr Annette Fillery-Travis (Chair)
Dr Rachel Burch (Hon Secretary)
Prof Arthur Tatham
Mr Mike Saltmarsh
Dr Trevor Grenby
Prof Peter Frazier
Dr Andrew Cox
Dr Jianshe Chen
Prof Michael Spiro
Prof Tony Andrews (Hon Treasurer)
Dr Mike Doel
Dr Keith Waldron
Dr Roy Browne

The committee has been very active in discussion and has organized a number of meetings throughout the year. I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their continuing support for the Group and their hard work. My thanks go especially to those who have organized our scientific meetings.

In addition I would like to thank Mike Saltmarsh, Tony Andrews, and Rachel Burch for their continuing support and encouragement and Peter Frazier for his work in the development of the Group website and our highly successful Newsletter.

A special mention must also go to Prof Eric Dickinson who is retiring from the committee this year. Eric has made a highly significant contribution to the work of the Group and Food Chemistry as a whole.

Meetings held this year

1) Postgraduate Student Research Conference

4 - 5 July 2006, University of Leeds, UK

Professor Spiro has been a leading light in the Group's provision for student members. He continues to champion the student research meeting as an opportunity for postgraduate students to explore the range of research undertaken in food

chemistry within the UK; network with their peers and develop their presentational skills. Our thanks go to DEFRA for their sponsoring of this event via Dr Mike Doel.

This year the meeting was held at Leeds University and Dr Jianshe Chen, who recently joined the Food Group Committee, was the main local organizer. He was supported by the postgraduate students from Leeds who played a significant role in the organization and delivery of this meeting. We are grateful to them all for their enthusiasm and professionalism in ensuring the success of this event.

2) Food Colloids 2006: Self-Assembly and Material Science

23 - 26 April 2006, Montreux Convention Centre, Switzerland

Prof Dickinson has been involved in this meeting series since its inception. This meeting was very well organised by the local committee from Nestle in collaboration with the University of Fribourg. It was attended by approximately 200 delegates and was very successful with a high quality of contributions by both lectures and discussion. The next meeting in this series will be held in Le Mans in 2008.

3) Total Food 2006

7 - 9 November 2006, World Forum Convention Centre, The Hague, The Netherlands

This had been a joint meeting with EFFoST, and sponsored by Elsevier, with approximately 220 delegates attending mainly from academia. The key focus of the meeting is the utilisation and valorisation of food waste - a growing opportunity for the industry given the legislative and environmental pressures for change in this area. The presentations were of high quality, and congratulations are due to Dr Keith Waldron for the organisation of the conference as well as for an excellent keynote presentation. The Committee are committed to developing this conference and discussions are already underway concerning the organisation of the next conference in this series.

Meetings in the coming year to April 2008

1) Starch Structure and Functionality - March 2008

We are delighted to welcome back this cornerstone of our meeting portfolio. In previous years this meeting has been held in Cambridge but in 2008 it will be moving to Nottingham University, and the conference is to be held on the main Campus. The meeting format has also been expanded to include non-food topics such as bioethanol. Keynote speakers have been identified and the deadline for contributed papers will be August 2007.

2) Food Colloids - April 2008

The Food Colloids will be moving to France in April 2008. The provisional title is 'Food Colloids: Creating Structure, Delivering Functionality'. Prof Dickinson has reported that the local organisers are enthusiastic and well organised, and he is confident that the Le Mans conference will continue the successful tradition of this series.

Concluding Remarks

This year the committee has continued to explore the changing role of the Group and professional bodies in general. As noted in previous years the attendance at meetings and workshops across the research sector has declined dramatically. Through our consultations with members it is clear that this is not due to a reduction in quality of these events but a reduction in both the time available to members and the budget available for face-to-face meetings.

In essence, the manner and frequency by which we access information and the ways we network have changed dramatically over the last decade. In the past, one of the main roles for professional bodies has been as the disseminator of the growing body of knowledge. We now need to identify ways by which we can fulfil this role within this new environment.

The committee took the decision at the beginning of the year to spend some time considering this issue. You will notice that we have not scheduled any meetings during 2007 so we would have time to work on this issue. We have since explored the role of the Group, both as a lobbying forum for food chemistry to research funders etc., and as a disseminator of knowledge. These discussions will continue as we explore further the most appropriate way we can meet the needs of the membership.

One area which we have chosen to develop actively is to provide our members and others, such as the media, with an up-to-date analysis of 'hot topics'. Committee members and others are writing these briefings to provide an authoritative and critically robust description and opinion on the topics that are of interest to food chemists through the UK. These briefings will be in a format which is downloadable and easily accessible. They will also provide references and links for further information. Anyone who would like to contribute to these briefings will be warmly welcomed and should contact the committee directly.

This year I will also be giving up the Chairman's role of the Group after serving for four years. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the post and am grateful for the support of all the committee. I wish the new Chairman every success in the future.

Annette Fillery-Travis