

## Third Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Social Science (2 April 2019): Minutes

### Location

Grange Wellington Hotel, 71 Vincent Square, London, SW1P 2PA

### Attendees

#### *Advisory Committee for Social Science*

- Professor Susan Michie (SM), Chair - [s.michie@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:s.michie@ucl.ac.uk)
- Ms Julie Hill (JH), Deputy Chair - [julie@juliehill.org.uk](mailto:julie@juliehill.org.uk)
- Dr Seda Erdem (SE) - [seda.erdem@stir.ac.uk](mailto:seda.erdem@stir.ac.uk)
- Professor Julie Barnett (JB) - [j.c.barnett@bath.ac.uk](mailto:j.c.barnett@bath.ac.uk)
- Professor George Gaskell (GG) - [G.Gaskell@lse.ac.uk](mailto:G.Gaskell@lse.ac.uk)
- Professor Spencer Henson (SH) - [shenson@uoguelph.ca](mailto:shenson@uoguelph.ca)
- Mr John McTernan (JM) - [jmternan@ps-b.com](mailto:jmternan@ps-b.com)
- Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford (HL) - [h.lambie-mumford@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:h.lambie-mumford@sheffield.ac.uk)

#### *Food Standards Agency*

- Guy Poppy (GP), Chief Scientific Adviser
- Steve Wearne (SW), Director of Science
- Rick Mumford (RM), Deputy Director of Science, Evidence & Research
- Vanna Aldin (VA), Head of Analytics
- Michelle Patel (MP), Head of Social Science
- Nicholas Daniel (ND), Economics Team
- Lea Milanovic (LM), Economics Team
- Lucy King (LK), ACSS Secretary
- Sarah Kovacs (SK), ACSS Secretariat
- Nuria Casadevall (NC), ACSS Secretariat

#### *Apologies*

- Professor Dan Rigby (DR) - [dan.rigby@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:dan.rigby@manchester.ac.uk)

### Agenda

See Annex A (page 11)

### Materials

Agenda, slide pack and papers<sup>1</sup>:

- Paper 3.1 – FSA Social Science Update
- Paper 3.2 – FSA Scientific Advisory Committees Update
- Paper 3.3 – Risk Communications Update

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<sup>1</sup> Papers can be found on the ACSS website: <https://acss.food.gov.uk/acss-meetings/acss-meetings/acss-meeting-2nd-april>

- Paper 3.4 – Behavioural Science Update
- Paper 3.5 – Review of FSA’s Food and You Survey
- Paper 3.6 – ACSS Annual Review 19/20
- Paper 3.7 – EU exit (Proposition Paper)
- Paper 3.8 – Emerging Technologies (Proposition Paper)

### **Summary of Actions**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Target date</b>
3.1	Committee members to request printed papers ahead of future meetings.	All ACSS	Next meeting (tbc)
3.2	SW and GP to consider relevance of IPPC report to work of the FSA.	SW / GP	May 19
3.3	DR to circulate written note with details of/data from chlorinated chicken research.	DR	End Apr 19
3.4	GP to share Science Council Horizon Scanning report with ACSS once finalised (June).	GP	Jun 19
3.5	FSA to devise a form for requesting ad-hoc advice/ input from ACSS members on risk communications and other issues.	LK	End Apr 19
3.6	Responsive way of working to be reviewed after 6 months.	Chair/Sec	Nov 19
3.7	Wrap up Behavioural Science Working Group and trial responsive mode, with SM as point of contact for behavioural science requests or unassigned requests.	JD	End Apr 19
3.8	FSA to set up task force for development of Food and You Wave 6.	EM	End Apr 19
3.9	New EU Exit Working Group to be set up – SH to lead, liaising closely with FSA on scope and timings.	LM	End Apr 19
3.10	New Emerging Technology Working Group to be set up – SE to confirm leadership.	ND	End Apr 19
3.11	Assurance Working Group to be set up, led by HL.	MP	End Apr 19

## **Minutes**

### **Item 1: Welcome and introductions (SM)**

1. Welcome from SM. Confirmed no conflicts of interest and no AOB. It was suggested for future meetings Committee members are to let LK know if they require printed papers. Welcome to Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford and introductions from attendees.

**Action 3.1: Committee members to request printed papers ahead of future meetings.**

### **Item 2: Actions from last meeting (SM)**

2. Outstanding and ongoing actions from previous meeting (4 Dec) were reviewed:
- *Committee to consider the relevance of the IPPC report to work of the FSA at the next ACSS meeting – SW and GP to take this away.*
  - *Share details of/data from chlorinated chicken research with FSA – DR to circulate written note.*
  - *Consider how best to interact with other SACs at the next meeting – to revisit as part of Item 4.*

**Action 3.2: SW and GP to consider relevance of IPPC report to work of the FSA.**

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

### **Item 3: Chairs update (SM)**

3. Since the last ACSS meeting JH attended a risk assessment training workshop with FSA. The risk assessment process is thorough, but complex. A key topic of discussion at the workshop considered the need for a standardised approach across the Agency.

4. The group discussed challenges in balancing quantitative measures with other factors such as consumer acceptance, and potential for uncertainty around who is doing what to deal with risk. FSA's statistics branch reported that Bayesian<sup>2</sup> approach training has been undertaken by the Agency but is yet to be applied. SM commended this approach.

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<sup>2</sup> Bayesian statistics is a mathematical procedure that applies probabilities to statistical problems, however updates the probability as more evidence of information becomes available.

#### **Item 4: Back brief from Science Council meeting (JH)**

5. JH was pleased to be asked to participate in the Spring Science Council meeting, and used the opportunity to introduce ACSS work, talk about horizon scanning and how the committees could link up – there was appetite for collaborative working.
6. GG attended for part of the Science Council meeting to present developments on the Food and You review. It was suggested that ACSS or Social Science team members should meet periodically with the Science Council e.g. to present development of Food and You Wave 6.
7. Opportunity for the ACSS to contribute to horizon scanning work discussed, to ensure focus on technology is balanced with consideration of social and behavioural change. This includes not just ‘what is on the horizon’ but also what does it mean and what to do about it. A FSA foresight report is to be finalised in June, including recommendations for moving forward which will, at a minimum, involve an annual horizon scanning workshop. The ACSS agreed to review the report and participate in future horizon scanning workshops. SW noted that comments from the ACSS on how to integrate technology and social horizon scanning would be valuable e.g. any useful mechanisms or tools.

#### **Action 3.4: GP to share Science Council Horizon Scanning report with ACSS once finalised (June).**

#### **Item 5: FSA update (SW & RM)**

8. [Paper 3.1 – FSA Social Science Update](#) and [Paper 3.2 Scientific Advisory Committee Update](#) provide updates for information – there were no comments from the group.
9. SW explained that over the past nine months FSA have been working with the Board to put in place a new framework for risk analysis, including a range of tools developed for use within and outside the Agency. The framework is summarised in a [one-page flow chart](#) and includes guidelines for risk assessment, management and communications. The framework reflects the report and recommendations from the Science Council’s working group on risk and uncertainty, as discussed and agreed by the FSA Board, and will seek further recommendations from the Risk Communication Working Group of this committee in due course.
10. One of the recommendations of the Science Council’s Working Group was to “*consider types of risk other than those that directly relate to impacts on health (such as related to food authenticity and fraud) in the wider application of its advice*”. There

is also a statutory duty on FSA to do just that. FSA Board has agreed that the FSA should always evidence and consider the following factors:

- public health, safety and wellbeing;
- wider consumer interests;
- consumer habits, perceptions, acceptability and preferences;
- economic impact; and
- feasibility of implementation.

11. The intention is to publish evidence-based analysis and advice for decision makers about a range of 'other legitimate factors' (step 8 of the [Food and Feed Safety Risk Analysis Process](#)), and for this to be world-leading in risk analysis and risk communication once operationalised. The Advisory Forum on Food and Feed will provide a check that there are no important factors that have been overlooked. The group discussed consideration of environmental impact and animal welfare as part of risk assessment process, which will not apply in all cases.

12. RM raised the point of potential unintended consequences of trends such as removing plastics from the supply chain; the FSA have commissioned a literature review and will be hosting a workshop on this, looking at safety issues relating to bio-renewables. There is a need to keep ahead of these trends in relation to food safety. SM noted the rise in systems thinking, considering feedback loops and considering issues in a wider systems context.

13. The committee discussed the possible risk of prioritising economic impact above public health. SW assured the committee that FSA always considers economic impacts but alongside responsibilities for protecting consumers and industry, and through transparency in publishing all information relevant to decision making, so that decision makers can be held to account. Openness and transparency are taking hold in science more generally, and not sharing science publicly is increasingly recognised to be a waste of research investment. There should be clarity about the relationship between evidence and policy in government and other policy circles.

#### **Item 6.1: Working Group updates – Risk Communication (JB)**

14. Discussion was based on [Paper 3.3 – Risk Communication Update](#).

15. Much of the work of the Risk Communication Working Group has been subsumed within reviewing the risk analysis framework and the place of social science and risk communication within the framework. Testing this approach with consumers is the next step.

16. Risk communication will be an ongoing area of interest for the FSA and ACSS but it was agreed that it doesn't need a working group beyond the summer and the

completion of a literature review that is part of the original remit. Expertise would be welcomed to advise on testing and co-creating communications with consumers.

17. SM proposed trialling a 'responsive mode' way of working, whereby Committee members with relevant expertise would be asked for advice through a short request form detailing what is required, for what purpose, context, timeframe etc. Requests will go through MP and ACSS secretariat then to the Committee member with relevant expertise to take forward the work. JB agreed to be the main point of contact for risk communications work. Members may also call upon their own contacts/networks, as well as drawing on expertise through the FSA's Register of Specialists. This would encourage agile working and avoid proliferation of working groups. SW noted that this is in line with models which have worked well in other committees (e.g. task and finish groups) and expressed support for this way of working. This way of working will be reviewed after 6 months.

**Action 3.5: FSA to devise a form for requesting ad-hoc advice/ input from ACSS members on risk communication and other issues.**

**Action 3.6: Responsive way of working to be reviewed after 6 months.**

#### **Item 6.2: Working Group updates – Application of Behavioural Science (JH)**

18. Three strands of activity outlined in [Paper 3.4 - Behavioural Science Update](#) are still in progress to some extent.

19. MP provided an update on the development of intervention ideas. Experimental trials are likely to run in September or October this year, at the earliest. The review of frameworks is ongoing and is in final stages and the Working Group will review once complete. The FSA will put together a one-year plan for how to integrate behavioural science throughout the Agency.

20. MP noted this area could also benefit from a more agile way of working. It was agreed an active working group is not required but FSA would still like to draw on the Committee for advice on Behavioural Science when needed. The group agreed the Behavioural Science Working Group should be wrapped up, moving into a more 'responsive mode' with SM as the main point of contact.

21. There will be an opportunity for the ACSS to feed into the next stage of commissioning intervention trials. There was agreement that the earlier ACSS can get involved the better, as failure of interventions is often down to lack of analytical approach at the outset. There was discussion about how to get the best contractors for the job; it was agreed that it would be helpful to see details of the commissioning process, tender documents and evaluation criteria to produce the best possible social science work in the FSA. It was agreed to consider this under Item 10.

**Action 3.7: Wrap up Behavioural Science Working Group and trial responsive mode, with SM as point of contact for behavioural science requests or unassigned requests.**

22. GP flagged two other opportunities to develop social science within the FSA:
- a. The imminent call for bids for research into redesigning the UK food system for planetary and human health as there is expected to be a significant behavioural science element. As this is a strategic priority driven by government rather than academia, it will need an aligned research evidence base and experts to call upon.
  - b. Development of a food strategy for England will also fall into this space.
23. The Committee could provide advice and help to disseminate information to their academic networks to increase the likelihood that high quality social and behavioural scientists will be involved.

**Item 7: Food and You review (GG)**

24. GG recapped the approach taken and recommendations presented in [Paper 3.5 – Review of FSA’s Food and You Survey](#).
25. GG highlighted the recommended change in methodology away from face-to-face interviews to an online (or ‘web-push’) approach. This is supported by declining response rates of random probability face-to-face surveys and 90% of UK population now having access to the internet (although respondents will be given an option of self-completion paper-based survey if required). There are several government surveys successfully employing a web-push method.
26. Recommendations include:
- Set up a task force to develop wave 6 and manage move to web push, and review frequency of question modules
  - Increase sample size in Wales and Northern Ireland to improve scope for segmentation and sub-analysis
  - Social Science team to monitor other data sources of relevance e.g. British Social Attitudes survey
  - Bring analysis and reporting in-house, to improve efficiency and provide timely bespoke analysis for policy teams
  - Social Science and Communications teams to develop clear communication strategy.
27. The recommendations were agreed. It was agreed to sign off the Food and You Review Working Group and to set up a task force to support the development of wave 6.

28. GP is keen to explore creative opportunities e.g. co-funding PhD students, or building on concepts of workshops or sandpit working to delve into the data. JM offered to lead on strategic communications for Food and You wave 6.

29. There was discussion around lack of knowledge about the profile of non-responders of face-to-face and online surveys; GG noted that vulnerable consumers are as likely to be non-responders with face-to-face as web push. Financial savings from the change in methodology could be redeployed to investigate non-response, and other matters.

30. GP thanked all those involved in the review.

### **Action 3.8: FSA to set up task force for development of Food and You Wave 6.**

#### **Item 8: Reflection on the last year**

31. SM recapped that:

- Risk Communication Working Group will carry on until end of summer
- Behavioural Science and Food and You Working Groups will wrap up
- A new responsive mode of working will be piloted

#### **Item 9.1: Looking forward to the next year – EU exit (LM)**

32. LM introduced proposition [Paper 3.7 – EU Exit](#) and provided background on potential impacts on the food industry, including border checks, new compliance requirements (e.g. labelling) and new trade opportunities. The ongoing uncertainties around future relationship with the EU were noted.

33. Ongoing work of FSA Analytics Unit includes:

- Focus groups / trackers to assess consumer and business concerns
- Workforce issues (for MHI and Official Vets) where many employees are EU nationals
- Analysis of border implications.

34. The FSA would like to strengthen economic assessment of emerging EU exit related issues. LM proposed that the role of the ACSS would be to provide advice on strategic priorities in terms of what to focus on, and whether there are any wider research or economic drivers to be aware of. More ad-hoc advice may also be sought once the consequences of EU Exit are clearer e.g. advice on approaches and methodologies to assess the potential impacts on industry and consumers, and how economic changes (costs/trade/employment) would be passed on to consumers.

35. It was agreed to set up a new working group, with SH to lead, HL and SE to support and DR to be invited.



36. It was suggested that outputs are phased so that there is timely delivery on strategically important aspects. VA noted there is an existing research proposal which the Working Group could review. The exact scope of working group is to be defined but will need to respond rapidly and provide conceptual advice. FSA to drive creation of work phases.

**Action 3.9: New EU Exit Working Group to be set up – SH to lead, liaising closely with FSA on scope and timings.**

**Item 9.2: Looking forward to the next year – Emerging technologies (ND)**

37. ND introduced proposition [Paper 3.8 - Emerging Technologies](#), looking at impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which will create new challenges and threats in terms of public health, food safety, labour markets as well as broader social values systems and ethical frameworks. The FSA requires better understanding of implications for consumers and business regulation, including impacts on consumer choice, quality of life and connection with food system.

38. It was agreed to set up a working group on emerging technologies to provide advice on initial ideas and advise on strategic direction. The value of joint working with other committees e.g. Science Council Horizon Scanning Working Group was noted. The ACSS should be on the front foot to help ensure social aspects, as well as technology, is considered. Further understanding of the problems, dangers and potential opportunities will be required, including understanding how technological changes impact consumer perceptions of risk and food consumption behaviours. MP is keen to look at what is driving behaviours among younger consumers.

39. The idea of developing a heat map or matrix (similar to that of the Science Council Working Group) to illustrate the varying timescales and significance of emerging technologies was discussed.

40. The working group will comprise JB, SM, SE, JH and GG. SE to confirm whether able to lead the group.

**(Postscript: SE confirmed she will chair the Emerging Technology Working Group).**

41. It will build on the 2015/6 [Food Futures](#) work. The link between technology and cross-cutting issues of trust, personal responsibility, surveillance and privacy was noted.

**Action 3.10: New Emerging Technology Working Group to be set up – SE to confirm leadership.**

**Item 10: Assuring social science in the FSA (MP)**

42. The FSA Chair has asked the ACSS to provide assurance on social science activities within the FSA in the form of a paper planned to be discussed at the September Board meeting. This will sit alongside an annual social science update paper from MP.

43. The group acknowledged that that this is a large piece of work and would require a dedicated working group. GG highlighted the existence of the nationally recognised UK Research Integrity Office which could serve as a model for this work.

44. It was suggested that the ACSS provides 'expert commentary' on the FSA's social science function, including examples of good work and areas for improvement. Consideration is needed on how this is communicated.

45. A phased approach was suggested, with two pieces of work

- a. Obtaining a broad overview of the Social Science work currently being undertaken within the FSA.
- b. Examination of the five priority projects as case studies

46. This work will require investigating criteria used for assuring social science research and activities in other organisations and agreeing those to be used for the FSA. Other considerations could include gaps in the FSA's social science portfolio, balance of in-house and external work and utilisation and impact of outputs.

47. It was agreed that the scope and objectives for this work need to be defined, so that it is practicable and as useful as possible.

48. HL offered to lead on this Working Group, with SM, JH and JB to support.

### **Action 3.11: Assurance Working Group to be set up, led by HL.**

#### **Item 11: AOB**

49. No AOB.

#### **Item 12: Questions from Observers**

50. No questions from observers.

#### **Close**

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

## Annex A

**Third Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Social Science: Agenda**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Materials</b>
12.00	Lunch* (30 mins)		
12.30	<b>1. Welcome and introductions</b> (5 mins)	SM	
12.35	<b>2. Actions from last meeting</b> (5 mins)	SM	
12.40	<b>3. Chairs update</b> (5 mins)	SM	
12.45	<b>4. Back brief from Science Council meeting</b> (5 mins)	JH	
12.50	<b>5. FSA update</b> (10 mins)	SW RM	
13.00	<b>6. Working Group updates</b> 6.1 Risk Communication (10 mins) 6.2 Application of Behavioural Science (10 mins)	JB JH	Paper 3.3 Paper 3.4
13.20	<b>7. Food and You Review</b> (30 mins) Presentation of final report and recommendations; followed by a discussion on next steps.	GG	Paper 3.5
13.50	<b>8. Reflection on the last year</b> (10 mins) Discussion and agreement of the 12-month review paper.	MP	Paper 3.6
14.00	Tea and coffee (15 mins)		
14.15	<b>9. Looking forward to the next year</b> 9.1 EU exit (25 mins) 9.2 Emerging technologies (25 mins)	MP	Paper 3.7 Paper 3.8
15:05	<b>10. Assuring social science in the FSA</b> (15 mins) 10.1 How to judge the FSA's portfolio of work 10.2 Information required & how it should be presented	MP	
15.20	<b>11. AOB</b> (5 mins)	SM	
15.25	<b>12. Questions from observers</b> (5 mins)	SM	
15.30	<b>Close</b>		