



THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NOVEL FOODS AND PROCESSES

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FURTHER INFORMATION

For further advice and information concerning the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes please contact: Alison Asquith, ACNFP Secretariat, Food Standards Agency, Room 1B Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6NH.

CONTENTS

Terms of reference	3
Membership	3
Commitments	3
Secretariat	3
Legislation	3
Relations with other committees	5
A code of conduct for members of the ACNFP	6
Appointment of independent members	9
Job and person criteria	10
Contact	12
Annex 1 – The seven principles of public life	13
Annex 2 – Different types of interest	14
Annex 3 – Recruitment advertisement	16

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) is an independent body of experts whose main task is to consider requests from the food industry and others for the clearance of novel foods and novel processes. The Committee's terms of reference are:

“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.”

MEMBERSHIP

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) Board appoints the Chair and Members under open competition for fixed terms on an unsalaried basis. Appointments terms are for 1 to 3 years and, can be renewed. The scientific members are drawn from universities, research establishments and industry to ensure that a wide variety of relevant eminent expertise and knowledge is represented. They have expertise in a wide range of disciplines including genetic modification, nutrition, microbiology, toxicology, allergenicity and food technology. There are also three lay members: an ethicist and two consumer representatives. Professor Peter Gregory currently chairs the Committee.

COMMITMENTS

Each year Members are required to attend six Committee meetings that are usually held on a Wednesday or Thursday in London. Actual travelling expenses will be paid, as well as a combined attendance and reading fee (Chairman £205, Members £160) for each meeting attended. Additionally there may be the need to consider submissions by post in order to meet deadlines laid down by European regulations. Depending on the amount of work carried out Members may claim up to 100% of the meeting fee for time spent considering postal consultations. Requests from the press and media for interviews about the Committee's business will normally be handled by the Chairman.

SECRETARIAT

FSA officials provide the Committee Secretariat. Their role is to arrange the Committee meetings, liaise with applicants, and prepare papers summarising the data submitted to the Committee. They are also responsible for presenting the Committee's advice to the FSA Board and the European Commission, and for informing applicants and other interested parties, including the public, of the decisions reached.

LEGISLATION

The novel foods regulation (EC) No. 258/97 establishes an EU-wide pre-market approval system for novel foods and novel food ingredients, that is foods which do

not have a significant history of consumption within the EU prior to May 1997. This Regulation requires that companies wishing to market a novel food in the EU must submit an application to the Competent Authority in the Member State where they first intend to market their product. The UK Competent Authority is the Food Standards Agency. The Regulation requires a detailed safety assessment based on a comparative approach endorsed by the World Health Organisation, in which a novel food is compared with its conventional equivalent. This includes an examination of results from analytical and toxicological data. In the UK the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) carries out this assessment.

Following acceptance of an application the Competent Authority is required to complete an initial assessment and forward it to the European Commission within 90 days. The Commission then copies it to other Member States for their comments, giving them a further 60 days to do so. If the initial assessment is favourable and no objections are raised by other Member States the product can be marketed. If objections are raised these will be referred to the EC Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed for final agreement, consulting the European Food Safety Authority as necessary. If no agreement is reached the matter will be referred to the Council of Ministers. To ensure that all Member States follow a similar approach to the safety assessment of novel foods, the Scientific Committee for Food produced a detailed set of guidelines setting out the type of information that would be expected to support an application for approval of a novel food. These guidelines, which draw upon the structured approach developed by the UK's ACNFP, were published in the Official Journal of the European Communities, No. L253, vol. 40, 16 September 1997.

The GM food and feed Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 came into effect on 18 April 2004. This Regulation involves a centralised safety assessment procedure with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) assuming primary responsibility for the safety assessment of GM foods. This replaces the approval procedures for GM foods that previously operated under the novel foods regulation but the ACNFP still has a role in advising the Food Standards Agency on GM foods – for example by contributing to EFSA's risk assessments or by advising the Agency on other GM issues.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEES

The ACNFP is one of a number of independent committees that advise the Government on food matters. Some issues require consideration by more than one of these committees. The main bodies with which the ACNFP interacts are as follows:

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

GACS provides independent advice on the Food Standard Agency's governance and use of science.

Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF)

ACAF, serviced jointly by the Food Standards Agency and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), advises on the safety of animal feed and feeding practices, with particular emphasis on protecting human health and with reference to new technical developments.

Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF)

ACMSF, serviced by the Food Standards Agency, provides advice on any matters relating to the microbiological safety of food.

Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food Consumer Products and the Environment and the parallel Committees on Mutagenicity and Carcinogenicity (COT/COM/COC)

The COT is serviced jointly by the Food Standards Agency and Department of Health. COM and COC are serviced by the Department of Health. The COT/COM/COC advise at the request of the Department of Health, Food Standards Agency and other Government Departments and Agencies.

Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)

SSRC provides advice to the Food Standards Agency about how it gathers and uses social science evidence.

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN)

The ACNFP works closely with SACN which is serviced by the Department of Health. SACN advises Ministers on nutritional questions.

Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE)

The ACNFP works closely with ACRE, which is serviced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). ACRE advises Ministers on environmental protection issues relating to the release of genetically modified organisms.

A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF THE ACNFP

Public service values

The Members of the ACNFP 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 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.

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 (see Annex 1);
- 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 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 Food Standards Agency or Health Ministers;

- 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 up 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; and
- ensure that the Committee does not exceed its powers or functions.

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.

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.

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 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; 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.

Handling conflicts of interests

The purpose of these provisions is to avoid any danger of Committee Members being influenced, or appearing to be influenced, by their private interests in the exercise of their public duties. All Members should declare any personal or business interest that may, or may be perceived (by a reasonable member of the public) to, influence their judgement. A guide to the types of interest that should be declared can be found at Annex 2.

(i) Declaration of Interests to the Secretariat

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 asked to update their personal and non-personal interests each year. (Non-personal interests involving less than £1,000 from a particular company in the previous year need not be declared to the Secretariat).

The register of interests should be kept up-to-date and be open to the public.

(ii) Declaration of Interest and Participation at Meetings

Members of the Committee are required to declare any direct interests relating to salaried employment or consultancies, or those of close family members,¹ in matters under discussion at each meeting. Having fully explained the nature of their interest the Chair will, having consulted the other members present, decide whether and to what extent the member should participate in the discussion and determination of the issue. If it is decided that the member should leave the meeting, the Chair may first allow them to make a statement on the item under discussion.

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.

¹ Close family members include personal partners, parents, children, brothers, sisters and the personal partners of any of these.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Independent members of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) are initially appointed for a period of 1 to 3 years. Members may be asked to serve a second term but longer service is only considered under exceptional circumstances. Appointments to the Committee are made in accordance with the principles set out in the Nolan Report on Standards in Public Life.

The overriding principle is appointment on merit. Members are appointed for their individual qualifications and the expertise they can bring to the Committee and not to represent any particular sectoral interests. The balance of the Committee is intended to ensure that it has a wide range of expertise to draw on to enable it to advise the Board of the Food Standards Agency effectively.

Although several appointments may expire in any one year, the range of possible candidates will be limited by the needs of the Committee. As far as possible, retiring members are replaced with people who have similar expertise, unless a need to change the balance of the membership is identified.

Beginning the process

Any candidate not meeting the essential criteria for the vacancy will not be considered further. All shortlisted candidates will have a face-to-face interview. The skills and knowledge of each candidate will be considered very carefully and the reasons for decisions noted. In addition, a panel will scrutinise procedures and final recommendations. Ministers may ask for details of those candidates not proposed for appointment. Records are kept in line with the recommendation of the Code of Practice for Public Appointments.

Appointments to ACNFP are made strictly on merit by fair and open process in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments 'Code of Practice' and taking account of equality and diversity. The Foods Standards Agency is committed to equal opportunities and aims to ensure that everyone who works for or with the Agency should be treated fairly and with respect.

The decision

Once the skills and knowledge of all candidates have been assessed details of those deemed most suitable are forwarded to the Chair of the Food Standards Agency for consideration. Appointments to the Committee are made by the Chair of the Food Standards Agency following consultation with the appropriate authorities.

JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job description

Principal tasks

- Attend six meetings a year in London. Candidates should be prepared to attend regularly and contribute to the meetings of the Committee. Meetings usually last between half and one day.
- Prepare for meetings from the papers dispatched by the Secretariat (usually about ten days prior to the meeting).
- Observe restrictions on disclosure of classified material (which may be of commercial or policy sensitivity)

Remuneration and expenses.

Members receive a combined attendance and reading fee of £160. The Food Standards Agency pays travel and subsistence costs.

Conditions of service

Members of the ACNFP must:

- a) Observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the advice they provide. They must follow the Seven principles of Public life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. In particular, members must not:
 - Misuse information gained in the course of their work with the Committee for personal gain or political purpose;
 - Seek to use the opportunities presented by their membership to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations; and
 - Hold any paid or high profile unpaid posts in a political party, nor engage in specific political activities on matters directly affecting the work of the Committee. When engaged in other political activities, Committee members should be conscious of their public role and exercise proper discretion.
- b) comply with the code of practice for Members of the ACNFP, and ensure they understand their duties, rights and responsibilities, and that they are familiar with the function and role of the Committee.
- c) make every attempt to attend meetings. Where this is not possible, apologies should be sent via the Secretariat, together with any comments concerning the meeting documents.
- d) observe the rules on commercial interests as defined in the ACNFP Code of Practice.

- e) the Board of the Food Standards Agency may alter the composition of the Committee to ensure that it is equipped to provide authoritative advice on all relevant issues. In addition, individual Committee members can be removed from office by the Board if they fail to perform the duties required of them in line with the standards expected in public office.

Person specification for expert scientists

The vacancies are for 5 experts in the following fields:

- Allergy – 1 expert with clinical experience and 1 with expertise in plant science.
- Microbiology, with particular emphasis on the gut
- Molecular Biology (GM)
- Toxicology

Essential skills/experience required

1. Demonstrable expertise in one of the scientific areas specified. This might be by providing, for example, details of publications, or roles in other organisations or advisory bodies.
2. Excellent oral and written communication skills.
3. Excellent analytical skills with the ability to critically assess and interpret scientific data.
4. Strong team player able to work with other committee members to arrive at sound, balanced and timely decisions.
5. Ability to provide constructive challenge outside of own specialist scientific area.

(In the event of a large number of applicants, the first sift will be solely on the basis of criterion 1 – scientific expertise.)

Qualifications

Candidates should be educated to degree level in one of the above areas of expertise or a related discipline and have a relevant postgraduate qualification.

CONTACT

Additional information on the ACNFP and its operation can be found on the ACNFP website at: www.acnfp.food.gov.uk or from:

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Aviation House

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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.

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 Chair 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.:
 - (i) a grant for the running of a unit or department for which a member is responsible;
 - (ii) 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);
 - (iii) 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

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NOVEL FOODS AND PROCESSES (ACNFP)

Recruitment of New Members

The Food Standards Agency wishes to appoint five new members to the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP).

The ACNFP is an independent body of experts that advises the Food Standards Agency on any matters relating to novel foods and novel food processes.

The five vacancies are for experts in the following fields:

Allergy – 1 expert with clinical experience and 1 with expertise in plant science.

Microbiology, with particular emphasis on the gut

Molecular Biology (GM)

Toxicology

The successful candidates for membership will be a recognised expert and will have a good track record in the assessment and interpretation of scientific data. They will also be able to contribute to the formulation and delivery of advice to the Board of the Food Standards Agency, have strong communication skills, and be aware of relevant food safety issues.

Appointments are normally for a term of 1 to 3 years. The Committee meets up to six times a year in London, usually on a Wednesday or Thursday. Appointments are made on an unsalaried basis. However, an attendance fee will be available and all legitimate expenses will be fully reimbursed.

Appointments will be made strictly on merit in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments guidance on appointment to public bodies. Selection will be in accordance with the Government's Equal Opportunities policy. Successful candidates will be required to declare any interests that may be relevant to the work of the Committee.

If you are interested further details and an application pack may be obtained from the ACNFP Secretariat at Food Standards Agency, Room 1B, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6NH.

Tel: 020 7276 8596

email: acnfp@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

The closing date for receipt of completed applications is 22 February.