

ACSS: Working Group Proposition Paper Wider Consumer Interests

Summary

This paper is for information and discussion. It sets out some initial ideas for an ACSS working group exploring wider interest of consumers with regards to food. We are expanding the scope of our evidence gathering to include wider interests of consumers in relation to food. This allows us to evidence and articulate consumers interests, helping to join up food policy. The Committee is invited to discuss options to best support and inform the FSA's work in this area.

Background

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 providing evidence on some of the big challenges in the food system such as diet and nutrition, sustainability of food, food insecurity, provision, and choice. A number of projects we have recently delivered under this Programme of work (please see table below).

Project name	Delivery date
Food in a Pandemic	March 2021
Mapping:	
• Overlooked Consumers	Aug 2021

Evidence reviews:

- Consumer choices re: meat and dairy alternatives
- Consumer choices re: High Fat Salt Sugar products

Primary consumer research:

Oct 2021

- Consumer understanding of meat, dairy and their alternatives.

Additionally, there are a number of workstreams underway (all to be delivered by end of March 2022):

1. “Consumer Interest in Food”: In partnership with Food Standard Scotland, we have Commissioned an iterative and innovative mixed-method approach over four stages, to explore consumer concerns, issues, needs and interests when it comes to food.
2. Revised consumer segmentation: to include wider food interests of consumers (holistic consumer).
3. Communications research: Behavioural insights-led testing phase 2 and develop quick turnaround (digital) processes for testing Communication activities.

Objective/Scope

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 wider interests of consumers, helping to join up food policy.

The main objective of the Working Group will be to provide impartial, ad-hoc advice, peer review our research under this programme and a clear steer particularly on point 2 above, to help provide timely, relevant and robust evidence to join up food policy.

With input and direction from the ACSS working group, we should be able to steer the programme in the right direction to have maximum impact in the FSA and across Government as well as understanding where broadening our evidence

would help join us food policy.

Initially areas of consideration (these may need further discussion and refinement) could include:

- Provide ad hoc advice on the 'Consumers interest in Food' project
- Provide regular challenge and ensuring the Programme is aligned with the FSA Strategy
- Ensure the Programme is providing robust, and new data and information for the upcoming FSA/FSS Annual report.
- Keep abreast of other sources of information (such as the work of other ACSS working groups, expert knowledge etc) that could inform, improve and guide the Programme.
- Discuss and advise on the direction of work for the Programme for 2021/22 and 2022/23 by providing a steer on evidence gaps that we may want to address.
- Discuss and advise on the need to investigate and explore specific issues with groups of the population/consumer groups with protected characteristics?

Potential impact

The impact of the Programme will primarily be at Strategic level and across Government. Projects under this programme will inform our strategy development and ensure we are on the right track to provide the holistic picture of the consumer with regards to food. The working group would feed into a [key FSA research priority: The future of food systems](#) by helping the FSA remain responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Discussion

The Committee is invited to discuss:

- whether the ACSS has the knowledge/skill base to fulfil the overall objective of the working group;
- whether an ACSS working group would be a good model to provide the advice required by the FSA;
- potential scope (are there any areas that members feel the ACSS could contribute the most?)