

Chapter 1

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Introduction

1. This is the twenty-ninth Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food and covers the calendar year 2020.

Chapter 1: Administrative Matters

Membership

Appointments

2. Appointments to the ACMSF are made by the FSA, after consultation with United Kingdom Health Ministers (i.e., the “Appropriate Authorities”) in compliance with Paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 2 to the Food Standards Act 1999. The Agency has resolved that appointments to the ACMSF should be made in accordance with Nolan Principles⁵³, the guidance issued by the Office of the

Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA)⁵⁴ and the Government Office for Science Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees⁵⁵. The FSA is not bound to follow OCPA guidance, as ACMSF appointments do not come within the remit of the Commissioner for Appointments and the guidance applies only to appointments made by Ministers. However, although ACMSF appointments are not made by Ministers, the Agency has decided that it would nevertheless be right to comply with OCPA guidance as best practice.

Periods of appointment

3. To ensure continuity, appointments to the ACMSF are staggered (usually for periods of 3 or 4 years) so that only a small proportion of Members require to be appointed, re-appointed or retire each year.

Spread of expertise

4. A wide spectrum of skills and expertise is available to the ACMSF through its Members. They are currently drawn from, food microbiology, food processing, food research, food retailing, commercial catering, environmental health, human epidemiology, medical microbiology, public health medicine, veterinary medicine, and virology. The Committee also has one consumer member.

5. Members are appointed on an individual basis, for their personal expertise and experience, not to represent a particular interest group.

New appointments in 2020

6. One new member was appointed to the ACMSF in 2020⁵⁶: Dr Nicol Janecko (expertise: Epidemiology and Food Microbiology Research). Her appointment runs from June 2020 until May 2023.

Retirements and resignations in 2020

7. The following members retired from ACMSF after serving on the Committee for 10 years. Professor David McDowell (Committee deputy chair) and Mr David Nuttall. Their term ended on 31 March 2020.

8. Dr Bob Adak (expert on human epidemiology) and Professor Miren Iturriza-Gómara (expert on virology) resigned their membership in summer 2020.

Committee and Sub-Group meetings

9. The full Committee met thrice in 2020. Meetings in January and October (chaired by Professor Bill Keevil) were plenary meetings open to the public. The June meeting was a horizon scanning workshop (chaired by Dr Roy Betts) which was held in closed session.
10. The Ad Hoc Group on non-proteolytic *Clostridium botulinum* and vacuum and modified atmosphere packaged foods (Chair: Professor David McDowell) met once in 2020. See paragraphs 24 - 38.
11. The Ad Hoc Group on quaternary ammonium compounds (QACs) and biocides used in food processing (Chair: Dr Gary Barker) did not meet in 2020. See paragraphs 97 - 103 for details of the group's business.
12. The subgroup on microbiological risk assessments in relation to food incidents (Chair: Dr Gary Barker) met once in 2020. Other group business was carried out via e-correspondence. See summary of group's activities at paragraph 104 - 108. Prof McDowell chaired this group before his tenure on the Committee expired.
13. The Working Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (Chair: Professor Bill Keevil) carried out its business via e-correspondence. Overview of the group's activities is available at paragraphs 109 - 110. Prof McDowell chaired this group before his tenure on the Committee expired. Although he remains a co-opted member.
14. Surveillance Working Group (Chair: Dr Roy Betts) carried out its activities via e-correspondence. See summary of group's activities at paragraph 111.

Current membership and Declarations of Interests

15. Full details of the membership of the Committee and its Working and *Ad Hoc* Groups are given in Annex III. A Register of Members' Interests is at Annex IV. In addition to the interests notified to the Secretariat and recorded at Annex IV, Members are required to declare any direct commercial interest in matters under discussion at each meeting, in accordance with the ACMSF's Code of Practice (Annex V). Declarations made are recorded in the minutes of each meeting.

Personal liability

16. In 1999, the Secretary of State for Health undertook to indemnify ACMSF Members against all liability in respect of any action or claim brought against them individually or collectively by reason of the performance of their duties as

Members (Annual Report 1999⁸ paragraph 6 and Annex III). In 2002, the Secretariat asked the FSA to review this undertaking, given the fact that, since 2000, the ACMSF had reported to the FSA where previously it had reported to UK Health and Agriculture Ministers. In March 2004, the Food Standards Agency gave a new undertaking of indemnification in its name, which superseded the earlier undertaking given by the Secretary of State (see Annex IV of 2004 Annual Report 14).

Openness

Improving public access

17. The ACMSF is committed to opening up its work to greater public scrutiny. The agendas, minutes, and papers (subject to rare exceptions on grounds of commercial or other sensitivity) for the full Committee's meetings are publicly available and are posted on the ACMSF website. Also, on the Committee's website are summaries of meetings of the Working and *Ad Hoc* groups. ACMSF's website can be found at: <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/>

18. The Committee also has an e-mail address ACMSF@food.gov.uk

19. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, ACMSF has adopted the model publication scheme which sets out information about the Committee's publications and policies.

Open meetings

20. Following the recommendations flowing from the FSA's Review of Scientific Committees⁵⁷, the ACMSF decided that from 2003 onwards all its full Committee meetings should be held in public.

21. The plenary meetings in 2020 were held in London on 30 January at the FSA's London Office: Clive House 70 Petty France London SW1H 9EX and 22 October a virtual meeting held via Microsoft Teams.

22. ACMSF open meetings follow a common format. Time is set aside following the day's business for members of the public and others present to make statements and to ask questions about the ACMSF's work. The names of participants, the organisations they represent, and details of any statements made, questions asked and the Committee's response, are recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Work of the other advisory Committees and cross-membership

23. The Secretariat provided members with regular reports of the work of other Scientific Advisory Committees advising the FSA in 2020. David Nutall was a member of the Social Science subgroup on the Food and You Surveys. His term on the Committee ended on 31 March 2020.