

Sixth Meeting of the ACSS

Tuesday 1st December 2020 (13.30 – 16.30)

Remote meeting

Attendees

ACSS members

- Professor Susan Michie, (SM), Chair
- Ms Julie Hill (JH), Deputy Chair
- Professor Julie Barnett (JB)
- Dr Seda Erdem (SE)
- Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford (HLM)
- Professor George Gaskell (GG)
- Professor Spencer Henson (SH)

Food Standards Agency

- Michelle Patel (MP), Head of Social Science
- Beth Armstrong (BA), Social Science Research Fellow
- Lucy King (LK), Social Researcher
- Rebecca Gillespie (RG), ACSS Secretariat
- Catherine Bartle (CB), ACSS Secretariat
- Peter Learmonth (PL), ACSS Secretariat
- Catriona McCallion (CM), SC Secretariat

Other Attendees

- Professor Sandy Thomas (ST)
- Professor Anne Murcott (AM)
- Joy Dobbs (JD)

Apologies

- Mr John McTernan (JM)
- Professor Dan Rigby (DR)

Materials

- 6.1: FSA Social Science Update (item 5)
- 6.2: Assurance working group update (item 7)
- 6.3: Kitchen Life working group update (item 7)
- 6.4: Climate change working group update (item 7)
- 6.5: The Critical Appraisal of Third-Party Evidence: Terms of Reference (item 9)
- 6.6: SAC Update and Working Groups (item 12)
- 6.7: 'Food and You' Origins and Scientific underpinnings (item 13)

Summary of Actions

Action 6.1. The ACSS is invited to provide comment and feedback on the upcoming third party evidence report.

Owner: the ACSS

Due Date: TBC

Action 6.2. Discuss and agree a new title for the Climate Change working group

Owner: Secretariat

Due Date: Next meeting

Action 6.3. Secretariat to consider options for retaining ACSS institutional memory

Owner: Secretariat

Due Date: Next meeting

1.1 Welcome and introductions

SM noted the apologies from JM with AM and JD joining as observers. Appreciation was expressed for the work of the Committee and FSA staff over the challenging year. BA gave an introduction as the new Food & You fellow with the FSA.

1.2 Declaration of interests

No additional declarations of interests were expressed.

1.3 Actions from the last meeting

Regarding action 5.6, “To find out the appropriate committee to ask about gene editing – emphasis on possible changes to agricultural practices and food post-EU-Exit” the Advisory Committee on Novel Food and Processes (ACNFP) was identified as the correct committee for the query.

Addressing action 5.8, “To provide any comments on the Areas of Research Interest (ARIs)”, the FSA will be in a period of external engagement in the new year and the ACSS will be invited to be included for input.

Action 5.10, “Establish process for reappointment/recruitment and share with committee the reappointment process for the ACSS” is addressed under the Secretariat update.

1.4 Chairs update

SM noted the creation of two new working groups on the subjects of Kitchen Life and Climate Change earlier in the year. Of further note was the ad hoc facility in place to oversee requests from the FSA on independent pieces of work. SM thanked JH for her deputising activities over the last year.

JH mentioned the SAC Chairs meeting and quarterly meetings with the Science Council Chair, ST. JH updated on meeting with the FSA Board and reported back on the Board’s endorsement of the ACSS contributions.

1.5 FSA update, Paper 6.1

MP provided an update on FSA activities with RB working on next wave of tracking data, which will be available in the new year. MP noted his important work on horizon scanning has been recognised and will be formalised into a Strategic Insights Team in the FSA.

MP raised the expectation of new risk assessment activities being handed over from the European Food Standards Agency (EFSA) to the FSA in January 2021. MP noted that the profile of the FSA's activities is continuing to grow with FSA input into CODEX allergen labelling and providing information for the National Food Strategy and Trade and Agriculture Commissions.

Further update was given on Food & You, with the first data from the latest wave coming through, showing a response from approximately 9,000 respondents. BA will be working with the reporting of insights with the first report due first week of February 2021.

MP mentioned the work program for Kitchen Life, a three year project examining behaviour in the home and commercial settings, is out to tender.

1.6 Secretariat Update

1.6.1 Terms of appointment

RG notified the Committee that the members' terms of appointment are coming to an end. The Committee is working well, so work is ongoing to explore reappointment and extensions. CB will be contacting members in the coming weeks to arrange meetings to discuss reappointment and term length.

1.6.2 Ad hoc requests

RG noted the two ad hoc actions brought before the Committee since the 5th ACSS meeting:

- Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy on UK universities and European funding
- Government Office for Science on recruiting exceptional research talent

RG raised the current ad hoc request on Item 9, on Third Party Evidence.

1.6.3 Expenses

PL mentioned the change in expenses policy to limit the time to claim to 90 days to support financial good practice. The claims will be pre-populated by the Secretariat to reduce the administration burden on members and fee amounts will remain the same.

1.7 The ACSS Working Group Updates, Papers 6.2-6.4

1.7.1 Assurance Working Group

HLM noted the Assurance Working Group has consolidated evidence from across the FSA and handed findings to the FSA for implementation. The next stage of the working group is to receive feedback from the impact evaluations

and commission support for examination of what constitutes “good science”. A paper for comment on Other Legitimate Factors is being circulated for comments by 3rd December 2020.

1.7.2 Risk Communications

JB noted that work has largely finished, and the toolkit is being adapted and progressed by an external group with the first draft due by the end of quarter four 2020. This toolkit will then be piloted, and the working group will reconvene to assess the output.

1.7.3 Kitchen Life

MP presented the plan for Kitchen Life 2, following on from a previous research project in 2012. The project will focus on kitchen behaviour in the home and commercial settings to inform the risk assessment process, e.g. the spread of bacteria, carried out in the FSA over a three-year time frame. Potential advances in technology could mean a greater scale and less intrusive observation than achieved in the last study. MP noted the purpose of the new ACSS working group is to provide a similar type of advice to the working group on Food & You.

1.7.4 Climate Change

PL gave an update on activities within the scoping activity of the Climate Change group and the proposed actions to inform the possible identification of a working group question. JH mentioned the influence of many different Government Departments on climate change policy as a starting point for mapping stakeholder relationships and the overall food system. There was agreement on continued collaboration with the Science Council as a proposed complementary working group will be set up to examine the Net Zero Carbon target and supply chains.

1.8 Update from the Science Council Chair

ST gave an update on two Science Council working groups:

- Data Usage, Working Group 4, set up to assist the FSA in understanding the next generation of technology opportunities and challenges. The findings focus on the continued importance of data standards, data access, capacity building and committing resources.
- Food Hypersensitivity, Working Group 5, set up to advise on the FSA’s approach to food hypersensitivity. The main output is an upcoming report currently being written.

ST also mentioned the Science Council is looking at a new working group on net zero carbon and supply chains.

1.9 The Critical Appraisal of Third-Party Evidence, Paper 6.5

CM presented the outline of the work and the timeframes for the project to understand how the FSA should incorporate evidence produced by third

parties. Focusing on structures and ways of thinking initially and developing through interviews with Food Standards Scotland (FSS), it seeks to draw together current ways of thinking and assessment.

Action 6.1. The ACSS is invited to provide comment and feedback on the upcoming third party evidence report.

The ACSS commented on the structure and presentation of the work, while noting the research was still underway and developing through an iterative approach.

GG raised the importance of replication in research and the effects on integrity and offered to send through an article from Nature to CM. GG also observed the existence of a legacy of misleading research being submitted to regulators. SM noted that assessments of evidence are frequent, although the unique point here is when it is non-commissioned, third party evidence.

Prompted by a question from JH, CM explained that while new evidence will be incorporated into the decisions of the FSA, the FSA makes the decision based on the overall weight of evidence.

1.10 Science Council Collaboration

The ACSS and Science Council Members acknowledged there has been a recent intensification of collaboration and a continual involvement between the two Committees and their respective Secretariats. ST noted the scoping of the Science Council's proposed new working group on net zero carbon and supply chains.

SM noted the importance of consumer and producer behaviour in the food system and changes within these actors to modify the overall system.

1.11 ACSS Work Programme (to include discussion of other possible working groups)

Working group membership and Chairs were agreed for the Kitchen Life and Climate Change groups.

Kitchen Life

Chair: Julie Barnett

Membership:

- Susan Michie
- Julie Hill
- Hannah Lambie-Mumford
- Seda Erdem

Climate Change

Chair: Julie Hill

Membership:

- Susan Michie
- Seda Erdem
- Spencer Henson
- Hannah Lambie-Mumford

Action 6.2. Discuss and agree a new title for the Climate Change working group to align with Science Council

Current ad hoc requests were tabled with two currently needing input:

- Third party evidence review to receive comments
- Rapid Evidence Assessment from Social Science team on working practises to comment on any literature that may have been missed.

1.12 Science Advisory Committee (SAC) update and Working groups, Paper 6.6

PL updated the ACSS on the success of the last working group mapping project and its incorporation in the joint SAC administration repertoire. Additional work is being done on the standardisation of the policies across the SACs and ensuring there is input from the ACSS on joint SAC matters.

1.13 'Food and You' Origins and Scientific underpinnings, Paper 6.7

AM and JD presented a paper they authored about the origins and scientific underpinnings of the original Food & You survey to highlight the thought process that gave rise to the Food & you design and implementation. Noting the changes in technology and therefore methodology employed, AM and JD unpicked the advancements and rationale for the original survey.

The ACSS welcomed the paper and its useful addition to the institutional memory of the (now named) ACSS. Asked if there were any recommendations from the report to adjusting current methodology, AM explained the importance of continuing current adherence to best practice. As a consequence, the recommendation was for the paper to be regularly updated for decisions made on ongoing pieces of research to create a record for the future.

The group discussed the need for retaining institutional memory when it came to the activities and outputs of the ACSS.

Action 6.3. Secretariat to consider options for retaining institutional memory

1.14 AOB

No AOBs.

Agenda

1. 13.30: Welcome and introductions (SM, 5 mins)
2. 13.35: Declaration of interests (SM, 5 mins)
3. 13.40: Actions from the last meeting (SM, 5 mins)
4. 13.45: Chairs update (SM/JH, 5 mins)
5. 13.50: FSA update (MP, 15 mins)
6. 14:05: Secretariat update
 - a. Terms of appointment (BG, 5 mins)
 - b. Ad hoc requests (BG, 5 mins)
 - c. Expenses (PL, 5 mins)
- 14.20: Comfort break
7. 14:35: ACSS working group updates
 - a. Assurance (HLM, 5 mins)
 - b. Risk communications (JB, 5 mins)
 - c. Kitchen Life (MP, 10 mins)
 - d. Climate Change (PL, 5 mins)
8. 15.00: Update from the Science Council Chair (ST, 5 mins)
9. 15.05: The Critical Appraisal of Third-Party Evidence (CM, 10 mins)
10. 15.15: SC collaboration (SM/JH, 15 mins)
- 15.30: Comfort break
11. 15.45: ACSS Work Programme (to include discussion of other possible working groups) (SM, 25 mins)
12. 16.10: SAC update and SAC Working groups (PL, 5 mins)
13. 16:15: 'Food and You' Origins and Scientific underpinnings (JD/AM, 10 mins)
14. 16.25: AOB
15. 16.30: Close