
**The Advisory Committee on the Microbiological
Safety of Food (ACMSF)**

A Report of the 2011 Quinquennial Review

March 2011

Good Practice and Recommendations

	Paragraph reference
Examples of good practice	
1. The role and remit of the Committee is clearly defined and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance.	9
2. The work undertaken by the Committee reflects the scope of that remit.	11
3. ACMSF publishes an annual report of its activities.	18
4. At each meeting the ACMSF Secretariat provides an update on the work of other FSA advisory committees in an information paper.	29
5. The administrative support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard.	35
6. ACMSF's meetings are an example of good practice in terms of well run open meetings which, together with the agenda, papers and minutes of each meeting available on ACMSF's website, provide a high level of openness and transparency.	13, 45 & 46
Recommendations	
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.	11
2. Horizon scanning should be undertaken on an annual basis.	15
3. The process for determining the work programme should be improved and a forward work plan published with proposed timescales for the work.	16 & 17
4. Completed work should be summarised in terms of outcomes and impact achieved. This should be updated to track known outcomes and impacts over time.	18
5. 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.	23 & 24
6. There is currently no ACMSF assessor appointed for Northern Ireland and it is recommended that FSA addresses that in the near future.	26
7. 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.	37
8. 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.	40
9. 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.	41
10. It is recommended that new members have an induction meeting with the Secretariat.	42
11. There is a need to clarify the role and responsibilities of the assessors on the Committee.	44
12. 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.	49

Work Programme

14. The primary role of each of the FSA's Scientific Committees is to advise on the specific issues that are referred to it by the FSA and the other Departments to which it responds. Members of the Committees should also be free to propose additional items for consideration and the final decision on whether such issues should be included on the agenda should lie with the individual committee Chair, taking account of competing priorities.
15. ACMSF members are specifically invited to put forward suggestions for additional items for consideration. This is primarily undertaken by a Horizon Scanning paper and meeting agenda item where proposed future work is discussed. This was discussed at the September 2010 meeting¹⁵ and followed up in the January 2011 meeting¹⁶. However, prior to that, it had not been discussed since 2006. It is recommended that Horizon Scanning is undertaken on an annual basis and that members are encouraged to be proactive in suggesting items for consideration at any time, drawing on their specific areas of expertise.
16. It is recommended that the results of the recent Horizon Scanning process be considered further by the Committee and if appropriate developed into an agreed forward work plan for ACMSF, together with on-going work and other work planned by FSA. The work plan should include:
- Prioritisation of the issues in an appropriate way, for example in terms of importance, urgency and impact.
 - A proposed timescale for addressing each item. This should feed into to an overall time-plan for the Committee's work, drawing on the prioritisation and allowing time for high priority items to be addressed at short notice as they arise.
 - Identification of the resources required to address each item within the proposed timescale including member and Secretariat resources as well as the potential need to co-opt additional expertise and involve other committees as required.
 - Identification of the most appropriate approach to address each issue in the context of the proposed timescale and resource availability, for example, whether the most appropriate approach is to address the item in full committee discussions or whether to set up a working group.

¹⁵ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2010/acmsf200910/acmsfagenda230910>

¹⁶ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2011/acmsf200111/acmsfagenda200111>

17. Once agreed by the members, the forward work plan for each year should be published on the Committee's website so as to meet the publication requirement of the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees¹⁷.
18. ACMSF publishes an annual report¹⁸ of its activities which is an example of good practice. It is recommended that in addition to the annual report, when work is completed by ACMSF, a brief bullet point summary of the work undertaken, the outcomes of the work and its known impact is produced by the Secretariat. This should be added to over-time, so that the impact of the work can be tracked. For example, it could record the risk management options that have been considered, the risk management option adopted, results of the implementation of the risk management option; or alternatively, research recommended, progress with the research recommendation and whether the research is to be funded etc. This should be a brief bullet point document with references to the documents where the detail is provided.
19. Such an approach to determining the work programme and reporting on the work achieved will enable the Chair and Secretariat to ensure that the potential value contributed by ACMSF is maximised and to provide both internal and external stakeholders with a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and the anticipated impact of the work as well as the outcome of that work and impact achieved.

Summary

- ❖ Horizon scanning should be undertaken on an annual basis.
- ❖ The process for determining the work programme should be improved and a forward work plan published with proposed timescales for the work.
- ❖ ACMSF publishes an annual report of its activities which is an example of good practice.
- ❖ Completed work should be summarised in terms of outcomes and impact achieved. This should be updated to track known outcomes and impacts over time.

¹⁷ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/qoscience/docs/c/cop-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfreps/acmsfannualreports>