

Wider Consumer Interest Working Group - Terms of Reference

Members

- Spencer Henson (Chair)
- Julie Barnett
- Seda Erdem
- George Gaskell
- Julie Hill
- Hannah Lambie-Mumford

FSA Secretariat

- Ely Mirzahosseinkhan (FSA lead)
- Anya Mohideen

Dates

November 2021 - circulation of a proposition paper

December 2021 – First ACSS WCI WG meeting

January 2021 - second ACSS WCI WG meeting

April 2022 – third ACSS WCI WG meeting

July/Aug 2022 – fourth ACSS WCI WG meeting

Background

The FSA 5 year strategy for 2022-2027, is now published, yet the steer for the programme will be provided at the Board meeting in June 2022. Thus, the terms of reference of this working group will need to be flexible so that the group can be reactive in this space.

The FSA is currently embarking 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, and for us to demonstrate that we are guided by the consumer interest. This is an opportunity to demonstrate that the FSA lives up to its commitment to openness and enhances social equity by bringing the consumer 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.

What we are hoping to achieve from the Programme is to capture the holistic consumer perspective with regards to food and do more in two spaces:

1. Amplifying the consumer voice in food policy in the FSA and across Government.
2. Broadening the scope of our evidence gathering to include the wider interests of consumers, in turn helping to join up food policy.

The main objective of the Wider Consumer Interest Working Group is to provide impartial advice to the FSA on an ad hoc basis, peer review our research under this programme and provide more strategic guidance especially relating to Point 2 above. In so doing, the Working Group will support the provision of timely, relevant and robust evidence that supports the FSA in its efforts towards joined-up food policy.

With input and direction from the Wider Consumer Interest Working Group, the FSA will be better able to steer this programme in directions that maximise its impact within the Agency itself as well as the whole of government. Furthermore, the FSA will better understand where broadening of evidence will help join up food policy.

Initially areas of consideration, which will need further discussion and refinement on an ongoing basis, include:

- Provide (on approval) further analysis on the data from the 'The UK Public's interests, needs and concerns around food' project e.g. formulating potential research questions.

- Provide regular critical reflections on the Programme to ensure it is aligned with the FSA Strategy.
- Ensure the Programme is providing robust and new data and information for the upcoming FSA/FSS Annual report and/or synthesising the right information to provide a broad and robust evidence base.
- Keep abreast of other sources of information (such as the work of other ACSS working groups, expert knowledge, etc.) that could inform, improve and/or guide the Programme.
- Discuss and advise on the direction of work for the Programme for 2021/22 and 2022/23 by identifying evidence gaps that the FSA may want to address.
- Identify specific issues relating to certain groups of the population and/or consumer groups with protected characteristics that the FSA may need to explore and/or investigate further.

Approach

The working group will meet every three months to identify areas where it will likely be asked for input in the near future and to define specific activities it will be asked to complete. At these meetings, members of the working group will be asked to highlight issues, recent research, etc. that is relevant to the work of the FSA as it related to the remit of the working group.

In-between regular meetings and as input from the working group is needed, the FSA will liaise with the chair of the working group to discuss and identify how input can be best achieved, the members of the working group who might be engaged, etc.

The working group will provide an update on its work at plenary meetings of the ACSS.

Timing

March/April 2022 – Initial terms of reference agreed by the Working Group and reviewing the main findings of the Consumer Interest in Food project.

19th April 2022 – Third WCI ACSS Working Group meeting

June 2022 – Publication of ‘The UK Public's interests, needs and concerns around food’