

Paper 13.5 Wider Consumer Interests Working Group - Update (July 2024)

SUMMARY

This paper provides an update on progress for the Wider Consumer Interests Working Group. It summarises background, key activities, and future action. This paper is for information and discussion.

Background

The FSA is working on a programme of work drawing on our understanding of consumers' wider interests in relation to food as we develop our new strategy and approach for the coming years. We are expanding the scope of our evidence gathering to include wider interests of consumers in relation to food, giving perspective into wider food policy and provide evidence on some of the big challenges in the food system such as diet and nutrition, sustainability of food, food insecurity, provision, and choice.

The ACSS was asked to consider how best to support the FSA's research to evidence the wider interest of consumers and agreed that the creation of a Working Group will help support and assure the quality of this workstream.

Members

The Working Group is comprised of the following members:

- Professor Spencer Henson (Chair)
- Professor Julie Barnett
- Dr Seda Erdem

- Professor George Gaskell
- Dr Charlotte Hardman
- Ms Julie Hill
- Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford
- Dr Naomi Maynard
- Professor Dan Rigby

Terms of reference

The main objective of the Working Group is to provide impartial, ad-hoc advice, peer review the research and support broadening the scope of evidence gathering to include the wider interest of consumers and to help provide timely, relevant robust evidence to join up food policy.

Key activities to date

Since its inception, the Wider Consumer Interest Working Group has:

1. Advised on the direction of work for the Wider Consumer Interest Programme for 2022/23 by providing a steer on evidence gaps that the FSA may want to address, in line with FSA Strategy and Board discussions around Household Food Insecurity (2022).
2. Provided ad hoc support to the FSA Lead, e.g. peer reviewing research materials and final outputs, and reviewing and providing advice on research specifications (ongoing).
3. Conducted an external review on the Consumer Insight Tracker (2022) and contributed to regular steering group meetings to inform topics asked about on the monthly tracker, ensuring the current wider interests of consumer are captured (ongoing).
4. Completed the external review on the Consumer Insight Tracker (CIT), now published on the [ACSS website](#) (2023)
5. Contributed to the research specification and tender documents to appoint a new contractor for the CIT (2023).

Current Activities

Members are currently in the final stages of a scoping activity to explore evidence around consumer understanding knowledge, behaviours and information needs, with reference to ultra processed foods. Findings will be distilled in a short report

for the FSA, in order to inform any future activity in this area.

Future Activities

The Group will continue to provide ad hoc support to the WCI research programme (ongoing) and advise on the content and reporting of the CIT (via contributions to the CIT steering group).

Following internal discussions around the frequency of Food and You 2, the group are likely to be asked to support the social science team consider the impact of any changes, question prioritisation, and how best to utilise our other consumer surveys such as the CIT.

Spencer Henson, ACSS Working Group Chair

Ely Mirzahosseinkhan, Sophie Watson, FSA Working Group Leads