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Foreword

Dear Reader,

I am delighted to present the 2020 Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes. This report summarises the work of the Committee from January to December 2020 and details the values under which the Committee has worked.

This year the content of this report reflects the role the Committee has had in 2020, in advising the Food Standards Agency on traditional foods from third countries, anticipated issues for 2021 and new ways of working in relation to Novel Foods (NF), Genetically Modified (GM) Foods & Feeds, food innovation and Novel Food Processes (NFP). This report details the number and variety of notifications that have been considered by the Committee in 2020 and how the Committee has considered scientific progress in preparation for the future.

In 2020, in line with the Novel Food Regulation (EU) 2015/2283, the ACNFP continued to have the remit in assessing only those 'traditional' Novel Foods from third countries; EFSA is responsible for reviewing all other novel foods in the EU. Safety assessments of notifications were completed for one such traditional food.

This year, the membership of the Committee has changed and expanded to reflect the wider range of issues we anticipated within the ACNFP's remit as the UK left the EU, most notably in relation to GM foods. I would like to welcome all our new members who add to our impressive membership of highly qualified experts. The ACNFP Secretariat and Committee have worked together to ensure that due process and the requisite expertise are in place to meet the new UK regulatory requirements as of 1 January 2021 for novel foods and that excellence in the provision of science advice continues.

I would also like to thank sincerely our outgoing Chairman, Professor Peter Gregory, for his commitment, highly competent chairing and significant contributions during his 10 years on the ACNFP. Thanks also go to the excellent contributions and efforts over the years of our other members, Professor Michael Bushell, Professor John Mathers, Ms Claire Nicholson and Professor Christopher Ritson, who reached the end of their term of office on the Committee.

At the end of 2020, the Committee recognised the hard work and commitment of the Secretariat in what has been a very challenging year. The whole committee adapted brilliantly to working remotely during the global pandemic, such that the advice of the ACNFP has continued to be given to a high quality and with great effectiveness. We look forward from a strong position, to the new responsibilities and new challenges in 2021.

Dr Camilla Alexander-White
April 2021

1. Introduction

The primary role of the ACNFP during 2020 has been preparing for EU-Exit providing advice to the FSA that contributes to the development of the Agency's strategic objectives and ways of working to ensure that food is safe and what it says it is. Here the FSA has used the expertise of the Committee to assist in scrutinising the development of their own processes, to ensure that they are robust, fit for purpose and reflect the interest of the consumer.

The ACNFP has an ongoing role in assessing traditional food notifications from third countries under Regulation (EU) 2015/2283. Under these Regulations, a novel food is defined as a food that does not have a significant history of consumption within the European Union before 15 May 1997.

The revised regulation, which came into full effect on the 1st of January 2019, provides a number of changes in light of scientific and technical advancement since the original regulation was put in place in 1997. This includes a change to the handling of full novel food applications under the EU system. Full dossiers are now assessed through a centralised procedure by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Traditional novel foods are a subset of a novel food requiring regulatory approval that refer to foods that are traditionally consumed anywhere outside of Europe. The process for assessing traditional foods from third countries, aims to provide a simplified route for traditional novel foods to access the market by making a notification in accordance with the regulation. The notification requires less information than a full novel food application, on the basis that history of safe use for 25 years in a third country provides information to inform the assessment. Traditional food notifications must demonstrate the food to be safe, not misleading to consumers and would not place consumers at a nutritional disadvantage.

Under Regulation (EU) 2015/2283 a company planning to market a traditional novel food must submit a notification on the novel food to the European Commission via an E-portal. Once the notification has been validated, it is forwarded to all Member States and EFSA who have up to four months to raise any duly reasoned safety objections on placing the traditional food on the market. If no objections are raised, the food can be authorised and placed on the new Union list. If objections are raised, the applicant will need to submit a traditional food application, addressing the concerns raised. This application would be evaluated for safety by EFSA.

The views of the ACNFP were provided to risk managers at the FSA to inform the UK position on the notification. During the year one traditional food notification was assessed.

To note: From 1st Jan 2021 the UK left the EU. Therefore, the process described above for submitting and authorising Novel and Traditional Foods, Genetically Modified Food & Feed changed for the UK. Full details for the new process for the UK can be found on the ACNFP Food Assessment pages. Our risk assessment will be carried out in

accordance with the requirements of retained EU law and the guidance previously developed by EFSA.

In 2020, the Committee has considered and provided advice on the handling of Cannabidiol (CBD) applications post EU-Exit by the FSA.

CBD was confirmed as a novel food in January 2019 and as yet, there are no authorised CBD products on the UK market. In February 2020, the FSA set a deadline of 31st March 2021 by which businesses already selling CBD must have submitted a dossier to the FSA which must be complete enough for the FSA to validate these products enabling them to remain on the market.

The Committee also has a role in considering the new products, trends and technologies that may be entering the market and affect the food system. The Committee works to identify and monitor risks that may be encountered by the work of the FSA. In 2020 the Committee considered and provided comment to an FSA risk profile report on edible insects, a gene editing scoping review and a gene editing hazard identification hazard report.

2. Traditional Food Applications

In 2020, one traditional food from third countries notification was validated under Regulation (EU) 2015/2283 by the EU and passed to Member States and EFSA for review. This notification was for Roasted Sacha Inchi Seed. The notification was assessed by the Committee and their advice passed to risk managers at the FSA to inform the UK position on this dossier. The notification is detailed in Table 1

Minutes and details of the issues that were raised by the Committee can be found in the minutes of the relevant meetings on the ACNFP website.

Table 1: Traditional Novel Food notifications considered by the Committee during 2020

Novel food	Meeting discussed	Outcome	Comment
Roasted Sacha Inchi Seed	February	Advice Provided to Food Policy – Currently not Authorised in the EU	The Committee identified several areas of concern where further information and assessment would be required to provide reassurance on the conditions under which Sacha Inchi roasted seeds could be used safely by the EU population. Although traditional use and safety of Sacha Inchi roasted seeds had been partially

			established, the Committee could not reach a conclusion on its safety, and therefore more information would be necessary to properly inform risk management decisions.

3. Other Issues

a) Ways of Working

In 2020 the ACNFP was consulted on several topics relating to the scientific work of the FSA and how this is managed. Topics included: FSA's position on Cannabidiol (CBD), further develop documents and processes to support the FSA's future work and the revised role for FSA's Scientific Advisory Committees when the UK leaves the EU, as well as governance processes such as the annual report and the revised code of practice.

Minutes and details of the issues that were raised by the Committee can be found in the minutes of the relevant meetings on the ACNFP website.

Table 2: Other Issues

Issue	Meeting discussed	Comment
Guidance on Whole Genome Sequences	February	Committee comments were used as the basis for providing feedback to the EFSA consultation on the guidance on whole genome sequences
Allergy Workshop follow-up	February	The Committee identified the key learnings from the session and how these could inform future ACNFP assessments.
FSA Areas of Research Interest (ARIs)	February	The Committee provided suggestions and advice on the FSA's work on areas of research interest, a cross-government initiative designed to better signpost the FSA's research priorities for funders and researchers.
Annual report 2019	April	The Committee reviewed and agreed the annual report for the ACNFP's work in 2019.
Future Ways of Working – GM dossiers	June	This item was a further opportunity to explore how the current EU approach for assessing GM food and feed could be applied in future once the UK has left the EU.

Code of Practice	June	The Committee reviewed the new format for the ACNFP's Code of practice on the Committee's ways of working.
CBD Position Statement	September	The Committee reviewed the COT/FSA position on the data limitations and information surrounding CBD.
CBD Request for Advice	September	The Committee were asked to consider a request for advice to CBD applicants regarding the specifications in the event of a joint application.
Code of Practice	September	The Committee finalised the ACNFP's Code of practice on the Committee's ways of working.
Regulated Products' Risk Assessment Template	November	A generic Regulated Products Risk Assessment Template to be used by several Scientific Advisory Committees for a variety of topics was discussed.

b) A number of items were considered under reserved business in 2020. The discussions for these items are primarily in areas where the Committee's input was sought to further develop documents and processes to support the FSA's future work and the revised role for FSA's Scientific Advisory Committees when the UK leaves the EU. They were considered as reserved business as they were under development and in the majority of cases it is expected that final outputs will be placed in the public domain in due course.

Table 3: Items considered under reserved business

Reserved Business item	Meeting discussed	Comment
Future ways of working - Scientific Advisory Committees & Joint Expert Groups	February	The Committee were invited to consider information on how the new Joint Expert Groups (JEGs) will work with existing Scientific Advisory Committees when considering regulated products dossiers.
Future Ways of Working – GM dossiers	April	This item was a further opportunity to explore how the current EU approach for assessing GM food and feed could be applied in future once the UK has left the EU.
Guidance on Novel Foods	June	The Committee discussed a Novel Food Guidance Paper regarding the EU guidance on Novel Foods to check its

		applicability for future use in the safety assessment of novel foods.
GM Position Statement	June	The Committee discussed the Food Standards Agency (FSA's) position statement on the safety of genome editing technologies.
Future ways of working - CBD dossiers	September	This item was an initial opportunity to explore how the current EU approach for assessing GM food and feed could be applied in future once the UK has left the EU.
Risk Profile on Edible Insects	November	In order to inform the risk management of future edible insects' novel food applications, a risk profile report on this type of novel food was conducted by FSA and reviewed by the ACNFP.
Genome Editing Scoping Review	November	The Committee were asked to review a genome editing scoping review conducted by FSA to ensure that current and newly developed risk management and assessment procedures encompass technological advances.
Genome Editing Hazard Identification	November	A literature review was conducted by FSA to identify available scientific literature detailing the hazards posed by existing GM and emergent GE techniques, and to compare the hazards posed by genome editing technologies to those posed by both conventional breeding and genetic modification techniques. The Committee provided comment on this report.

5. ANNEX 1 – Information about the Committee

ACNFP – remit, membership and Members' interests.

Remit
The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes is an independent body of experts. This means they are not employed by the government. Their remit is:

> "to advise the central authorities responsible, in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively on any matters relating to novel foods and novel food processes including food irradiation, having regard where appropriate to the views of relevant expert bodies".

Officials of the Food Standards Agency provide the Secretariat. As well as formal meetings, the Committee periodically organises workshops on specific topics related to its remit.

Membership of the Committee during 2020
The membership of the Committee provides a wide range of expertise in fields of relevance in the assessment of novel foods and processes. A list of the membership during 2020, together with the names of the FSA assessors can be found below.

Chair
Professor Peter Gregory BSc, PhD ***(Term finished: June 2020)***
Emeritus Professor of Global Food Security at the University of Reading.

Dr Camilla Alexander-White BSc (Hons) DPhil CChem FRSC ERT
(Term began: July 2020)
Senior Policy Advisor in Chemical Regulation, Royal Society of Chemistry

Members
Dr Anton Alldrick BSc. Hons, PhD (Industry Expert)
Special Projects Manager at Campden BRI.

Dr Camilla Alexander-White BSc (Hons) DPhil CChem FRSC ERT (Toxicologist)
(Term finished: June 2020)
Programme Manager in Chemical Regulation, Royal Society of Chemistry

Dr Mark Berry (New product development expert)
Independent Consultant
Founder & Director at Food and Life Sciences Consulting Ltd

Professor Michael Bushell BSc, PhD (Microbiologist)
(Term finished: June 2020)
Emeritus Professor of Microbiology in the Microbial Sciences Department at the University of Surrey.

Professor Susan Duthie BSc, MSc, PhD (Nutrition Scientist)
Professor of Molecular Nutrition and Associate Head of School, Pharmacy & Life Sciences, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

Professor Paul Fraser (Molecular Biologist)
School of Biological Sciences at Royal Holloway University

Professor Susan Fairweather-Tait (Nutritionist)
Professor of Human Nutrition, Norwich Medical School, University of East Anglia

Dr Hamid Ghoddusi BSc, MSc, PhD (Food Scientist & Microbiologist)
Head of the Microbiology Research Unit at the London Metropolitan University.

Professor Wendy Harwood (Crop Genetics)
Head of Crop Transformation Group at John Innes Centre, Norwich

Professor Huw Jones (Translational Genomics)
Chair in Translational Genomics for plant breeding, Aberystwyth University

Nichola Lund LLB (Consumer Affairs Representative)
Trading Standards Officer with the North East London Metrology Partnership.

Dr Rohini Manuel MB BCh BAO, MSc, MD, FRCPath (Microbiologist and Mycologist)
Consultant Medical Microbiologist at the Public Health Laboratory London, National Infection Service, Public Health England.

Professor John Mathers BSc, Dip. Nutr, PhD (Nutritionist)
(Term finished: June 2020)
Professor of Human Nutrition and Director of the Human Nutrition Research Centre at Newcastle University.

Mrs Rebecca McKenzie BSc, MSc (Allergy Dietician)
Senior Specialist Dietician in Allergy, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust London.

Professor Harry McArdle BSc, PhD (Nutritionist)
Emeritus Professor of Biomedical Sciences at the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health, University of Aberdeen. Honorary Professor of Biological Sciences, Nottingham University.

Dr David J Mela PhD (Nutritionist)
Representative from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN).

Professor Clare Mills BSc, PhD (Plant Science and Allergy Expert)
Professor of Molecular Allergology, at the Manchester Institute of Biotechnology, and Division of Infection, Immunity and Respiratory Medicine, School of Biological Sciences, University of Manchester.

Ms Claire Nicholson BA and MBA (Consumer Affairs Representative)
(Term finished: June 2020)
Independent Consumer Advisor to the FSA and other food industry organisations.

Professor Christopher Ritson BA, MAgrSc (Ethicist)
(Term finished: June 2020)
Emeritus Professor of Agricultural Marketing and former Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Biological Sciences, Newcastle University.

Dr Lesley Stanley MA(Oxon) PhD ERT FBTS (Toxicologist)

An independent consultant in biomedical science and investigative toxicology.

Dr Maureen Wakefield, FERA Science Ltd. (Entomologist)
Research Entomologist at FERA Science.

FSA Assessor
Dr Paul Tossell – Team leader Regulated Products 1 Branch

Observers from the Devolved Administrations
Mr Adam McDowell – Food Standards Agency (Wales)
Ms Siobhan Watts – Food Standards Scotland
Ms Georgina Finch – Food Standards Scotland
Ms Krystle Boss – Food Standards Scotland
Ms Svetlozara Chobanova – Food Standards Scotland
Ms Kerry Gribbin – Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)
Richard Annett – Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)

ACNFP Members' Interests during 2020
In common with other independent advisory committees the ACNFP is publishing a list of its members' commercial interests. These are managed in line with Agency guidelines on handling of conflicts of interest revised in 2019. These have been divided into different categories relating to the type of interest:

Personal:
a) direct employment or consultancy;
b) occasional commissions;
c) share holdings.

Non-personal:
a) fellowships;
b) support which does not benefit the member directly e.g. studentships.

Details of the interests held by members during 2020 can be found on the ACNFP website.

Code of Conduct

A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NOVEL FOODS AND PROCESSES (ACNFP)

Public service values

All members must:

- Follow the guidance on the Seven Principles of Public Life, these being selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- 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 Board of the Food Standards Agency and Health Ministers, to Parliament and the public for its activities and for the standard of advice it provides. The Board of the FSA and Health Ministers are answerable to Parliament for the policies and performance of this Committee, including the policy framework within which it operates.
- Comply with this Code, and ensure they understand their duties, rights and responsibilities, and that they are familiar with the function 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 councillors, or to Peers in relation to their conduct in the House of Lords.

The role of the ACNFP Chair

The Chair is responsible for:

- Providing effective leadership on the issues within the Committees terms of reference;
- Ensuring that the Committee meets at appropriate intervals and that the minutes of meetings and any reports to the Board of the Food Standards

Agency accurately record the decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual members;
- Representing the views of the Committee to the general public;
- Ensuring that new members are briefed 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;
- Ensure that every member of the Committee is heard and that no view is ignored or overlooked;
- Ensure unorthodox and contrary scientific views are given a fair hearing;
- Ensure that any significant diversity of opinion among the members of the Committee is accurately reflected in the report and in any other communications with the FSA;
- Advise on matters relating to FSA science as required by the FSA on an ad hoc basis or in emergencies;
- Engage with the wider networks of relevant experts including with the Chairs of SACs relevant to the FSA's work;

Role of Committee Members
- Members are appointed as individuals to fulfil their role respective to the ACNFP.
- Members are not a representative of their profession, employer or interest group and have a duty to act in the public interest.
- If a Member declares an organisation's view rather than a personal view, they should make it clear at the time

Members have collective responsibility for the operation of this Committee.
They must:
- Engage fully in collective consideration of the issues, taking
- In accordance with Government policy on openness, ensure that they adhere to the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (including prompt responses to public requests for information); agree an Annual Report; and, where practicable and appropriate, provide suitable opportunities to open the work of the Committee to public scrutiny;
- Not divulge any information which is provided to the Committee in confidence;
- Ensure that an appropriate response is provided to complaints and other correspondence, if necessary, with reference to the sponsor department;
- Ensure that the Committee does not exceed its powers or functions.
- Members are free to question and comment on the information provided or the views expressed by any of the other members.
- Individual members should inform the Chair (or the Secretariat on his or her behalf) if they are invited to speak in public in their capacity as a Committee member.
- A member's role on the Committee should not be limited by the expertise or viewpoint she or he was asked to bring to it. Any statement/report belongs to the whole Committee. Members should regard themselves free to question and comment on the information provided or the views expressed by any of the other members, even though the views or information provided do not relate to their own area of expertise.

- If members believe the committee's method of working is not rigorous or thorough enough, they have the right to ask that any remaining concerns they have be put on the record
- Communications between the Committee and the Board of the Food Standards 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 Board of the Food Standards Agency on any matter that 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 Board of the Food Standards Agency, if they fail to perform the duties required of them in line with the standards expected in public office.

Communications with the FSA Board, Chief Scientific Adviser and Executive

- The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes works in collaboration with several other Committees where the topics under consideration would benefit from expert advice from other Committees. These include, but are not limited to:
- The FSA's Science Council;
- The Committee on Toxicity of Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT);
- The Committee on Carcinogenicity of Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COC);
- The Committee on Mutagenicity of Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COM);
- Communications between the ACNFP and the Board of the Food Standards Agency will generally be through the Chair except where the ACNFP has agreed that an individual member should act on its behalf. Nevertheless, any Member has the right of access to the Board of the Food Standards Agency on any matter that he or she believes raises important issues relating to his or her duties as an ACNFP Member. In such cases the agreement of the rest of the ACNFP should normally be sought.
- Similarly, communications between the ACNFP and the FSA Executive will generally be through the ACNFP Secretariat although the ACNFP Chair has the right of access to the FSA Chief Scientific Adviser and Deputy CSA at all times.
- Any member also has the right of access to the FSA Chief Scientific Adviser on any matter which he or she believes raises important issues relating to his or her duties as a member. In such cases the agreement of the ACNFP Chair should normally be sought.

Declaration of interests and management of conflicts

- As an independent, open and transparent advisory body the ACNFP's members must provide clear declarations of interests. The full guidance on

declaration of interests for SACs should be consulted by all members, however a summary is provided below.

- Not all interests are necessarily ones that will cause conflict with a member's work with the ACNFP. Interests that may be seen to have relevance to their role (either personal, non-personal or those of family/friends) or the specific topics under discussion at a ACNFP meeting should be declared so the Secretariat can make an assessment of whether it could be considered a potential conflict of interests and what action may be needed in response.
- Members of the Committee should inform the Secretariat in writing of their current personal and non-personal interests, when they are appointed, including the principal position(s) held. Only the name of the organisation and the nature of the interest are required; the amount of any salary etc. need not be disclosed.
- Members are asked to inform the Secretariat at any time of any change of their personal interests and will be invited to complete a declaration form once a year.
- The Secretariat maintains a register of interests for each member that is updated and published online regularly. The register of interests should contain current or previous interests (including things like employment, consultancies, memberships, investments or other personal interests) that may, in general, be seen to directly affect the perceived independence of the member or benefit from information gained whilst acting as a ACNFP member (that is not already public).
- The register of interests should be kept up-to-date and be open to the public.
- At the start of the meeting the Chair should ask members to declare any interests potentially relevant to the items under discussion relating to themselves or their close family members.
- Based on this information, the Chair will consult with Secretariat, FSA staff and potentially other SAC members, and decide on an approach to managing the interest.
- In the case of interests declared by the Chair, the same process will apply as to when there is an absence of the chair; the relevant FSA staff are responsible for deciding whether an interest is a conflict and if so, how it should be managed. FSA staff may also request input from other ACNFP members on appropriate action.
- The interests declared, and the chosen action should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting with the rationale for this decision.

Personal Liability of Committee Members

- A Committee member may be personally liable if he or she makes a fraudulent or negligent statement which results in a loss to a third party; or may commit a breach of confidence under common law or a criminal offence under insider dealing legislation, if he or she misuses information gained through their position.
- However, the Government has indicated that individual members who have acted honestly, reasonably, in good faith and without negligence will not have to meet out of their own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in execution or purported execution of their Committee functions save

where the person has acted recklessly. To this effect, a formal statement of indemnity has been drawn up.

Openness and publication of documents – general principles

- The Committee operates to the standards of openness and transparency. It will work in accordance with guidelines by the FSA and relevant guidance and rules established across Government. These include:

1. The cross-Government Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (CoPSAC), which includes the
2. Principles of Scientific Advice to Government
3. The FSA's Good Practice Guidelines for SACs
4. The provisions under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).
5. Committee meeting agendas, papers, minutes and reports are published. While meetings are not open to the public as standard, open events are held regularly to provide public input into the work of the Committee
6. The Committee publishes an annual report.

Different types of interest

The following is intended as a guide to the kinds of interests that should be declared. Where Members are uncertain as to whether an interest should be declared they should seek guidance from the Secretariat or, where it may concern a particular product which is to be considered at a meeting, from the Chairman at that meeting. If Members have interests not specified in these notes but which they believe could be regarded as influencing their advice they should declare them. However, neither the Members nor the Secretariat are under any obligation to search out links of which they might reasonably not be aware. For example, either through not being aware of all the interests of family members, or of not being aware of links between one company and another.

Personal Interests

A personal interest involves the Member personally. The main examples are:

- Consultancies and/or direct employment: any consultancy, directorship, position in or work for the industry or other relevant bodies which attracts regular or occasional payments in cash or kind;

- Fee-Paid Work: any commissioned work for which the member is paid in cash or kind;

- Shareholdings: any shareholding or other beneficial interest in shares of industry. This does not include shareholdings through unit trusts or similar arrangements where the member has no influence on financial management;

- Membership or Affiliation to clubs or organisations with interests relevant to the work of the Committee.

Non-Personal Interests

A non-personal interest involves payment which benefits a department for which a member is responsible but is not received by the member personally. The main examples are:

- Fellowships: the holding of a fellowship endowed by industry or other relevant body;

- Support by Industry or other relevant bodies: any payment, other support or sponsorship which does not convey any pecuniary or material benefit to a member personally, but which does benefit their position or department e.g.:

- a grant for the running of a unit or department for which a member is responsible;

- a grant or fellowship or other payment to sponsor a post or a member of staff or a post graduate research programme in the unit for which a member is responsible (this does not include financial assistance for undergraduate students);

- the commissioning of research or other work by, or advice from, staff who work in a unit for which a member is responsible.

- Members are under no obligation to seek out knowledge of work done for, or on behalf of, industry or other relevant bodies by departments for which they are responsible, if they would not normally expect to be informed. Where members are responsible for organisations which receive funds from a very large number of companies involved in that industry, the Secretariat can agree with them a summary of non-personal interests rather than draw up a long list of companies.

- Trusteeships: any investment in industry held by a charity for which a member is a trustee. Where a member is a trustee of a charity with investments in industry, the Secretariat can agree with the member a general declaration to cover this interest rather than draw up a detailed portfolio.

Definitions

For the purposes of the ACNFP 'industry' means:

- Companies, partnerships or individuals who are involved with the production, manufacture, packaging, sale, advertising, or supply of food or food processes, subject to the Food Safety Act 1990;

- Trade associations representing companies involved with such products;

- Companies, partnerships or individuals who are directly concerned with research, development or marketing of a food product which is being considered by the Committee.

'Other relevant bodies' refers to organisations with a specific interest in food issues, such as charitable organisations or lobby groups.
In this Code ‘the Secretariat’ means the Secretariat of the ACNFP

FSA Good Practice Guidelines for The Independent Scientific Advisory Committees (Revised and updated July 2012)

Good practice guidelines for the independent Scientific Advisory Committees

Introduction

The Government Chief Scientific Adviser's *Guidelines on the Use of Scientific and Engineering Advice in Policy Making*[1] set out the basic principles which government departments should follow in assembling and using scientific advice. The key elements are to:

- **identify early** the issues which need scientific and engineering advice and where **public engagement** is appropriate
- draw on a **wide range of expert advice** sources, particularly where there is uncertainty;
- adopt an open and transparent approach to the scientific advisory process and publish the evidence and analysis as soon as possible;
- **explain publicly the reasons for policy decisions**, particularly when the decision appears to be inconsistent with scientific advice; and
- **work collectively** to ensure a joined-up approach throughout government to integrating scientific and engineering evidence and advice into policy making.

The *Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees* and the *Principles of Scientific Advice to Government*[2] provide more detailed guidance on the operation of scientific advisory committees (SACS) and their relationship with their sponsor Departments.

The Food Standards Agency's Board adopted a **Science Checklist** in 2006 (updated in 2012) that makes explicit the points to be considered in the preparation of papers and proposals dealing with science-based issues, including those which draw on advice from the Scientific Advisory Committees (SACS).

These **Good Practice Guidelines** were drawn up in 2006 by the Chairs of the independent SACs that advise the FSA based on, and complementing, the Science Checklist. They were updated in 2012 in consultation with the General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS) (since replaced by the Science Council (SC)).

The Guidelines apply to the SACs that advise the FSA and for which the FSA is sole or lead sponsor Department:

Advisory Committee on Animal Feeding stuffs
Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety of Foods
Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes
Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment
Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment
Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment

Science Council
Advisory Committee for Social Science

For the SACs with a shared sponsorship the Guidelines apply formally to their advice to the
FSA; they may opt to follow them also in advising other sponsor Departments.

These committees share important characteristics. They:

- are independent;
- work in an open and transparent way; and
- are concerned with risk assessment and/or science governance, not with decisions about risk management.

The Guidelines relate primarily to the risk assessment process since this is the main purpose of most of the SACs. However, the SACs may, where appropriate, comment on risks associated with different risk management options, highlight any wider issues raised by their assessment that they feel should be considered (distinguishing clearly between issues on which the SAC has an expert capability and remit, and any other issues), or any evidence gaps and/or needs for research or analysis. In addition, the SC and SSRC may advise the FSA on aspects of the governance of risk management, or on research that relates to risk management.

Twenty-nine principles of good practice have been developed. However, the different committees have different duties and discharge those duties in different ways. Therefore, not all the principles set out below will be applicable to all the committees, all of the time. The SACs have agreed to review their application of the principles annually and report this in their Annual Reports. Compliance with the Guidelines will also be covered in the annual self-assessments by Members and annual feedback meetings between each SAC Chair and the FSA Chief Scientist.

ACNFP self-assessment against the Good Practice Guidelines

Issue	**Compliance?**	**Notes/Comments**
Defining the problem and the approach 1. The FSA will ensure that issues it asks a SAC to address are clearly defined and take account of stakeholder expectations in discussion with the SAC Secretariat and where necessary the SAC Chair. The SAC Chair will refer to the FSA if discussion suggests that further iteration and discussion of the task is necessary. Where a SAC proposes to initiate a piece of work the SAC Chair and	Yes	ACNFP does this on a routine basis

Secretariat will discuss this with FSA to ensure the definition and rationale for the work and its expected use by the FSA are clear.		
Seeking input		
2. The Secretariat will ensure that stakeholders are consulted at appropriate points in the SAC's considerations. It will consider with the FSA whether and how stakeholder views need to be taken into account in helping to identify the issue and frame the question for the committee.	Yes	A role of the ACNFP in 2020 was to assess notifications for traditional foods from third countries. As applications are submitted through an EU process the Committee must comply with EU rules on access to documents. For the same reason, the Committee cannot discuss the documents in public. However, traditional food summaries of novel food notifications are produced by the Secretariat and cleared by the Committee which then go through a 10-day public consultation process. The ACNFP periodically holds an open event, which allows Members to discuss relevant topics with members of the public as occurred in February 2018.
3. Wherever possible, SAC discussions should be held in public.	Yes	
4. The scope of literature searches made on behalf of the SAC will be clearly set out.	N/A	
5. Steps will be taken to ensure that all available and relevant scientific evidence is rigorously considered by the Committee, including consulting external/additional scientific experts who may know of relevant unpublished or pre-publication data.	Yes	The Committee, with the assistance of the Secretariat also seeks further information and advice from other Committees or individual experts where required.

6. Data from stakeholders will be considered and weighted according to quality by the SAC.	Yes	
7. Consideration by the Secretariat and the Chair (and where appropriate the whole SAC) will be given to whether expertise in other disciplines will be needed.	Yes	
8. Consideration will be given by the Secretariat or by the SAC, in discussion with the FSA, as to whether other SACs need to be consulted.	Yes	
Validation 9. Study design, methods of measurement and the way that analysis of data has been carried out will be assessed by the SAC	Yes	The Secretariat and Committee critically review the methods and statistical treatments used in dossiers and ensure that this is considered in evaluating the contribution the data provides to the assessment.
10. Data will be assessed by the Committee in accordance with the relevant principles of good practice, e.g. qualitative social science data will be assessed with reference to guidance from the Government's Chief Social Researcher.	Yes Where relevant	For complex statistical questions the Secretariat can consult with specialists within the FSA.
11. Formal statistical analyses will be included wherever appropriate. To support this, each SAC will have access to advice on quantitative analysis and modelling as needed	Yes	
12. When considering what evidence needs to be collected	Yes	Evaluations of novel foods are mainly based on evidence provided by the applicant, including

for assessment, the following points will be considered: • the potential for the need for different data for different parts of the UK or the relevance to the UK situation for any data originating outside the UK; and • whether stakeholders can provide unpublished data.		unpublished studies and commercially sensitive information about manufacturing processes. As this information is submitted via an EU process there are limitations on the information that can be placed in the public domain.
13. The list of references will make it clear which references have been subject to external peer review, and which have been peer reviewed through evaluation by the Committee, and if relevant, any that have not been peer reviewed.	Yes	Novel food application dossiers include a list of references which make it clear whether they have been peer reviewed.
Uncertainty 14. When reporting outcomes, SACS will make explicit the level and type of uncertainty (both limitations on the quality of the available data and lack of knowledge) associated with their advice.	Yes	ACNFP complies with items 14 to 17 – outcomes are critically evaluated, and uncertainties are identified.
15. Any assumptions made by the SAC will be clearly spelled out, and, in reviews, previous assumptions will be challenged.	Yes	The Committee's assessment focuses on safety and it does not address any nutrition or health benefits that may be claimed for the novel ingredient or for foods that contain it. Nutrition or health claims may only be made if they are specifically authorised under EU Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006.
16. Data gaps will be identified and their impact on uncertainty assessed by the SAC.	Yes	
17. An indication will be given by the SAC about whether the evidence base is changing or static, and if appropriate, how developments in the evidence base might affect key assumptions and conclusions.	Yes	

Drawing conclusions 18. The SAC will be broad-minded, acknowledging where conflicting views exist and considering whether alternative interpretations fit the same evidence.	Yes	ACNFP complies with this – uncertainties and interpretations are identified clearly in the Committees opinions.
19. Where both risks and benefits have been considered, the committee will address each with the same rigour, as far as possible; it will make clear the degree of rigour and uncertainty, and any important constraints, in reporting its conclusions.	N/A	
20. SAC decisions will include an explanation of where differences of opinion have arisen during discussions, specifically where there are unresolved issues, and why conclusions have been reached. If it is not possible to reach a consensus, a minority report may be appended to the main report, setting out the differences in interpretation and conclusions, and the reasons for these, and the names of those supporting the minority report.	Yes	The final opinions are adopted by consensus, identifying the key issues and generally explaining the reasoning behind the Committee's conclusions.
21. The SAC's interpretation of results, recommended actions or advice will be consistent with the quantitative and/or qualitative evidence and the degree of uncertainty associated with it.	Yes	
22. SACs will make recommendations about general issues that may have relevance for other committees.	Yes	

Communicating SAC's conclusions		
23. Conclusions will be expressed by the SAC in clear, simple terms and use the minimum caveats consistent with accuracy.	Yes	
24. It will be made clear by the SAC where assessments have been based on the work of other bodies and where the SAC has started afresh, and there will be a clear statement of how the current conclusions compare with previous assessments.	Yes	
25. The conclusions will be supported by a statement about their robustness and the extent to which judgement has had to be used.	Yes	
26. As standard practice, the SAC secretariat will publish a full set of references (including the data used as the basis for risk assessment and other SAC opinions) at as early a stage as possible to support openness and transparency of decision-making. Where this is not possible, reasons will be clearly set out, explained and a commitment made to future publication wherever possible.	Yes	
27. The amount of material withheld by the SAC or FSA as being confidential will be kept to a minimum. Where it is not possible to release material, the reasons will be clearly set out, explained and a commitment made to future publication wherever possible.	Yes	

28. Where proposals or papers being considered by the FSA Board rest on scientific evidence produced by a SAC, the Chair of the SAC (or a nominated expert member) will be invited to the table at the Open Board meetings at which the paper is discussed. To maintain appropriate separation of risk assessment and risk management processes, the role of the Chairs will be limited to providing an independent view and assurance on how their committee's advice has been reflected in the relevant policy proposals, and to answer Board Members' questions on the science. The Chairs may also, where appropriate, be invited to provide factual briefing to Board members about issues within their committees' remits, in advance of discussion at open Board meetings.	N/A	
29. The SAC will seek (and FSA will provide) timely feedback on actions taken (or not taken) in response to the SAC's advice, and the rationale for these.	Yes	

Financial Statement

ACNFP is an independent SAC but does not have resources of its own. The operation of the Committee is funded by the FSA. In the period of this report, costs for this support (covering Members expenses and fees and administrative cost for the meetings) were £55,000.