

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 terms of reference are ***to assess the risk to humans from microorganisms which are used, or occur, in or on food, and to advise the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on any matters relating to the microbiological safety of food,***
- the Committee's Chairman is Professor Douglas Georgala, an independent scientific consultant and retired Director of the Institute of Food Research.
- there are currently 18 members (in addition to the Chairman) – see Annex for details;
- 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 commercial catering, environmental health, food microbiology, food processing, food research, food retailing, human epidemiology, medical microbiology, public health medicine, veterinary medicine, and virology. The Committee also has an overseas representative, a member with knowledge of small and medium sized enterprises, and 2 lay/consumer members;
- the ACMSF is committed to opening up its work to greater public scrutiny. Its 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 second 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 recent past, topics addressed include *Campylobacter*, *Mycobacterium avium* subsp. *paratuberculosis*, *Clostridium botulinum*, *Salmonella* in eggs and *Listeria monocytogenes*;
- in addition to these *ad hoc* questions, the Committee has also undertaken in-depth studies of particular topics. It has recently reported to the FSA on *Mycobacterium bovis*. The Committee has also issued subject-specific reports (publication dates shown in brackets) on :-
 - ♣ vacuum packaging and associated processes (1992);
 - ♣ *Salmonella* in eggs (1993);
 - ♣ *Campylobacter* (1993);
 - ♣ VTEC (1995);
 - ♣ poultry meat ((1996);
 - ♣ foodborne viral infections (1998);
 - ♣ microbial antibiotic resistance (1999);
 - ♣ *Salmonella* in Eggs (Second Report) (2001);
- a Working Group to look again at *Campylobacter*, following the interim report issued in 1993, will commence work in 2002.

Further information about the Committee can be obtained through the ACMSF Secretariat, Room 808C, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH. Tel : 0207 276 8946/8947/8948. Fax : 0207 276 8907.

E. mail acmsf@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

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

<http://www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/microbiogsafety>

**Secretariat
November 2001**

ANNEX

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

Chairman	
Professor Douglas Georgala	Independent scientific consultant. Retired Director of the Institute of Food Research.
Members	
Dr Geoffrey Andrews	Head of Technical Services, Northern Foods plc. (Food processing)
Dr David Brown	Director, Enteric, Respiratory and Neurological Virus Laboratory, Central Public Health Laboratory. (Virology)
Ms Susan Davies	Principal Policy Adviser, Consumers' Association. (Consumer)
Professor Michael Gasson	Head of Food Safety Science Division, Institute of Food Research. (Food research)
Dr Katherine Hadley	Senior Lecturer, Department of Immunology and Bacteriology, University of Glasgow. Honorary Consultant in Clinical Microbiology, North Glasgow University Hospitals NHS Trust, Western Infirmary, Glasgow. (Medical microbiology)
Professor Tom Humphrey	Professor of Food Safety, University of Bristol. (Food microbiology)
Professor Paul Hunter	Professor of Health Protection, University of East Anglia. (Epidemiology)
Mrs Patricia Jefford	Environmental Health Services Manager, Graveshaam Borough Council. (Environmental health)
Professor Mac Johnston	Professor of Veterinary Public Health, Royal Veterinary College, University of London. (Veterinary medicine)
Mr Alec Kyriakides	Head of Product Safety, Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd. (Food retailing)
Ms Eva Lewis	Computer consultant. (Consumer)
Professor Patience Mensah	Head of the Bacteriology Unit, Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, University of Ghana. Visiting E P Abraham Research Fellow, St Hilda's College, Oxford. (Overseas representative)
Dr Sarah O'Brien	Head of Gastrointestinal Diseases Division, Public Health Laboratory Service Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre. (Public Health Laboratory Service)
Mr Brian Peirce	Hotel owner. (Commercial catering)
Mr David Piccaver	Farmer. (Small and medium size enterprises)
Dr Quentin Sandifer	Executive Director of Public Health, Iechyd Morgannwg Health Authority. (Public health medicine)
Professor Cairns Smith	Professor of Public Health, University of Aberdeen. Director of the Institute of Applied Health Sciences. (Public health medicine)
Dr Tim Wyatt	Consultant Clinical Scientist, Mater Hospital Trust, Belfast. (Medicine)