

Paper 14.2 ACSS Working Group Update

Summary

This paper summarises previous and current activities for the 4 ACSS working groups and outlines potential future work for each.

This paper is for information and discussion.

Assurance Working Group (initiated August 2019)

Main aim: To explore how best to facilitate assurance of the quality, value and impact of social science in the FSA. See the ACSS website for full [TORs](#).

Membership:

- Dr. Hannah Lambie Mumford (Chair)
- Julie Hill
- Prof. Julie Barnett
- Prof. George Gaskell
- Prof. Fiona Gillison
- Prof. Charlotte Hardman
- Joanna Disson (FSA lead)
- Kristina Diprose (Secretariat lead)

Between January 2024 and February 2025 the group:

- Considered 4 projects through the Gateway Process
- Supported the FSA social science team review approaches to reaching vulnerable consumer groups in research.
- Reviewed the impact of the work of the group to date

Going forward the group will:

- Continue reviewing new projects via the Gateway Process (ongoing, since 2022)
- Continue reviewing FSA social science team approaches to reaching vulnerable consumer groups in research (ongoing since 2024)
- Support FSA activity around evidence translation, including understanding & measuring the impact of FSA research.

The group will next meet on the 18th March to discuss the impact of the group to date and new work around evidence translation, including understanding & measuring the impact of FSA research.

Wider Consumer Interests Working Group (initiated December 2021)

Main aim: To provide impartial, ad-hoc advice, peer review outputs 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. See the ACSS website for full [TORs](#)

Membership:

- Prof. Spencer Henson (Chair)
- Julie Hill
- Prof. Julie Barnett
- Prof. George Gaskell
- Dr. Seda Erdem
- Dr. Hannah Lambie-Mumford
- Prof. Fiona Gillison
- Prof. Charlotte Hardman
- Sophie Watson (FSA lead)
- Kristina Diprose (Sec lead)

Between January 2024 and February 2025 the group:

- Completed their scoping review exploring evidence around [consumer understanding and concerns about UPFs](#). This was published on the 24th October, to coincide with the [House of Lords inquiry report on Food, Diet & Obesity](#), and will feed into a planned UKRI public dialogue that the FSA are contributing to.

- Supported the development of Food and You 2, including considering question prioritisation, and how we use the survey alongside the Consumer Insights Tracker (CIT).
- Supported work to understand what external factors influence trust in food and the FSA, and how this can inform prioritisation decisions, business planning and future FSA strategies.
- Reviewed the final report from the School Food Standards Compliance Pilot – Feasibility Phase 2
- Reviewed the revised CIT survey (following changes to Food and You 2).

Going forward the group will:

- Continue to contribute to regular steering group meetings to inform topics asked about on CIT, ensuring the current wider interests of consumers are captured (ongoing since 2023).
- Continue providing ad hoc support to the Wider Consumer Interests research programme, including peer reviewing research materials and final outputs, and reviewing and providing advice on research specifications (ongoing, since 2022).
- Continue to support the development of Food and You 2 (ongoing, since 2024).
- Support the FSA in contributing to a UKRI public dialogue project on UPFs.

The group will next meet on the 24th March to discuss the FSA's contribution to a UKRI public dialogue project on UPFs.

Economics Working Group (initiated December 2021)

Main aim: To provide advice and guidance on economic analysis and guidance activities taking place under the management of the Analytics Unit. See the ACSS website for full [TORs](#)

Membership:

- Prof. Spencer Henson (Chair)
- Dr. Seda Erdem
- Julie Hill
- Nicholas Daniel (FSA lead)
- Becky Gillespie (Sec lead)

Between January 2024 and February 2025 the group:

- Supported the development and completion of the initial phase of the 2025 Spending Review project, which includes a Rapid Evidence Review (RER) and compilation of a Policy Impact Matrix (PIM) based on which an economic case will be made for the impact of current and proposed FSA activities.
- Supported the development of phase 2 of the SR25 work, expanding on the RER and PIM created in phase 1.
- Attended quarterly review meetings to discuss updates on substantive economics projects (ongoing, since 2022).

Going forward the group will:

- Continue to attend quarterly meetings to discuss substantive economics projects (ongoing, since 2022).
- Complete phase 2 of SR5 work, resulting in an expanded RER and PIM mapping FSA data sets on to the RER and PIM.

The group most recently met on the 3rd March to discuss ongoing work around the Spending Review 2025, and will next meet on the 2nd June.

Understanding Regulatory Change (initiated January 2024)

Main aim: Support FSA research exploring how potential changes to food regulations may be perceived by, and impact upon, consumers and wider stakeholders. See the ACSS website for full [TORs](#)

Membership:

- Julie Hill (Chair)
- Dr Seda Erdem
- Prof. Julie Barnett
- Prof. Spencer Henson
- Dr. Hannah Lambie-Mumford
- Laura Broomfield (FSA lead)
- Becky Gillespie (Sec lead)

In September 2024 the group completed work informing a review of evidence exploring consumer attitudes around potential change to the market authorisation process.

Going forward the group will:

- Support the commissioning of any primary research needed around the FSAs meat charging scheme.
- Support the development of evaluation plans, exploring the impact of the FSAs provision of information guidance

The group most recently met on the 3rd March to discuss evidence around impacts to changes to the FSA meat charging scheme, and will next meet on the 2nd June.