

Fifth Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Social Science

(16th June) Minutes

Location: Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Time: 13:00-15:50

Attendees

- Ms Julie Hill (JH), Deputy Chair¹ Julie@juliehill.org.uk
- Professor Julie Barnett (JB) J.c.barnett@bath.ac.uk
- Dr Seda Erdem (SE) Seda.erdem@stir.ac.uk
- Professor Dan Rigby (DR)² Dan.rigby@manchester.ac.uk
- Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford (HLM) H.lambie-mumford@sheffield.ac.uk
- Professor George Gaskell (GG) G.Gaskell@lse.ac.uk

Food Standards Agency

- Adam Cook (AC), Head of Science Strategy, Capability & Research
- Michelle Patel (MP), Head of Social Science
- Richard Bridge (RB), Principal Research Officer (Insights)
- Lea Milanovic (LM), Economic Advisor
- Rebecca Gillespie (RG), ACSS Secretariat
- Mateusz Fedyniak (MF), ACSS Secretariat
- Peter Learmonth (PL), ACSS Secretariat

Other Attendees

- Professor Sandy Thomas³ (ST) Sandy.Thomas@glopan.org

Apologies

- Professor Susan Michie, (SM), Chair S.michie@ucl.ac.uk
- Professor Spencer Henson (SH) Shenson@uoguelph.ca
- Mr John McTernan (JM)
- Vanna Aldrin (VA)

Agenda: See Annex A

Materials: Slide pack and papers⁴:

- Paper 5.1 FSA Social Science Update (agenda item 5)
- Paper 5.2 SAC Update and Working Groups (agenda item 6)
- Paper 5.3 Assurance Working Group Update (agenda item 7)

¹ Assumed the role of chair due to apologies from Susan Michie

² To note that Dan Rigby had connection issues and was unable to join for the duration of the meeting

³ In attendance from the Science Council

⁴ These are available on [the ACSS Meetings Website](#)

- Paper 5.4 Risk Communications Working Group Update (agenda item 7)
- Paper 5.5 EU Exit Working Group update (agenda item 7)
- Paper 5.6 Revised Code of Practise (agenda item 11)

Summary of actions

5.1 To clarify what is required from previous action 4.1/3.2. Steve Wearne and Guy Poppy to consider relevance of IPPC report to work of the FSA

Owner: Julie Hill

Delivery Date: Next meeting

5.2 To circulate report from ESRC symposium when final version is completed

Owner: ACSS Secretariat

Delivery Date: As available

5.3 To add an agenda item for next meeting regarding the future collaboration with Science Council (SC) as detailed in Sandy Thomas' letter to Susan Michie

Owner: ACSS Secretariat

Delivery Date: Next meeting

5.4 The Committee members to advise the secretariat of involvement with working groups of other Science Advisory Committees (SACs)

Owner: Committee members

Delivery Date: As soon as possible

5.5 To raise questions on coordination between the SACs at the joint secretariat meeting and report back to the group regarding if/how coordination of working groups across the different SACs can be achieved.

Owner: ACSS Secretariat

Delivery Date: Next meeting

5.6 To find out the appropriate committee to ask about gene editing – emphasis on possible changes to agricultural practices and food c post-EU-Exit

Owner: ACSS Secretariat

Delivery Date: As soon as possible

5.7 To share the additional slides presented on risk communication

Owner: ACSS Secretariat

Delivery Date: As soon as possible

5.8 To provide any comments on the ARIs

Owner: Committee members

Delivery Date: July 10th

5.9 Share list of research stakeholders with ACSS for comment/contributions

Owner: ACSS Secretariat

Delivery Date: As available

5.10 Establish process for reappointment/recruitment and share with committee

Owner: ACSS Secretariat

Delivery Date: August

5.11 Progress process for establishing new working groups, consult on strategic topics and set up a bespoke meeting

Owner: ACSS Secretariat

Delivery Date: August

5.12 Secretariat share revised COP for comment

Owner: ACSS Secretariat

Delivery Date: As available

1. Welcome and introductions (and resolving connection issues)

- i. Welcome from JH to the 5th ACSS meeting.
- ii. Apologies given for SM, JM, SH and VA.
- iii. Housekeeping included announcing the recording of the 5th meeting of the ACSS will posted on the ACSS website, along with minutes and papers to be accessible by the public.
- iv. Introduction from Peter Learmonth who joined the ACSS Secretariat in March.

2. Declaration of interests

- i. JH is working with Green Alliance to advise on GM crops
- ii. George Gaskell contributing to a review of risk communication in Parma

3. Actions from last meeting

Previous outstanding actions from the 4th ACSS meeting were discussed:

Action 4.1 was for MP to request an update on action 3.2 (Steve Wearne and Guy Poppy to consider relevance of IPPC report to work of the FSA). Given the breadth of the report, it was requested that the ACSS provide more information on what is required.

Action 5.1 To clarify what is required from previous action 4.1/3.2. Steve Wearne and Guy Poppy to consider relevance of IPPC report to work of the FSA

- i. Action 4.7 was for the Secretariat to circulate the report from the November ESRC symposium to the ACSS. RG mentioned delays arising from the finalisation of the report, with a tentative date being the end of July and to be presented at the next ACSS meeting.

Action 5.2 To circulate report from ESRC symposium when final version is completed

4. Chairs update

- i. JH acknowledged the good work being completed by the Working Groups (WGs) and the continued support from the Secretariat during this period.
- ii. Addressing the letter sent by ST, JH requested the Committee consider any further areas of potential collaboration between the Science Council (SC) and ACSS, to avoid duplication of work.

Action 5.3 To add an agenda item for next meeting regarding the collaboration with Science Council (SC)

5. FSA update, Paper 5.1⁵

i. Professor Robin May, New Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA)

MP confirmed the appointment and start date of the new CSA, Professor Robin May to replace Guy Poppy. Professor Robin May's first interactions with the SACs will be on the induction day held on the 18th June.

ii. Emily Miles, New CEO

MP noted Emily Miles' appointment in 2019 and her interest in social science, risk communication and other aspects within the FSA relevant to the ACSS.

iii. New appointments have been made with:

- Paul Morrison becoming Director of Strategy
- Julie Pierce becoming Director of Organisational Data, Digital and Information Technology, Wales and Science (ODD, Wales)

⁵ Cite

and Science). Julie Pierce also has oversight of the reporting from the Science, Evidence and Research Division (SERD) of the FSA.

- Steve Wearne becoming Director for Global Affairs

iv. Food and You update

MP confirmed the continued work on Food and You during the COVID-19 epidemic and the timing still being on track.

The Committee discussed how COVID-19, and then the lifting of restrictions, will affect the results of Food and You. MP reported that the impact of COVID-19 and the effects of the changes in consumer behaviours on results had been considered.

The conclusion of discussions between MP, Richard Bridge and Lucy King was that this was a good opportunity to start using the online survey to provide quicker results to generate insights into a post-COVID society and to come closer to real time monitoring. It would also establish a good start point to any long-term changes pre- and post-COVID-19 and help assess the impact of lock down on behavioural change (e.g. increased frequency in handwashing).

v. COVID-19 work

MP noted that COVID-19 work will continue at a minimum until July. As part of the COVID-19 work, horizon scanning activities have been taking place to look at topics of interest to the FSA, for example, food security and food safety. MP raised the publication of a report stemming from COVID-19 horizon scanning activities work to feed into a ministerial task force on June 18th.

vi. Fellowships

MP confirmed that applications had been invited for the Food and You fellowship, through a new open call approach, and bids were now under evaluation.

vii. Recent/upcoming publications

- i. MP noted much of the focus of publications has been on COVID-19. However, there are a few reports coming out soon:
 - First wave of consumer tracker (25th June)
 - FHRS tracker – this will be the last report until incorporated into Food and You survey (30th June)
 - Small and micro business survey (16th June)

6. SAC update and Working Groups, Paper 5.2⁶

- i. PL updated the Committee on the WGs within other SACs and noted a few developments that could be of interest to the Committee:
 - Food and You presentation given by Richard Bridge and Lucy King to Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF)
 - Alternative Food Packaging Materials scoping paper by COT
 - CBD advice generated by the COT being used by the FSA for communication with the public.
 - Vacancies within COM

Action 5.4 The Committee members to advise the secretariat of involvement with working groups of other Science Advisory Committees (SACs)

- ii. Committee Members welcomed the mapping and visualisation of an organogram of the ACSS sub-groups to complete action 4.5 from December's meeting.
- iii. JH asked about the coordination of different SACs and the understanding of any potential overlap or complementary research taking place. It was noted that ST was giving an update later for Science Council

Action 5.5 Secretariat to raise the issue of working group coordination at the joint secretariat meeting and report back to the group regarding if/how coordination of working groups across the different SACs can be achieved.

- iv. GG raised questions about possible changes to legislation around gene editing and agriculture. Given the potential regulatory impacts post-EU, the Committee requested to find out more.

Action 5.6 Secretariat to find out the appropriate committee to ask about gene editing – emphasis on possible agricultural practices and food changes post-EU

⁶ cite

7. ACSS Working Group updates and review, Papers 5.3-5.6

1. Assurance

- i. HLM gave a short history of the Assurance WG and the process to understand the use of Social Science in the FSA.
- ii. The aim remains to find ways to support QA in procurement and research with the next workshop in 2 weeks. This will likely lead to developing a research quality checklist to use when commissioning projects.
- iii. The Committee noted the good progress so far under HLM's leadership, in addition to ACSS members, Social Science and Secretariat involvement. The opportunity to have candid and open conversations to help develop substantive assurance was invaluable.

2. Risk Communications

- i. JB shared an update on the Risk Communications Group on its ongoing brief; stemming particularly from the FSA taking on risk assessment and management functions previously undertaken at EU level. This has been divided into three tasks:
 1. Gap analysis of research (fulfilled).
 2. Give input on existing risk communication frameworks, to help inform and structure risk communication. Literature review commissioned has been published (fulfilled).
 3. Practical toolkit – group will come back to ascertaining the organisational practices to embed this (ongoing).
- ii. MP, presenting from a separate slide deck (see action 5.7), provided detail on the process starting with a literature review to condense a “best practice” state of play and then complete primary research using interviews with practitioners to test the subsequent framework developed.
- iii. The Committee discussed back testing the framework using a case study approach, although it was concluded that often communication work requires a bespoke approach given the unpredictable nature of communications.

3. EU exit

- i. LM's updated that the EU Exit WG had been disbanded having delivered successfully on its objectives and there being no new projects in the FSA pipeline.
- ii. LM mentioned that ongoing work may be asked for on a bespoke basis and thanked the members of the WG for their valuable contributions.

8. Update from the Science Council Chair – Professor Sandy Thomas

- i. ST gave an introduction to the SC and the Working Groups currently in progress. It has completed three working groups, with another two in progress.
- ii. The future of the SC will see greater linkages across the other SACs and building stronger relationships. ST mentioned GG input in the data working group, and collaboration with the ACSS on food hypersensitivities working group

9. Update on FSA Areas of Research Interest (ARIs)

- i. AC presented on the ARIs of the FSA which sets out key questions underneath 4 key priority areas:
 - a. Food hypersensitivity and allergies
 - b. Evidence-based food safety risk management
 - c. Innovation in food regulation
 - d. The future of food systems

Action 5.8 ACSS members to provide any comments on the ARIs

- ii. The Committee discussed how relevant research will be going on in academia. AC explained that when the ARIs are published, it will facilitate engagement with the academic community and identify existing relevant research and any key additional questions that are may not be included in the ARIs
- iii. RG is currently collating a list of those engaged in food Social Science within academia.

Action 5.9 Secretariat to share list of research stakeholders with ACSS for comment/contributions

10. ACSS future look

- i. RG flagged potential reappointment/recruitment of ACSS members as the current ACSS term expires in April 2021. The recruitment process is likely to take a long time and the timeline shared with the Committee is indicative at this stage. The ACSS Secretariat will be working closely with Susan and Julie on this and share more information on the process when known.

Action 5.10 Secretariat to establish process for reappointment/recruitment and share with committee

- ii. RG flagged that the secretariat will soon be starting a consultation process to identify key topics that could be usefully informed by a new ACSS working group. The Secretariat will initial consult internally and then present to the ACSS for further comment. Proposition papers will be drafted for September with an aim to discuss further at a bespoke ACSS meeting in the same month.

Action 5.11 Secretariat to progress process for establishing new working groups, consult on strategic topics and set up a bespoke meeting

11. Code of Practise (COP) for FSA Science Committees Paper 5.7⁷

- i. MF introduced the new COP for the ACSS and explained this has been produced to provide consistency across SACs. Any changes between the new and old COP will be highlighted to the Committee and circulated for comments.

Action 5.12 Secretariat share revised Code of Practise for comment

12. AOB (5 mins)

- i. The ACSS extended thanks to MF for his sustained and valuable contributions to the Secretariat over the last year as his placement draws to a close in July.
- ii. Gratitude was also expressed for JH stepping in to chair the 5th ACSS meeting at short notice.

13. Close

⁷ cite

Annex A

[Link to the ACSS Agenda](#)