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

A Report of the 2011 Quinquennial Review

March 2011

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Summary and Recommendations

Summary

There is a continuing need for ACMSF, with value to the FSA, other Government Departments and stakeholders. The process for determining the work programme should be improved to ensure that the potential value contributed is maximised. Completed work should be summarised in terms of outcomes and impact achieved over time.

Objectives and roles

- There is a continuing need for ACMSF, with value to the FSA, other Government Departments and stakeholders.
- The role and remit of the Committee is clearly defined and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance.
- The work of the Committee reflects the scope of that remit. However, 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.
- Stakeholder interest in the work of ACMSF is evident from the number of stakeholders that attend ACMSF's open meetings.

Work Programme

- 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.

Research and Scientific Rigour

- Consistent and appropriate scientific support is in general provided by the Secretariat and it is important for that level of support to be continued.
- It is however 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.

Seeking and Using the Committee's Advice

- In general ACMSF follows good practice in formulating and presenting its advice.
- There is currently no ACMSF assessor appointed for Northern Ireland and it is recommended that FSA addresses that in the near future.

Working with other Committees

- At each meeting the ACMSF Secretariat provides an update on the work of other advisory committees in an information paper, which is an example of good practice.
- ACMSF has worked and continues to work with other FSA committees as and when appropriate.

- The Secretariat should continue to keep abreast of microbiological safety of food issues being addressed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Secretariat

- The administrative support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard.
- 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.

Members and Assessors

- 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.
- 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.
- It is recommended that new members have an induction meeting with the Secretariat.
- There is a need to clarify the role and responsibilities of assessors on the Committee.

Meetings

- 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.
- 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 sub group's work.

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
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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

Background

Terms of Reference of Review

1. The 2002 Food Standards Agency (FSA) Report of the Review of Scientific Committees¹ recommended that all Scientific Advisory Committees should be reviewed at least once every five years to determine 'whether each committee fulfils its intended function and whether all the current committees are still needed'.
2. The main objectives of this review are to assess:
 - The need for the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF);
 - Whether the role and remit of the Committee is clearly defined and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance;
 - The methods of operation and effectiveness, including the Committee's terms of reference and composition and the openness and transparency of its procedures (including with reference to the standards set out in the Code Of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees² and the Good Practice Guidelines³);
 - The relationships between the Committee, the commissioning department and other bodies with related responsibilities (in particular the other scientific advisory committees that advise the Agency); and
 - The implementation of the 2002 review recommendations, the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees and the current governance structures.

Methodology

3. The work involved in undertaking this review included:
 - A review of ACMSF's website⁴ and ACMSF documentation including minutes, meeting papers and publications published on its website;
 - Attending the ACMSF open meeting on 20th January 2011;
 - Attending the ACMSF's Ad Hoc Group on Vulnerable Groups meeting on 14th February 2011;

¹ <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/commswork/scicomrev>

² <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/goscience/docs/c/cop-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf> (At the time of this review a consultation on an updated Code of Practice had closed, and a revised Code was due to be published imminently.)

³ <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/goodpracguide.pdf>

⁴ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/>

- Interviews with and written comments from 30 internal and external stakeholders (as listed in the Appendix of this report).
4. The review was undertaken with specific reference to:
- The FSA's 2002 Report of the Review of Scientific Committees⁵;
 - The Government Office for Science Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees, December 2007⁶;
 - The FSA's Good Practice Guidelines for the Independent Scientific Advisory Committees, December 2006⁷;
 - The FSA's Science Checklist⁸.

Background to ACMSF

5. ACMSF provides expert advice to Government on questions relating to microbiological issues and food. The Committee provides advice in response to requests from the FSA and also on matters that Committee members themselves identify as important.
6. The Committee's terms of reference as stated on its website⁹ is to assess the risk to humans of microorganisms which are used, or occur, in or on food, and to advise the FSA on any matters relating to the microbiological safety of food.
7. Members are appointed for their individual expertise and experience and are not representative of any sector or organisation. There are currently 11 members and a Chair, with a recruitment exercise in progress for four new members to replace four members who retired from the Committee in March 2011. Member biographies are provided on ACMSF's website¹⁰ and further details provided in the annual report.
8. The Committee meets three times a year, although only two meetings were held in 2010. The agenda, papers and minutes of each meeting are provided on ACMSF's website¹¹. The Committee is supported in its work by a Secretariat provided from the FSA. ACMSF has no independent budget or expenditure. The FSA covers the costs for the operation of the Committee.

⁵ <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/commswork/scicomrev>

⁶ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/goscience/docs/c/cop-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/commswork/good>

⁸ <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/commswork/scienceschecklist/>

⁹ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/>

¹⁰ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmembers/>

¹¹ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/>

Objectives and Roles

9. The objectives and roles of ACMSF are summarised in the terms of reference (see paragraph 6 above). The role and remit of the Committee is clearly defined and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance.
10. The work of the Committee reflects the scope of its remit. For example, a recent open meeting agenda item was Raw Milk¹², where the Committee was asked to review available data on the microbiological quality and safety of raw milk for direct human consumption to assess the current risks to humans. Recent ACMSF microbiology reports¹³ include the report on the Increased Incidence of Listeriosis in the UK and the report on Botulism in Sheep and Goats. The Committee's current sub groups are an ad hoc group addressing Vulnerable Groups (which produced the report on Increased Incidence of Listeriosis in the UK), an ad hoc group addressing Foodborne Viral Infections, a Surveillance working group and an Emerging Pathogens working group.
11. However, 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 (see section of this review on "Work Programme" for further details).
12. The regular presence at the main Committee meetings and sub-group meetings of an official from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) means that Defra is aware of the work undertaken by ACMSF.
13. Stakeholder interest in the work of ACMSF is evident from the number of stakeholders that attend ACMSF's open meetings including industry bodies, food manufacturers and retailers, and the work undertaken for this review has confirmed that there is considerable value of ACMSF to stakeholders. The list of stakeholder attendees is available in the minutes of each meeting¹⁴. The open meetings allow for stakeholders attending the meetings to raise comments and queries at the end of the meeting which is an example of good practice and is appropriate for the ACMSF. That is separate from the FSA's continuing relationship with stakeholders on food safety including microbiological aspects which is outside of the remit of this review.

¹² <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2011/acmsf200111/acmsfagenda200111>

¹³ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfreps/acmsfreports>

¹⁴ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/>

Summary

- ❖ There is a continuing need for ACMSF, with value to the FSA, other Government Departments and stakeholders.
- ❖ The role and remit of the Committee is clearly defined and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance.
- ❖ The work of the Committee reflects the scope of that remit. However, 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.
- ❖ Stakeholder interest in the work of ACMSF is evident from the number of stakeholders that attend ACMSF's open meetings and the work undertaken for this review has confirmed that there is considerable value of ACMSF to stakeholders. The open meetings allow for stakeholders attending the meetings to raise comments and queries at the end of the meeting.

Paragraph reference

Examples of good practice

The role and remit of the Committee is clearly defined and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance.	9
The work undertaken by the Committee reflects the scope of that remit.	11

Recommendations

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
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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/goscience/docs/c/cop-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf>

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

	Paragraph reference
Examples of good practice	
ACMSF publishes an annual report of its activities	18
Recommendations	
Horizon scanning should be undertaken on an annual basis.	15
The process for determining the work programme should be improved and a forward work plan published with proposed timescales for the work.	16 & 17
Completed work should be summarised in terms of outcomes and impact achieved. This should be updated to track outcomes and impacts over time.	18

Research and Scientific Rigour

20. A number of ACMSF recommendations include recommendations for research to be undertaken. For example, specific recommendations for research were made by the ad hoc group on Vulnerable Groups in its report on the Increased Incidence of Listeriosis in the UK¹⁹.
21. ACMSF should continue to be kept informed of the progress of research it has recommended in terms of whether the research has been commissioned and the progress of the commissioned research in terms of its timescale for completion. If the research recommended by ACMSF is not commissioned ACMSF should be informed and have the opportunity to discuss that decision and the implications and update its statement if appropriate.
22. Much of ACMSF's work is to review data put to them, for example to review data on the microbiological quality and safety of raw milk for direct human consumption to assess the current risks to consumers²⁰.
23. Consistent and appropriate scientific support is in general provided by the Secretariat and it is important for that level of support to be continued. The Secretariat draws the FSA's Good Practice Guidelines²¹ and Science Checklist²² to the attention of members at key points, such as at the start of the work of a new ad hoc or working group. However, it is recommended that the Committee takes greater steps to show evidence of scientific rigour by using the Guidelines and Checklist more explicitly.
24. The Chair and Secretariat should also explicitly consider whether peer reviews would be appropriate for work on which the Committee's decisions are based. The Report on Infant Botulism²³ makes specific reference to peer review of the risk assessment in its acknowledgements, but it is not always clear in the Committee's reports whether peer review has been considered or undertaken. The Committee should as a matter of course consider whether its draft findings could benefit from peer review by a wider range of experts than those on the Committee. That is particularly important where the Committee is reviewing scientific data that has not been subject to peer review and where only one or two members have a detailed knowledge of the area.

¹⁹ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfrepos/acmsfreports>

²⁰ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2011/acmsf200111/acmsfagenda200111>

²¹ <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/commwork/good>

²² <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/commwork/scienc checklist/>

²³ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfrepos/acmsfreports>

Summary

- ❖ Consistent and appropriate scientific support is in general provided by the Secretariat and it is important for that level of support to be continued.
- ❖ It is however 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.

Paragraph reference

Recommendations

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

Seeking and Using the Committee's Advice

25. The Committee's advice is sought and used by the FSA. The FSA's Chief Scientist and Director of Food Safety are kept informed by the Secretariat of the issues being addressed by the Committee and the key outcomes. The range and type of recent issues addressed by ACMSF has not led to a need for issues to be referred to the FSA Board, although the Raw Milk²⁴ review was specifically requested by the FSA Board and the results of the review will be reported back to the Board.
26. The Defra assessor for ACMSF attends the ACMSF meetings regularly and communicates ACMSF work and advice within Defra. The ACMSF assessors for the FSA Scotland and Wales mainly follow ACMSF work remotely rather than by attending meetings and communicate ACMSF work and advice within their respective regions as they consider appropriate. There is currently no ACMSF assessor appointed for Northern Ireland and it is recommended that FSA addresses that in the near future.
27. The role of the FSA scientific committees is to advise on risk assessment. It is the FSA's responsibility to manage the risk based on their consideration of that risk assessment. Committees should not be asked to manage risks although they may be asked to provide scientific advice on risk management options. Evidence from the work undertaken for this review suggests that is currently understood and complied with by the Committee and that the Committee has a good understanding of the risk management context that their assessments will inform.
28. In general ACMSF follows good practice in formulating and presenting its advice, including defining the issues, seeking input, validation, drawing conclusions and communicating its conclusions.

Summary

- ❖ In general ACMSF follows good practice in formulating and presenting its advice.
- ❖ There is currently no ACMSF assessor appointed for Northern Ireland and it is recommended that FSA addresses that in the near future.

Paragraph
reference

Recommendations

There is currently no ACMSF assessor appointed for Northern Ireland and it is recommended that FSA addresses that in the near future. 26

²⁴ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2011/acmsf200111/acmsfagenda200111>

Working with other Committees

29. At each of its meetings the ACMSF Secretariat provides an update on the work of other FSA advisory committees in an information paper, for example, the update on other SACs²⁵ for the January 2011 meeting, which is an example of good practice.
30. The work undertaken for this review suggests that ACMSF has worked and continues to work with other FSA committees as and when appropriate.
31. For example, the ad hoc group on Vulnerable Groups in its report on the Increased Incidence of Listeriosis in the UK, recommended that the FSA referred the report to its Social Science Research Committee (SSRC) to consider the food behaviour, storage and handling practices of elderly people in the home. The SSRC subsequently set up a working group to review the available evidence and make recommendations for future research.
32. The Committee has also recognised the need to work with SSRC and the FSA's Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes in the future with regard to its Horizon Scanning item²⁶ on changing food preparation techniques and their impact on microbiological safety.
33. The Secretariat should continue to keep abreast of microbiological safety of food issues being addressed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and ensure that work undertaken does not duplicate work being undertaken at a European level.

Summary

- ❖ At each meeting the ACMSF Secretariat provides an update on the work of other advisory committees in an information paper, which is an example of good practice.
- ❖ ACMSF has worked and continues to work with other FSA committees as and when appropriate.
- ❖ The Secretariat should continue to keep abreast of microbiological safety of food issues being addressed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Paragraph
reference

Examples of good practice

At each meeting the ACMSF Secretariat provides an update on the work of other FSA advisory committees in an information paper.

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²⁵ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2011/acmsf200111/acmsfagenda200111>

²⁶ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2011/acmsf200111/acmsfagenda200111>

Secretariat

34. The Secretariat of ACMSF is staffed by five officials from the FSA. The Scientific Secretary spends 10% - 15% of his time on ACMSF related work and draws on input from other scientific staff in the FSA's Hygiene and Microbiology Division to draft scientific papers and reports for the Committee and to provide scientific support to ad hoc and working groups as required. The administrative function of the Secretariat is led by the Administrative Secretary who spends 20% - 25% of her time on ACMSF related work, supported by a team of three who spend approximately 50%, 80% and 90% of their time on ACMSF related work respectively.
35. The administrative support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard. For example, meeting arrangements are managed efficiently and effectively, and the meeting minutes are comprehensive and clearly written.
36. The level of scientific support provided by the Secretariat is generally considered to be of a high standard and the FSA should continue to ensure that appropriate senior Secretariat level reviews of papers are undertaken before papers are submitted to the Committee.
37. The Chair and Secretariat should consider Secretariat resources in terms of scientific expertise and amount of resource available when planning ACMSF's work programme (see the section in this review on "Work Programme" for further details), and identify and address any gaps as appropriate.
38. All members of the Secretariat attend the main open meetings and that is considered to be appropriate. The Chair and Secretariat should decide on the appropriate scientific and administrative Secretariat support required for each ad hoc and working group, depending on the specific requirements of that group.

Summary

- ❖ The administrative support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard.
- ❖ 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.

**Paragraph
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Examples of good practice

The administrative support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard. 35

Recommendations

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

Members and Assessors

39. ACMSF is a UK-wide Committee and is made up of independent experts appointed by UK Ministers and the Chairman of the FSA. Members are appointed for their individual expertise and experience and are not representative of any sector or organisation. There are currently 11 members and a Chair, with a recruitment exercise in progress for four new members to replace four members who retired from the Committee in March 2011. Member biographies are provided on ACMSF's website²⁷ and further details provided in the annual report.
40. The number of members and the range of expertise represented by the membership are generally considered to be appropriate but the Chair and Secretariat should ensure that, following the recruitment exercise, there is the correct balance of expertise including sufficient specific food microbiologist expertise as well as knowledge of food retailing, manufacturing and production. It is recommended that the Committee reviews the balance of expertise on the Committee at regular intervals in the context of the future work programme of the Committee.
41. The term of the four retiring members ended in March 2011 and it is intended that the recruitment process for the four new members will be completed and the new members appointed in time for the next Committee meeting on 19th May 2011. It is recommended that in future the recruitment process 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 meetings and the sub group work.
42. There is no formal induction process for new members, although new members are provided with a members' guidance document on appointment. It is recommended that new members have an induction meeting with the Secretariat.
43. At the time of this review the FSA was in the process of introducing a new assessment process for the Chairs and members of its advisory committees, and the assessment process had not yet been completed by ACMSF so it was not possible to assess the effectiveness of the process within this review.
44. There is a lack of awareness across the Committee's participants as to the role of assessors, both on the main Committee and in the ad hoc and working groups. Although the role of assessors is described in the ACMSF Code of Practice²⁸, the Chair should remind the members, assessors and officials of the role and responsibilities of officials and assessors on the Committee and how that translates at a practical level in terms of their input at main Committee meetings and ad hoc and working group meetings.

²⁷ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmembers/>

²⁸ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmembers/>

Summary

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ It is recommended that new members have an induction meeting with the Secretariat.
- ❖ There is a need to clarify the role and responsibilities of assessors on the Committee.

Paragraph reference

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It is recommended that new members have an induction meeting with the Secretariat.	42
There is a need to clarify the role and responsibilities of the assessors on the Committee.	44

Meetings

45. The Committee currently meets three times a year. 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.
46. The meetings are open so that interested parties can attend and observe the committee in operation and, although they cannot contribute to the meeting itself, they are invited to make statements or ask questions at the end of the meeting and those statements and comments and the Committee's response are included in the minutes which are subsequently published on the Committee's website.
47. Only two meetings were held in 2010 as one meeting was cancelled. Also the work undertaken for this review has suggested that the agenda for a number of recent meetings has been slightly "heavy" in terms of content, possibly limiting discussion of some of the more substantial issues. A more tightly defined work programme (see the section of this review on "Work Programme" for further details) will enable the Chair and Secretariat to ensure that the work and meetings are planned and scheduled in advance and help them to match meeting requirements against the workload.
48. The Chair and Secretariat should also ensure that the reason for each item on a meeting agenda being on the agenda is clear and that each item on the agenda contributes directly to the work of the Committee and is consistent with the priorities and work programme of the Committee.
49. As well as the three main Committee meetings each year, the Committee has a number of meetings for its sub groups. The Committee's current sub groups are an ad hoc group addressing Vulnerable Groups, an ad hoc group addressing Foodborne Viral Infections, a Surveillance working group and an Emerging Pathogens working group. The ad hoc groups are set up to address specific issues and typically produce a report at the end of its work. 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. A work plan should be developed with a schedule of meeting dates arranged accordingly and resource issues identified and addressed at the start of the work. The two working groups are permanent sub groups which meet when the need to address a specific issue arises.
50. The sub group meetings are not open meetings, but the sub group Chairs report on progress at each of the main Committee meetings and the work of the group is reported on and published on the website when the work has been completed. That is considered to be appropriate. The Committee has recently reviewed its policy on the openness of its sub group meetings and at the February 2011 meeting²⁹ the Committee concluded that the current approach is appropriate but also agreed that the ACMSF website would be updated to include information on the sub groups.

²⁹ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2011/acmsf200111/acmsfagenda200111>

51. ACMSF should continue to consider whether additional sub groups would be appropriate when considering the most appropriate approach to addressing items in its work plan.
52. Members are asked to declare any relevant changes to their interests in the Register of Members' Interests or any specific interest in items on the agenda. All declarations are recorded in the minutes. The Secretariat, Chair and members should continue to be aware of and treat as appropriate potential conflicts of interest resulting from the research interests of members of the Committee and the research the Committee recommends that the FSA undertakes.

Summary

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ The work of the ACMSF ad hoc groups should in general be run to a tighter timescale with the timescale being agreed at the start of the sub group's work.

	Paragraph reference
Examples of good practice	
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.	45
Recommendations	
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 sub group's work.	49

Appendix: List of contributors to the review

ACMSF Secretariat

Paul Cook (Scientific Secretary)	Food Standards Agency
Geraldine Hoad (Administrative Secretary)	Food Standards Agency
Sophie Rollinson	Food Standards Agency
Adekunle Adeoye	Food Standards Agency
Sarah Butler	Food Standards Agency

ACMSF members

Sarah O'Brien	ACMSF Chair
Vivianne Buller	ACMSF member
Rosie Glazebrook	ACMSF member
Richard Holliman	ACMSF member
Alec Kyriakides	ACMSF member
David McDowell	ACMSF member
Thomas Humphrey	ACMSF member

ACMSF assessors

Liz Redmond	Food Standards Agency
Stephen Wyllie	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
Jacqui McElhiney	Food Standards Agency (Scotland)
Steve Wearne	Food Standards Agency (Wales)

Other stakeholders

Ernesto Liebana, Deputy Head, Biological Hazards Panel	European Food Safety Authority
Sally Barber, Food Policy Adviser	British Retail Consortium
*Kenneth Chinyama, Food Safety and Science Division	Food and Drink Federation
Tom Miller, Member	National Consumer Federation
Bridgette Clarke, Group Microbiologist	Bakkavor
Jenny Hopwood, Company Microbiologist	Marks & Spencer

*Fiona Brookes, Company Microbiologist	Northern Foods
Bob Adak, Head of Epidemiological Services	HPA Centre for Infections
*Barbara Lund, Visiting Scientist	Institute of Food Research
Peter Jackson, Acting Chair	Social Science Research Committee
David Coggon, Chair	Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment
Diane Benford	Secretariat, Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment
Andrew Wadge, Chief Scientist	Food Standards Agency
Alison Gleadle, Director of Food Safety	Food Standards Agency
Patrick Miller, Joint Head, Chief Scientist Team	Food Standards Agency

All of the above were interviewed for the review except for those marked with an asterisk who contributed written comments.