

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

### INFORMATION PAPER

#### **Role of Assessors, Members and Secretariat on the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF)**

Following the recent quinquennial review of the ACMSF one of the recommendations (recommendation 11) in the report was for clarification to be provided on the role and responsibilities of assessors on the Committee. Please see outlined below for your information the role of an assessor together with details of the role of Members and the Secretariat.

#### **Departmental assessors**

Meetings of the ACMSF and its Groups may be attended by Departmental Assessors. The Assessors are currently nominated by, and are drawn from, those with relevant policy interests and responsibilities in the Food Standards Agency (including FSA Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Assessors are not members of the ACMSF and do not participate in Committee business in the manner of members.

The role of an Assessor is to keep their parent Department or Agency informed about the Committee's work and act as a conduit for the exchange of information. They do this by:

- advising the Committee on relevant policy developments and the implications of Committee proposals
- informing the Committee's work through the provision of information
- being informed by the Committee on matters of mutual interest
- sharing with the Secretariat the responsibility of ensuring that information is not needlessly withheld from the Committee. Assessors should make the Committee aware of the existence of any information that has been withheld from the Committee on the basis that it is exempt from disclosure under Freedom of Information legislation unless that legislation provides a basis for not doing so.
- ensuring that their parent Department or Agency is promptly informed of any matters which may require a response from Government.

#### **ACMSF Assessors:**

Ms Liz Redmond (FSA HQ)  
Dr Jacqui McElhinney (FSA Scotland)  
Mr Steve Wearne (FSA Wales)  
Dr Susanne Boyd (FSA Northern Ireland)  
Mr Stephen Wyllie (Defra)

## **Members**

### **Role of Committee members**

ACMSF meets 3 times a year and each meeting usually last half a day.

Members have collective responsibility for the operation of the Committee. They must engage fully in collective consideration of the issues, taking account of the full range of relevant factors, including any guidance issued by the FSA.

In general terms, the FSA asks members to spend time studying the papers in preparation for meetings, participate in the meetings and undertake actions which arise from the discussions. Members may also be asked to consider items by post if advice is needed before the next meeting. The committees often set up sub-groups and in most cases members may elect to join those, as well as identifying additional Members with the required expertise. The sub-groups are more informal and often their members are much more involved in preparing reviews/reports.

An important point is that the workload is arranged so that the Committee Chair and members focus on the key data. They do not have to look at all of the primary data personally. The Secretariats summarise the data in an unbiased format and make available the key primary literature for members to check, if required.

### **The Secretariat**

The primary function of the Secretariat is to facilitate the business of the Committee. This includes supporting the Committee by arranging its meetings, assembling and analysing information, and recording conclusions. An important task is ensuring that proceedings of the Committee are properly documented and recorded. The Secretariat is also a source of advice and guidance to members on procedures and processes.

The ACMSF Secretariat is drawn from staff of the FSA. However, it is the responsibility of the Secretariat to be an impartial and disinterested reporter and at all times to respect the Committee's independent role. The Secretariat is required to guard against introducing bias during the preparation of papers, during meetings, or in the reporting of the Committee's deliberations.

#### **ACMSF Secretariat:**

Ms Geraldine Hoad (Administrative Secretary)  
Dr Paul Cook (Scientific Secretary)  
Dr Sophie Rollinson (Secretariat member)  
Mr Adekunle Adeoye (Secretariat member)  
Ms Sarah Butler (Secretariat member)

Secretariat  
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