

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD**  
**INFORMATION PAPER**

**Response to the Recommendations of the 2011 Quinquennial Review of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF)**

Twelve recommendations were made following the Quinquennial Review of the ACMSF. These were discussed by the Committee at their June 2011 meeting. The Committee's response to each recommendation is given below.

A number of the recommendations (3, 5, 10, 11) are potentially relevant across all Agency Scientific Advisory Committees and the Chief Scientist Team may provide an additional separate response to these recommendations.

Recommendation	ACMSF response
<p><i>1. The Chair and the Secretariat should ensure that the work of the Committee continues to be focused on where it can have most impact, value and relevance.</i></p>	<p>The Committee suggests this recommendation is linked to recommendations 2 and 3 on the process for developing the Committee's work plan and horizon scanning. A more formal procedure for planning the ACMSFs work programme will be developed. The programme will be reviewed by the Committee and Secretariat to ensure work continues to focus on areas which have most value and relevance.</p>
<p><i>2. Horizon scanning should be undertaken on an annual basis.</i></p>	<p>The Committee will undertake horizon scanning more frequently. This will feed into the process for reviewing and refreshing the ACMSF's work programme to ensure horizon scanning work is balanced against existing commitments of the Committee and its subgroups.</p>
<p><i>3. The process for determining the work programme should be improved and a forward work plan published with proposed timescales for the work.</i></p>	<p>A more formal procedure for planning the ACMSFs work programme will be developed. The programme will be reviewed by the Committee and Secretariat. The work programme will be published on the ACMSF website. The Committee must maintain the flexibility to consider urgent issues that arise unpredicted and</p>

	discussions scheduled in the work programme may therefore be deferred.
<b>4.</b> <i>Completed work should be summarised in terms of outcomes and impact achieved. This should be updated to track known outcomes and impacts over time.</i>	<p>There are challenges in measuring the outcome and impact of risk assessment advice and resource considerations in providing this level of information for every issue discussed by the Committee. Where ACMSF recommendations result in a reconsideration of FSA risk management advice the outcome and impact will be summarised and provided in the Committees' annual report.</p> <p>The Secretariat will also provide quick feedback to the Committee on significant issues such as consideration of ACMSF advice taken into account in FSA Board discussions or in incident management. The matters arising papers already provide a level of feedback on previous Committee discussions and identified actions</p>
<b>5.</b> <i>It is recommended that the Committee takes greater steps to show evidence of scientific rigour by using the FSA's Good Practice Guidelines and Science Checklist more explicitly and also routinely considering whether peer reviews are appropriate for work on which the Committee's decisions are based</i>	<p>The Committee will continue to use the Science Checklist and Good Practice Guidelines in producing their reports and will consider how this can be done more explicitly.</p> <p>The need for peer-review will be considered on a case-by-case basis, for example when the Committee does not have the relevant expertise to assess information required for their deliberations.</p>
<b>6.</b> <i>There is currently no ACMSF assessor appointed for Northern Ireland and it is recommended that FSA addresses that in the near future.</i>	A Northern Ireland assessor will be appointed to the Committee.
<b>7.</b> <i>The Chair and Secretariat should consider Secretariat resources in terms of scientific expertise and amount of resource available when planning ACMSF's work programme and identify and address any gaps as appropriate.</i>	Scientific Secretariat resources are considered in the planning of ACMSF work and the work of ACMSF sub-groups. Resources are however limited and can be affected by other FSA priorities. Development and regular review of the Committees' work plan (see recommendation 3) will facilitate future Secretariat resource planning.

<p><b>8.</b> <i>The Committee should review the balance of expertise on the Committee at regular intervals in the context of the future work programme for the Committee.</i></p>	<p>The Secretariat and the Chair will continue to review the balance of expertise on the Committee ahead of new appointments and re-appointments. The opportunity already exists to co-opt specific external expertise onto ACMSF sub-groups if required and this flexibility is frequently used.</p>
<p><b>9.</b> <i>It is recommended that in future the recruitment process for new members starts earlier, so that the new members are in place either before or by the end of the terms of the retiring members to provide continuity of membership for the Committee and the sub group work.</i></p>	<p>The Secretariat will endeavour to have new members in place by the end of the terms of retiring members for future appointments rounds.</p>
<p><b>10.</b> <i>It is recommended that new members have an induction meeting with the Secretariat.</i></p>	<p>Existing induction arrangements will be built on and a short induction programme developed for new members.</p>
<p><b>11.</b> <i>There is a need to clarify the role and responsibilities of the assessors on the Committee.</i></p>	<p>The role of assessors will be clarified by the Chair at the next open meeting.</p>
<p><b>12.</b> <i>The work of the ad hoc groups should in general be run to a tighter timescale with the timescale being agreed at the start of the group's work.</i></p>	<p>Ad-hoc groups will be encouraged to produce a work plan and anticipated timeline for their deliberations. The timescale for sub-group work needs to be balanced against Secretariat resource, Member availability and the priority and urgency of the subject matter.</p>

**Secretariat  
September 2011**