

# Purpose and Ways of Working

## Purpose

The FSA Advisory Committee for Social Science is an [independent expert committee](#) of the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

It provides expert strategic advice to the FSA on its use of the social sciences including new and emerging methods, processes and systems to interrogate data (including data science), to deliver FSA's objectives. Its purpose is to help FSA utilise these sciences and approaches to shape and deliver its strategic objectives and understand its impact.

This includes advising FSA on how it can use and bring together the different types of evidence, approaches and information across these diverse disciplines and fields, to address and evaluate strategic problems or interests, in an effective, appropriate and timely way.

The Committee is constituted to work at a strategic level bringing together insights from across a different and broader range of areas to those, which FSA has previously accessed. It forms a core yet agile group of experts which is able to identify and to draw in wider inputs across relevant disciplines and perspectives to address the issues at hand.

Its members are experts who work within and across disciplines, think strategically and understand how the social sciences and new and emerging data methods, processes and systems can be applied at disciplinary, multi and interdisciplinary levels to shape, inform and test policies and to achieve concrete impacts to benefit people.

Specifically, its role is to provide advice on how FSA gathers, uses and brings together social science evidence and relevant approaches and outputs to support delivery of the FSA's strategic objectives. This includes:

- how FSA frames the problem or question
- the work it commissions to meet its strategic aims

- how the FSA uses and combines different social science, including data science, approaches, sources and types of evidence to achieve its objectives
- how FSA assures the quality and rigour of its social and data science evidence
- how the FSA assures the quality of its advice and outputs based on these sources
- help assure impact from FSA's application of these disciplines and approaches that is both timely and relevant to its priorities and objectives
- review and advise on FSA's current social and data science investments
- add value by advising on opportunities and best practice in bringing together these different disciplines and approaches to address strategic problems identified by or relevant to the work of the FSA
- advise on new and emerging opportunities for interrogating FSA and wider data, scoping new opportunities and innovations emerging across disciplines and fields, and help FSA to understand how these approaches and systems may in turn impact on people and what they do
- provide evaluation advice to ensure successful delivery and impact of policy, considering best use of existing and new social science methods and data interrogation
- help to identify and access wider relevant networks, experts and evidence in these and related fields to provide effective advice to the FSA
- keep the FSA in touch with current and future developments in social science and data approaches and capabilities both in the UK and internationally
- maintain a programme of continuous development to assure successful multi and interdisciplinary working
- work collaboratively with other SACs and the FSA Science Council which provides independent expert advice on FSA's use of science at a strategic level.

## **Ways of working**

### **Code of Practice**

Please visit the [ACSS Code of Practise webpage](#) for further information.

### **Independence and transparency**

The Committee is an independent Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) which operates to the highest standards of openness and transparency. It will work in accordance with guidelines by the FSA and relevant guidance and rules

established across Government for the operation of Scientific Advisory Committees. These include:

- The [cross-Government Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees \(CoPSAC\)](#), which includes the [Principles of Scientific Advice to Government](#)
- The FSA's [Good Practice Guidelines for Scientific Advisory Committees](#)
- The [seven principles of public life](#)
- [Statement of indemnity for Science Council and FSA SAC members](#)

**Key elements of practice which underpin and assure this includes:**

1. Committee meeting agendas, papers, minutes and reports are published on a dedicated website and meetings are open to the public
2. Publication of an annual report
3. The Committee Chair has the right of direct access to the FSA CSA, the CEO, and to Board members (via the FSA Chairman), at all times. Members also have the right of access to the CSA, the CE and Board on any matter which he or she believes raises important issues relating to his or her duties as a member
4. In addition to regular contact between meetings, the Committee Chair and FSA CSA will meet for a feedback discussion each year to review the work of the Committee against its remit, and the relationship with, and support from, the FSA

The Committee is supported by a Secretariat provided by the FSA.

## **Work programme**

The Committee generally works by generating its own content and intellectual input in response to high-level, cross-cutting issues, issues and questions identified by the FSA Chief Scientific Adviser and FSA officials. Where needed, it will co-opt wider expertise on specific tasks and work areas, utilising the FSA SAC Register of Specialists and other relevant means for this purpose. Its outputs will include short reports on collective insights on issues and questions identified by the FSA, which may be delivered directly by the Committee or as part of directed SAC Working Groups. It will also work with FSA to convene wider discussions, events or initiatives to generate and synthesise insights from wider experts/ groups on specific issues relating to the social sciences and data approaches, relevant to the work of the FSA.

The FSA and the Committee Chair and members will maintain regular communication between meetings through face to face meetings and correspondence with support from the Secretariat as needed.

As part of its work programme the Committee will hold two open meetings a year. These will usually consist of a short, general update session reviewing developments in work by the FSA and by the Committee as a whole, which may be followed by themed sessions devoted to specific issues or specific activities identified relevant to the work of the FSA. These meetings will also ensure that the Committee discusses in public the key issues and outcomes from its work, including work between meetings within Committee Working Groups.

We expect to work with the Committee to develop and use online tools to support its work and communication both at and between meetings.

The Committee will establish and engage with wider networks of experts, including with other SACs, calling on wider expertise and seeking new synergies depending on the issue at hand, and assist FSA in maintaining and updating the FSA SAC Register of Specialists to assist this agile way of working.

The Committee will also have a key role in its own continuous development to assure successful ongoing multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary working.

## **Privacy notice**

[Privacy notice for Advisory Committee for Social Science](#)

## **Secretariat**

The ACSS is supported by an FSA staffed secretariat.

[Contact us](#)