

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD
INFORMATION PAPER

Revised ACMSF Code of Practice

Members' attention is drawn to the attached revised Code of Practice for the Committee. The paragraphs describing the role of Departmental Assessors have been revised in line with the Government Office for Science Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees published in December 2007.

Secretariat
June 2008

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

Public service values

The members of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food must at all times

- observe the highest standards of **impartiality, integrity and objectivity** in relation to the advice they provide and the management of this Committee;
- be accountable, through the Food Standards Agency (the Agency) and, ultimately, Ministers, to Parliament and the public for the Committee's activities and for the standard of advice it provides.

The Ministers of the sponsoring department (the Agency) are answerable to Parliament for the policies and performance of this Committee, including the policy framework within which it operates.

Standards in public life

All Committee members must :

- follow the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Annex 1);
- comply with this Code, and ensure they understand their duties, rights and responsibilities, and that they are familiar with the functions and role of this Committee and any relevant statements of Government policy. If necessary, members should consider undertaking relevant training to assist them in carrying out their role;
- not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purpose, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations; and
- not hold any paid or high-profile unpaid posts in a political party, and not engage in specific political activities on matters directly affecting the work of this Committee. When engaging in other political activities, Committee members should be conscious of their public role and exercise proper discretion. These restrictions do not apply to MPs (in those cases where MPs are eligible to be appointed), to local councillors, or to Peers in relation to their conduct in the House of Lords.

Role of Committee members

Members have collective responsibility for the operation of this 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 Agency;
- ensure that they adhere to the Agency's Code of Practice on Openness (including prompt responses to public requests for information); agree an Annual Report; and, where practicable and appropriate, provide suitable opportunities to open up the work of the Committee to public scrutiny;
- follow Agency guidelines on divulging any information provided to the Committee in confidence;
- ensure that an appropriate response is provided to complaints and other correspondence, if necessary with reference to the Agency; and
- ensure that the Committee does not exceed its powers or functions.

Individual members should inform the Chair (or the Secretariat on his behalf) if they are invited to speak in public in their capacity as a Committee member.

Communications between the Committee and the Agency will generally be through the Chair except where the Committee has agreed that an individual member should act on its behalf. Nevertheless, any member has the right of access to the Chair of the Agency on any matter which he or she believes raises important issues relating to his or her duties as a Committee member. In such cases, the agreement of the rest of the Committee should normally be sought.

Individual members can be removed from office by the Chair of the Agency if, in the view of the Chair of the Agency, they fail to carry out the duties of office or are otherwise unable or unfit to carry out those duties.

The role of the Chair

The Chair has particular responsibility for providing effective leadership on the issues above. In addition, the Chair is responsible for:

- ensuring that the Committee meets at appropriate intervals, and that the minutes of meetings and any reports to the Agency accurately record the decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual members;
- representing the views of the Committee to the general public, notifying and, where appropriate, consulting the Agency, in advance where possible; and

- ensuring that new members are briefed on appointment (and their training needs considered), and providing an assessment of their performance, on request, when members are considered for re-appointment to the Committee or for appointment to the board of some other public body.

DEPARTMENTAL ASSESSORS AND THE SECRETARIAT

Departmental assessors

Meetings of the ACMSF and its Groups are 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 and Wales), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute, Northern Ireland. Assessors are not members of the ACMSF and do not participate in Committee business in the manner of members. The role of the Assessors includes sharing with the secretariat the responsibility of ensuring that information is not unnecessarily 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. Assessors keep their parent Departments informed about the Committee's work and act as a conduit for the exchange of information; advising the Committee on relevant policy developments and the implications of ACMSF proposals; informing ACMSF work through the provision of information; and being informed by the Committee on matters of mutual interest. Assessors are charged with ensuring that their parent Departments are promptly informed of any matters which may require a response from Government.

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 Food Standards Agency. 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. Current contact details for the ACMSF Secretariat are shown in Annex B.

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interests.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

ACMSF SECRETARIAT CONTACT DETAILS

ACMSF Secretariat
 Food Standards Agency
 Aviation House
 125 Kingsway
 London
WC2B 6NH

Tel : 0207 276 plus extension
 Fax : 0207 276 8907

Position	Name	Room No.	Tel extension	E-mail address
Administrative Secretary	Dr Lucy Foster	813C	8951	lucy.foster@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
Scientific Secretary	Dr Paul Cook	812C	8950	paul.cook@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
Secretariat member	Mr Adekunle Adeoye	808C	8946	adekunle.adeoye@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
Secretariat member	Miss Sarah Butler	808C	8947	sarah.butler@foodstandard.gsi.gov.uk
Secretariat member	Mr Saliqu Rahman	808C	8948	saliqu.rahman@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Membership of the ACMSF

Chair

Professor Sarah O'Brien
Consultant in Public Health Medicine, Professor of Health Sciences and
Epidemiology, University of Manchester.

Members

Mr John Bassett
Microbiological risk assessor, Unilever Safety and Environmental Assurance
Centre

Dr David Brown
Director of the Virus Reference Department, HPA Centre for infections

Mrs Vivianne Buller
Consultant, Business Improvement Catering Consultancy

Professor John Coia
Consultant Clinical Microbiologist, Director of the Scottish Salmonella
reference laboratory, Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
at the University of Glasgow

Professor Michael Gasson
Head of Food Safety Science Division, Institute of Food Research

Mrs Rosie Glazebrook
Consumer representative

Dr Richard Holliman
Lead Consultant and Reader in clinical microbiology, St George's Hospital,
London.

Professor Tom Humphrey
Professor of Veterinary Bacterial Zoonoses, University of Bristol

Professor Paul Hunter
Professor of Health Protection, University of East Anglia, School of Medicine
Health Policy and Practice

Mr Alec Kyriakides
Head of Product Safety, Sainsbury's Supermarkets

Mr Paul McMullin
Senior Veterinarian and Managing Director, Poultry Health Services

Dr Sally Millership
Consultant in Communicable Disease Control, Essex Health Protection Unit
and Honorary Consultant in Microbiology

Mrs Jenny Morris
Food safety policy officer, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

Mr Robert Rees
International Food Consultant and Chef

Professor Peter Williams
Professor of Microbiology in the Department of Genetics, University of
Leicester