

Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Social Science (5 December 2019): Minutes

Location

116 Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5ED

Attendees

Advisory Committee for Social Science

- Professor Susan Michie (SM), Chair - s.michie@ucl.ac.uk
- Ms Julie Hill (JH), Deputy Chair - julie@juliehill.org.uk
- Dr Seda Erdem (SE) - seda.erdem@stir.ac.uk
- Professor Julie Barnett (JB) - j.c.barnett@bath.ac.uk
- Professor George Gaskell (GG) - G.Gaskell@lse.ac.uk
- Professor Spencer Henson (SH) - shenson@uoguelph.ca
- Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford (HL) - h.lambie-mumford@sheffield.ac.uk
- Professor Dan Rigby (DR) - dan.rigby@manchester.ac.uk

Food Standards Agency

- Vanna Aldin (VA), Head of Analytics
- Michelle Patel (MP), Head of Social Science
- Lea Milanovic (LM), Economics Team
- Lucy King (LK), ACSS Secretary
- Rebecca Gillespie (RG), ACSS Secretariat
- Mateus Fedyniak (MF), ACSS Secretariat
- Nuria Casadevall (NC), ACSS Secretariat

Apologies

- Mr John McTernan (JM) - jmternan@ps-b.com

Agenda

See Annex A (page 11)

Materials

Agenda, slide pack and papers¹:

- Paper 4.1 – FSA Social Science Update
- Paper 4.2 – FSA Scientific Advisory Committees Update
- Paper 4.3 – Assurance Working Group Update
- Paper 4.4 – Horizon Scanning Working Group Update
- Paper 4.6 – Risk communications Working Group Update

¹ Papers can be found on the ACSS website: <https://old.food.gov.uk/committee/advisory-committee-for-social-sciences-acss/acss-meetings-1/acss-meeting-on-5-december-2019>

- Paper 4.7 – Response mode

Summary of Actions

No.	Action	Owner	Target date
4.1	MP to request update on action 3.2 (Steve Wearne and Guy Poppy to consider relevance of IPPC report to work of the FSA).	MP	Next meeting (tbc)
4.2	DR to circulate written note with details of/data from chlorinated chicken research.	DR	Dec 19
4.3	MP to contact SAC and explore opportunities to present risk coms work.	MP	Jan 20
4.4	HLM to provide an update on the assurance work package of SAC working group 5 (hypersensitivity).	HLM	Next meeting (tbc)
4.5	Secretariat to provide an ACSS organogram detailing membership in ACSS working groups, and map out SAC working groups, flagging how/if ACSS members are involved.	Sec	Next meeting (tbc)
4.6	Secretariat to invite Science council chair, Professor Sandy Thomas to the next ACSS meeting.	Sec	Next meeting (tbc)
4.7	Secretariat to circulate the report from the symposium to the ACSS	Sec	End Jan 20
4.8	LK to check whether outputs from the FSA data hackathon will be published/publicly available.	LK	End Jan 20
4.9	LK to review the data gaps identified at the hackathon and highlight any that the ACSS might be able to contribute to.	LK	End Jan 20
4.10	The Food and You working group (with SM and DR) to consider the pros/cons of combining the FSAs public attitudes tracker and the Food and You survey into one survey.	LK	Next meeting (tbc)
4.11	Each working group to produce a paper for the next meeting outlining the groups aims, the extent to which these have been achieved, and any wider impacts.	All	Next meeting (tbc)
4.12	Secretariat to add an agenda item to the next meeting to review whether working groups have achieved their initial aims.	Sec	Next meeting (tbc)
4.13	MP to invite risk communications working group to a presentation of research findings in	MP	Feb/Mar 2020

	February/March 2020.		
4.14	MP to organise a workshop for the risk communications working group to review tool kit in October 2020.	MP	October 2020
4.15	Secretariat to develop template for logging ad hoc work ACSS members have been involved in.	Sec	Jan 2020
4.16	Secretariat to circulate log template and add as agenda item for next meeting	Sec	Feb 2020
4.17	ACSS members to inform secretariat if approached for ad hoc advice. Secretariat to send monthly reminders.	all	Ongoing
4.18	MP to fill in response mode form for ACSS input into food strategy review.	MP	Jan 2020
4.19	Committee members to aim to respond to future requests from the FSA/secretariat within 3 working days (if only to acknowledge receipt/state that unable to assist)	All	Next meeting (tbc)
4.20	Secretariat to ensure future requests to the ACSS are clear.	Sec	Ongoing
4.21	Secretariat to check availability with the strategy team and then send out doodle poll for the meeting on the NFS metrics.	Sec	Jan 2020
4.22	Secretariat to circulate further information about the NSF, and the request for input, ahead of the meeting.	Sec	Jan 2020
4.23	Secretariat to send out doodle polls for the 2020 biannual meetings in January 2020.	Sec	Jan 2020
4.24	NC to circulate calendar invite for FSA international conference to ACSS members.	NC	Jan 2020

Minutes

Item 1: Welcome and introductions (SM)

1. Welcome from SM. Confirmed no conflicts of interest and no AOB. Introductions from attendees.

Item 2: Declaration of interests (SM)

2. SM thanked members for returning their declaration of interest forms and advised that the secretariat will ask for these to be updated on an annual basis. No further interests relating to the specific agenda items were declared.

Item 3: Actions from last meeting (SM)

3. Outstanding and ongoing actions from previous meeting (2 Apr) were reviewed:
 - Action 3.2: Steve Wearne and Guy Poppy to consider relevance of IPPC report to work of the FSA.

Action 4.1: MP to request update.

- Action 3.3: DR to circulate written note with details of/data from chlorinated chicken research

Action 4.2: DR to circulate by 13th December.

Item 4: Chairs update (SM)

4. SM attended the FSA Scientific Advisory Committee chairs meeting on the 9th October 2019. She reported that it was a positive meeting with a number of implications for the work of the ACSS. Key points to note included:
 - Strong interest in Risk Communications work
 - SAC working group 5 (hypersensitivity) includes work package 3 on assurance with potential cross over with the ACSS assurance working group.
 - RG and HLM are involved in this work package and explained that this work will be based on interviews with policy staff and analysts re the use of evidence in policy making, initially restricted to those working on hypersensitivity but intention is to roll out across other policy themes and provide a more holistic view.
 - Important to engage with other assurance work going on across FSA. MP explained that Adam Cook has taken up a new role in strategy team which should mean that liaison across committees/FSA re assurance can be done in a more systematic way.

Action 4.4: HLM to provide an update on this work package at the next meeting

Action 4.3: MP to contact SAC and explore opportunities to present risk coms work.

5. The group discussed the need to have clear view of the work of the SAC, associated working groups and how these fit with the ACSS.

Action 4.5: Secretariat to provide an ACSS organogram detailing membership in ACSS working groups, and map out SAC working groups, flagging how/if ACSS members are involved.

Action 4.6: Secretariat to invite Science council chair, Professor Sandy Thomas to the next ACSS meeting.

Item 5: FSA update (MP) – paper 4.1 ²

6. **ESRC Symposium of social science.** The FSA held a symposium of social science on the 4th of November in Cardiff, with the theme of food, innovation and the future consumer. FSA staff presented topics ranging from the food concerns of a rising generation, consumer perspectives on new food technology such as lab grown meat, QALYs and new ways of measuring consumer wellbeing, and ways of using social media to understand what people talk about when they talk about food. The afternoon saw fascinating talks from Professor Lorraine Whitmarsh of CAST on the kinds of social transformations that will drive a sustainable food future, from Dr Rhian Hayward of Aberystwyth University on the cutting edge science that is driving innovation in food, and Professor David Lloyd of Cardiff Metropolitan University on the innovations that food businesses are making now to be fit for the future food system. The day finished with a workshop where experts and practitioners discussed the areas of research interest, the evidence gaps and gave their advice on our future research agenda. Julie Hill attended the symposium and reported that it was a well-run and very informative event. A report will be published post purdah.
7. The benefits of having a single event in one city, rather than a series of events across the UK, were discussed by the group. This approach will be used next year and the group felt it was important to consider options for people to be able to attend over the web.

Action 4.7: Secretariat to circulate the report from the symposium to the ACSS.

² <https://old.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/41socialscienceupdate.pdf>

8. **FSA data hackathon.** On Saturday 23rd November the FSA ran their first ever data hackathon. The event was attended by over 60 data working in teams to come up with new insights from FSA data, specifically looking at:
 - The relationship between food hypersensitivities and health and well-being
 - The link between food security and risky food behaviour
 - Drivers of trust in food
9. Participants were also asked to flag any data gaps they had identified.

Action 4.8: LK to check whether outputs from the hackathon will be published/publicly available.

Action 4.9: LK to review the data gaps identified at the hackathon and highlight any that the ACSS might be able to contribute to.

10. **Food and you update.** Web based survey methodology will be used for the Food and You survey going forward, with a mobile first approach. This will permit an improved coverage in Wales and Northern Ireland, reduces the time lag between data collection and /analysis publication, and gives more flexibility in the number and topic of questions. In the long term this allows the FSA to be more responsive to policy needs and for current trends to be identified in a more timely way.
11. The survey has been recommissioned to Ipsos MORI and LK is currently working on question development with the ACSS working group and internal stakeholders.
12. The group discussed the benefit of combining the food and you survey with the public attitudes tracker, and the advantages of having a single methodology for the 2 sources. MP advised that whilst this has previously not been deemed appropriate by the FSA, the tracker is due for review and this review could be done in line with the principles used to review the food and You survey.

Action 4.10: The Food and You working group (with SM and DR) to consider the pros/cons of combining the FSAs public attitudes tracker and the Food and You survey into one survey.

13. **Areas of research interest.** The FSA are working up document detailing key research questions or 'areas of research interest' (ARIs). This will be a live document, published in the New Year, and will guide FSA engagement with the wider research community.
14. The ARI document is currently undergoing internal review but the ACSS will be asked to feed into this prior to publication.
15. **Recent/upcoming publications.** As detailed in paper 4.1, the most recent publication was the [Food and You Wave 5, Secondary Analysis: The Food Landscape in Wales](#) requested by colleagues in FSA Wales. Upcoming

publications include the Food Business Operators (FBO) Tracker (December 2019) and CBD consumer Insight (January 2020).

16. **How working groups outputs have been used by the FSA.** MP reported that the outputs from working groups have had real impact and have been incredibly useful. The following examples were discussed:

- The **Risk Communications** Working Group's commentary on the Science Council's opinion on communicating risk, and subsequent advice was the basis of FSA 'day 1' guidance on risk communications. The Chair reviewed bids for both the literature review and primary research.
- The **Behavioural Science** Working Group prioritised and shortlisted areas for intervention pilots. The Chair was on the panel to select a new supplier.
- The **Food and You** Working Group's work has been central to recommendations on the new methodology and the Chair was on the panel to select a new supplier.

The group discussed how important it was to have this feedback and ensure the ACSS has real impact.

Action 4.11: Each working group to produce a paper for the next meeting outlining the groups aims, the extent to which these have been achieved, and any wider impacts.

Action 4.12: Secretariat to add an agenda item to the next meeting to review whether working groups have achieved their initial aims.

Item 6: Food Strategy Review (MP)

17. MP discussed the Food Strategy Review, a DEFRA commission to conduct an independent review to help the government create its first [National Food Strategy](#) (NFS) for 75 years. The purpose of the cross-government review is to address the environmental and health problems caused by our food system, to ensure the security of the food supply, and to maximise the benefits of the coming revolution in agricultural technology. It is intended to be an overarching strategy for government, designed to ensure that our food system:

- delivers safe, healthy, affordable food, regardless of where people live or how much they earn
- is robust in the face of future shocks
- restores and enhances the natural environment for the next generation in this country
- is built upon a resilient, sustainable and humane agriculture sector

- is a thriving contributor to our urban and rural economies, delivering well paid jobs and supporting innovative producers and manufacturers across the country
 - delivers all this in an efficient and cost-effective way
18. The strategy team is developing metrics to assess the success of the NFS strategy and would value ACSS input into this. Specifically, they are interested in identifying metrics relating to:
- Social impact - a metric which captures a positive trajectory for the social impact of food. Examples might be: the proportion of meals which we eat with others; cooking confidence; or number of community food initiatives.
 - Food Environments – various metrics which cover: Access and availability; Prices and affordability; Convenience; Appeal
19. The group discussed the policy context for this work, which MP advised was largely around supply, food poverty, social fragmentation, and the number of different government agencies dealing with food policy, leading to the need to create a holistic strategy and fully understand the system.

Item 7: Update from Science council working group 5 (WG 5 - Food Hypersensitivity) – paper 4.2 ³

20. The Science Council chair – professor Sandy Thomas – was unable to attend the meeting. As part of the working group, JB provided an update based on the two meetings of WG5 so far, and clarified that hypersensitivity covers both allergens and intolerances, as well as celiac disease. The aim of WG5 is to explore how changing food environments leads to new routes of exposure. Desk research will be conducted to identify participants for a workshop exploring these issues.
21. HLM and RG are also involved in WG5, through the work package on assurance (as covered in item 3)

Item 8: working group updates – papers 4.3-4.6 ⁴

22. **Assurance** (paper 4.3): HLM reported that work to date has scoped out the specific aims of the group, which are largely based around recommendations in the [Lofsted social science review](#). The agreed terms of reference are to:
- Develop a method for evaluating processes by which social science projects are designed, implemented and used by the FSA.
 - Oversee the evaluation referred to in point 1.

³ <https://old.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sciencecouncilfoodhypersensitivity.pdf>

⁴ <https://old.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/43assuranceworkinggroupupdate.pdf>
<https://old.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/44horizonsscanningworkinggroupupdate.pdf>
<https://old.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/46riskcommunicationworkinggroupupdate.pdf>

- Provide advice and recommendations relating to how FSA practices might be enhanced to ensure best practice.
23. The group meet in November and discussed relevant FSA processes in practise. This led to several FSA actions and future potential themes for the working group around: tender activity, post project reviews, and guidance for drafting research specifications and evaluating tender applications. The note from this meeting will be circulated when final.
 24. **EU Exit:** LM explained the main aim of the working group is to provide advice to the FSA on economic aspects of EU exit (there is no accompanying paper due to purdah). The group has provided valuable input into evidence specifications for FSA planed commissions. Potential for joint work on the analysis of border rejection patterns of food products has been identified. The group will continue to provide advice on approaches currently taken by the AU to assess the economic impact of EU Exit and to identify research gaps.
 25. **Risk communications** (paper 4.6): The Risk Communications Working Group was set up to to help ensure that the best possible evidence base supports the development of a risk communication framework for the FSA. JB reported that the group has advised on the specification, commissioning and reporting of a review of the current state-of-play of available risk communication guidance that is potentially applicable to food, the current academic literature on risk communication and the extent to which current guidance reflects existing academic literature. The review report has been reviewed by the Working Group and will be published in due course.
 26. MP reported that continued input from the group would be valued in the development of a risk communications tool kit. The FSA would like to ask the Working Group to remain in the capacity of a critical friend as they begin research activity in this area.
 27. It was agreed that the working group would be extended until October 2020 to enable them to review research findings and aid development of tool kit

Action 4.13: MP to invite risk communications working group to a presentation of research findings in February/March 2020.

Action 4.14: MP to organise a workshop for the risk communications working group to review tool kit in October 2020.

28. **Horizon scanning** (paper 4.4): SE reported that the group was setup to advise the FSA on key strategic priorities and methodologies to assess economic/ social impacts of emerging technologies in the food safety regulatory space.
29. Risk of duplicating efforts as there is already an established FSA workstream on horizon scanning with annual workshop events being held with input from the Scientific Advisory Committees (SAC).
30. Mutual agreement between the chair, members of the group and FSA that the proposed approach for this working group was not suitable. The Committee has

subsequently decided that instead of a separate working group it would prefer to feed into horizon scanning alongside the SAC.

Item 9: Review ways of working

31. **Responsive mode** (paper 4.7⁵): the responsive mode form was developed to process ad hoc requests received by the ACSS/Secretariat. To date this form has not been used, largely because people have built up their own contacts and send requests directly.
32. The need to capture the impact of the ACSS was discussed, and that ad hoc work should be recorded to demonstrate this. The responsive mode will be retained as facility for those who want to use it, and supported by ACSS members notifying the secretariat of any ad hoc work. This information will be recorded by the secretariat in an 'ad hoc work template', to include details on the request, outputs and impact.

Action 4.15: Secretariat to develop template for logging ad hoc work ACSS members have been involved in.

Action 4.16: Secretariat to circulate log template and add as agenda item for next meeting.

Action 4.17: ACSS members to inform secretariat if approached for ad hoc advice. Secretariat to send monthly reminders.

Action 4.18: MP to fill in response mode form for ACSS input into food strategy review.

33. **FSA communications with committee members.** The clarity of requests from the FSA and responsiveness of committee members was discussed. Communications from FSA need to make it clear if something is sent for information only or if action required. If the latter, FSA need to make clear who the action is for. This will help ensure the committee is responsive to requests. It was agreed that committee members will aim to respond in 3 working days (if only to acknowledge receipt).

Action 4.19: Committee members to aim to respond to future requests from the FSA/secretariat within 3 working days (if only to acknowledge receipt/state that unable to assist)

Action 4.20: Secretariat to ensure future requests are clear.

⁵ <https://old.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/47responsemode.pdf>

34. **Review of monthly round up.** The content, level of detail and frequency of the rounds up were discussed. The group were happy with current format. The importance of including items relating to the wider FSA that may impact on the work of the ACSS (key publications, board changes and key announcements) were discussed.

Item 10: Dates for 2020 meetings

35. **Input in NFS metrics.** Due to limited availability, the meeting will need to be after the 20th January. Senior members of the strategy team will need to be present to provide context for the ACSS.

Action 4.21: Secretariat to check availability with the strategy team and then send out doodle poll for the meeting on the NFS metrics.

Action 4.22: Secretariat to circulate further information about the NSF and their request for input ahead of the meeting.

36. **ACSS bi-annual meetings:** the group agreed that the next meeting would be best held in May/June with a subsequent meeting in early December.
37. The need to have the meetings booked in calendars as early as possible was discussed by the group.

Action 4.23: Secretariat to send out doodle polls for the 2020 biannual meetings in January 2020.

Item 11: AOB

38. **ACSS secretary:** SM advised that Rebecca Gillespie will be taking over from Lucy King as ACSS secretary in January 2020.
39. **FSA international conference:** LM highlighted the FSA international conference, to be held in London on the 30th/31st March. It will host expert speakers from Food Safety Regulators (mainly from the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and UK), academia, industry and international organisations, and provide an opportunity to showcase innovative research on consumer trends, novel and emerging technologies, better use of data and regulatory analysis across disciplines.

Action 4.24: NC to circulate calendar invite for FSA international conference to ACSS members.

Item 12: Questions from Observers

40. No questions from observers.

41. **Close**

42. SM thanked all those involved in and who had worked to prepare for the meeting.