

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD
(ACMSF)**

INFORMATION PAPER

ABOUT THE ACMSF

- the Committee was established in December 1990 on the recommendations of the Richmond Committee to provide the Government with independent expert scientific advice on the microbiological safety of food;
- its new terms of reference, to reflect the fact that the Committee now reports to the Food Standards Agency, are being discussed under item 5 of the 5 December 2000 agenda (see also ACM/497);
- the Committee's Chairman is Professor Douglas Georgala, an independent scientific consultant and retired Director of the Institute of Food Research.
- there are currently 14 members (in addition to the Chairman);
- the ACMSF is concerned with the whole food chain. This is reflected in the membership which is drawn from a wide spectrum of disciplines;
- the range of skills and expertise among members currently embraces microbiology, medicine, veterinary medicine, the food industry (including production, processing and retailing), food science and research, and public and environmental health;
- in addition, the Committee has 2 consumer/lay representatives;
- the ACMSF is committed to opening up its work to greater public scrutiny. It's agendas, minutes and papers (subject to certain exceptions on grounds of commercial or other sensitivity) are now publicly-available.

A press release is issued after each of the Committee's routine quarterly meetings;

- this is the first of the ACMSF's routine quarterly meetings to be held in public, an exercise which the Committee expects to repeat in future years;

- the Committee publishes an Annual Report on its work. This also contains a Register of Members' Interests;

- the Committee operates in accordance with the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The code of practice under which the Committee operates can be found at Annex IV of the Committee's 1999 Annual Report;

- the Committee provides advice to the Food Standards Agency (previously to UK Health and Agriculture Ministers) on the human health implications of a wide range of food safety issues. These may either have been referred to the Committee by the FSA or initiated by the Committee itself. Over the past 2 years, topics addressed include raw milk, agricultural disposal of sewage sludge, *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*, infectious salmon anaemia, *Clostridium botulinum*, in-shell egg pasteurisation, and *Listeria monocytogenes*;

- in addition to these *ad hoc* questions, the Committee has also undertaken in-depth studies of particular topics. It has issued subject-specific reports on :-

- ♣ vacuum packaging and associated processes;

- ♣ *Salmonella* in eggs;

- ♣ *Campylobacter*;

- ♣ VTEC;

- ♣ poultry meat;

- ♣ foodborne viral infections;

- ♣ microbial antibiotic resistance.

- a second Report on *Salmonella* in Eggs will be submitted to the FSA shortly.

Further information about the Committee can be obtained through the ACMSF Secretariat, Room 429A, PO Box 31307, Ergon House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3WG.

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Information is also available on the Committee's webpages on the Food Standards Agency's website at :-

www.foodstandards.gov.uk/committees.acmsf.summary.htm

Secretariat

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