Report

FSA Science Council Annual Report 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Foreword

This report provides a summary of the Science Council's activities in its seventh year (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024) and reflects on its successes and challenges over the past year, as well as a forward look into future activities.

The completion of an independent tailored review of the work of the Science Council was an important landmark in the first half of the reporting period. The tailored review afforded the opportunity to review the ways in which Science Council advice has had a positive impact on the FSA during its first six years. The Science Council response to the recommendations of the Review included a change in the way of working: to move away from large reports to short, sharp, responsive pieces that are timely for the FSA's needs. This will require more agility on our part. In addition, we committed to achieving more visibility for the work of the Council both externally and within the FSA, in particular for FSA units without a direct science and evidence role. In response, one of my actions as interim chair of the Council was to participate in the November FSA all staff call to share a brief update on the work of the Council and to point staff to where further information might be obtained on the dedicated Science Council website (https://science-council.food.gov.uk/).

The final report on Food Safety in the Net Zero Era was delivered in May 2023. The working group was chaired by Mrs Claire Nicholson, with Professor Jonathan Wastling as deputy chair. I wish to thank them both for leading this work and the

other Council members for their input during the many drafts and discussions that the report necessitated.

In line with the decision to continue holding one open plenary meeting per year, the Science Council “Key Research Questions for the Future of Food Safety Workshop” on 15 March 2024 sought inputs from invited experts drawn from Council members’ networks in academia, government agencies, research institutes and industry. The workshop provided a model for future workshops dedicated to a single topic. In addition to forming the basis of a stand-alone report, the outcome of the workshop will help the Science Council to scope appropriate future project topics. With workshops in March and April and with shorter turnaround times, 2024 is a busy year.

Professor Sandy Thomas stepped down from the Science Council on 28 June 2023, having served two terms as Chair. I wish to thank Professor Thomas for her leadership, encouragement and hands-on involvement in all of the projects since her appointment as inaugural Chair of the Council in 2017. Dr Paul Turner completed his second term and stepped down from the Science Council in February 2024. I wish to thank Dr Turner for his contribution during both terms, in particular for his leadership of the Working Group on Food Hypersensitivity. Professor Patrick Wolfe completed his second term on the Council on 31 March 2024. My thanks to Professor Wolfe for his many contributions, especially for leading the Working Group on Data Usage and Digital Technology that enabled the FSA to identify opportunities afforded by new technologies.

Having served as interim chair from June 2023, I was delighted to be appointed Chair in January 2024 and look forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead and in particular to working with the FSA to ensure the advice of the Council is impactful and timely.

Prof John O’Brien, Chair of the FSA Science Council

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the Science Council’s activities in its seventh year (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024) and reflects on its successes and challenges over that period as well as a forward look into future activities.

The purpose of the Science Council is to help ensure that the FSA identifies, sources, integrates and uses the best scientific evidence and expertise from all relevant disciplines to inform and deliver its work. FSA defines science in a broad

and inclusive way, including the life, social and economic, digital and data sciences. This means the Science Council takes a multidisciplinary approach to deliver and inform its recommendations.

The Council meets four times a year in plenary, one of which includes an open session where members of the public can be invited. This year the 13th open plenary was held on 15 March 2024 and was an open workshop titled ‘Key research questions for the future of food safety’ with external experts helping to identify 50 key questions on food safety relevant to the FSA’s remit.

This year the Council completed its review of Net Zero Carbon and Food Safety (published in May 20231) and started work on a project on “Wider Impacts Beyond Food Safety Risk Assessment” about the practicalities of how the FSA might include non-food safety risk impacts (such as animal welfare, the environment) in its decision-making process.

Science Council and Secretariat also developed and agreed the Council’s new ways of working in light of the recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) review (Published in June 2023).

Outside of the period covered by this review but still of interest are the updates made to the Terms of Reference for the Science Council in light of the new ways of working. They can be found on the Science Council website at https://science-council.food.gov.uk/SCToR.

Changes in Membership

During the reporting period three Science Council members completed their terms: The Chair Prof Sandy Thomas in June, Prof Patrick Woolfe in March and Dr Paul Turner in February.

Prof John O’Brien stood in as interim Chair whilst the open recruitment exercise of the Chair’s position took place, which he then was successful at and became Chair on 28 February.

Prof Tom Oliver, Prof Richard Smith, Prof Emily Burton and Jacquiline Healing were recruited and started as members on 28 February, expanding the total number of members to 11.

Science Council Work Programme

This section sets out the reviews and workshops which have been ongoing for the Science Council over the period of this report.

Review of Science Advisory Councils

The Science Council was part of a wider Tailored Periodic Review of FSA's Science Advisory Committees (SACs) during 2022 and 2023. The FSA's SACs are non-statutory and advisory non-departmental public bodies (ANDPBs) or Departmental Expert Committees (DECs) which are subject to assessment under the Cabinet Office Public Bodies review programme. The last Review was commissioned in September 2015 and concluded in 2016; since then, there has been the creation of two new committees: the Science Council and Advisory Committee on Social Science.

The purpose of this Review was to provide assurance to the FSA that the SACs roles and purposes are appropriate in addressing the future needs of the FSA, consumers and wider Government, and that the bodies are operating effectively. The Review evaluated how the SACs work together and with other relevant bodies against their objectives and provided recommendations for future ways of working.

The Review followed two stages:

1. The ongoing need for the functions provided by the body and the benefits to users and stakeholders; it then considered the best delivery model for the functions that are still needed.

2. Considerations of how the body operates, including relationships with stakeholders, opportunities for efficiencies and improved performance, and governance.

During this, the SACs as ANDPBs were assessed against three criteria:

- Is this a technical function which needs external expertise to deliver?

- Is this a function which needs to be delivered with absolute political impartiality?

- Is this a function which needs to be delivered independently of Ministers to establish facts or figures with integrity?

Development or scoping of future Science Council projects was put on hold due to the above review, as it couldn't be said with certainty at the time what purpose or ways of working Science Council would follow after the review.

Net Zero Carbon and Food Safety Review

The review "FSA Science Council Working Group 6 - Food Safety in the Net Zero Era" began in summer 2021, led by Science Council members Mrs Claire Nicholson (WG6 Chair) and Prof Jonathan Wastling (WG6 Deputy Chair) with advice and support from Profs Peter Gregory, Simon Pearson and John O'Brien. Other Science Council members also actively contributed. Secretariat support was provided by Mr P Nunn. The final report was published in May 2023 on the SC website.

- Study purpose: The study aimed to understand potential risks to food and animal feed safety due to changes in food production practices aimed at achieving net zero carbon.

- Phases and methods: Conducted in four phases, involving structured interviews, workshops with experts and civil servants, and a review of relevant literature.

- Categories of change: Identified three categories of change in primary production towards net zero carbon: evolution of production systems, novel changes to existing systems, and new products.

- Safety risks: Assessed potential food and feed safety risks associated with changing production systems, new food raw materials, and the circular economy.

- Conclusions: Eight conclusions highlight that while no unknown safety hazards were identified, the degree and balance of known risks may change with new technologies.

- Recommendations: Eight recommendations were made to the FSA, grouped under three themes:

- Surveillance and engagement: Active surveillance of production changes and engagement with producers and consumers.

- Inter-departmental cooperation: Collaboration between government departments and regulatory review.

- Research and horizon scanning: Systematic analysis of research gaps to understand risks and benefits in a low carbon economy.

Considering Wider Impacts in Food Safety Risk Assessment

The review “Report of Working Group on Wider Impacts Beyond Food Safety Risk Assessment” began work in September 2023 with the final terms of reference agreed in February 2024. The Working Group, led by Science Council members Prof John O’Brien (SC Chair) with advice and support from Prof Peter Gregory, and Mrs Claire Nicholson, will address the practical requirements to consider wider impacts beyond food safety in risk assessment/management. The WG will report on how these wider impacts can be evidenced to support risk management decisions. Secretariat support will be provided by Dr Kathleen Mooney and Paul Nunn. The final report of this review will be published, along with its recommendations, in November 2024 on the SC website.

Science Council member advisory work

This included:

- ‘Key research questions for the future of food safety’ workshop on 15 March 2024. Science Council supported an FSA workshop with 24 external experts helping shortlist 50 key questions on food safety (from 262 submissions) relevant to the FSA’s remit. The shortlisted questions informed the FSA’s Areas of Research Interest (ARI) formulation in 2024 and future Science Council work. A write-up of the workshop findings will be available early next year.

- At the request of the Strategic Insights Team (SIT) Science Council took part in a workshop in September 2023 to assess the key themes highlighted in the FSA Strategic Assessment 2023 and provided feedback and recommendations.

- The Chair and other Science Council members attended two virtual workshops in September 2023 run by GO-Science to address food systems chronic risk. The workshops drew on expertise from many disciplines and government departments and was aimed at identifying broad risk scenarios, potential interventions to mitigate risks, or suggestions to harness opportunities.

- Peter Borriello worked closely with the Advisory Committee on Microbiological Standards (ACMSF) to on the use of terminology in their recent report on Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR).

- Advised on specification of an AI in food systems review by SIT in December 2023.

- Provided their expert input on key emerging threats, opportunities or issues to the biannual FSA Business Delivery Group (BDG) horizon scanning exercise starting in October 2023. This is carried out to help with planning FSA strategy over the next 12 months and complement the Strategic Assessment SIT produce every 2 years. to provide independent external insight.

Future Work

Science Council will continue to advise FSA officials on issues of science strategy and will be liaising with senior FSA officials and the FSA Board in October 2024 to identify and prioritise Science Council's future work profile.

Annual Costs

The operation of the Science Council is funded by the FSA. For the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 – covering project costs, members' expenses (travel, subsistence, and accommodation) and fees and administrative costs for meetings – total costs:

Total Science Council spend (rounded to nearest pound) £31,152

The above figure includes:

- Fees and travel & subsistence (T&S) for members £16,218
- Fees and T&S for the chair s* £11,301
- Fees and T&S for external experts £806
- Venue hire and associated costs (e.g. catering) £2,827

Information on fee rates and expenses guidance are included in the FSA SAC Guidance on Committee Fees and Expenses.

*Prof Sandy Thomas (March to June) and Prof John O'Brien (July to March)

Appendix I: Who are the Council Members?

The FSA's Science Council is an independent expert committee comprising a Chair and nine members. It was established in April 2017 and its role is to provide high-level, expert strategic insight, challenge, and advice to the FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), the Board and Executive on the FSA's use of

science to deliver its objectives. The members during this reporting period were:

Prof John O'Brien (Chair)

Prof J O'Brien is Founder of the Food Observatory, UK and a Visiting Prof at Ulster University, Coleraine. In his previous career to 2018 he led the Nestlé global competence centre for Food Safety & Quality and the company's Food Safety and Integrity Research Programme in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Claire Nicholson

Claire Nicholson is the Science Council member representing the consumer interest and has held a range of roles representing consumer interests including having been an Independent Director to represent Consumer Interests on the Board of Red Tractor.

Prof Jonathan Wastling

Prof Wastling is Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Brunel University, London. He is a Prof of Infection Biology specialising in human and animal infectious diseases with a long-standing interest in food security.

Prof Peter Gregory

Prof Gregory is Emeritus Prof of Global Food Security at the University of Reading having previously been Prof of Soil Science at the same university. He is chair of the Recommended List Board for the AHDB and the board of Crops For the Future UK CIC.

Prof Michael Tildesley

Prof Michael Tildesley is a Prof in the Zeeman Institute for Systems Biology and Infectious Disease Epidemiology Research at the University of Warwick. His research focuses upon the development of models of infectious diseases and their utility as predictive tools.

Prof Simon Pearson

Prof Simon Pearson is Prof of Agri-Food Technology and Founding Director of the Lincoln Institute of Agri-Food Technology at the University of Lincoln. He specialises in interdisciplinary research that spans the agri-food system, including

agri-food robotics, use of digital systems in food manufacturing, the application of AI across the food chain and data governance in complex systems.

Prof Peter Borriello CB

Prof Peter Borriello CB has had a long career in research and has led human and veterinary national institutions. These have included the Public Health Laboratory Service Central Public Health Laboratory, the Health Protection Agency Centre for Infections, the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, and most recently Chief Executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Prof Tom Oliver

Prof Tom Oliver is the Research Dean for Environment at the University of Reading and a Prof of Applied Ecology. He has advised Defra in the UK government, helping them to set up a 'Systems Research Programme', and the Cabinet Office on 'chronic risks' to complement the UK National Security Risk Assessment.

Prof Richard Smith

Prof Richard Smith is Prof of Public Health Economics and Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor for the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at the University of Exeter. He was previously the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Strategy Integration and Resources, and prior to Exeter was Dean of the Faculty of Public Health & Policy at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Jacqueline Healing

Jacqueline Healing is a Food scientist with over 40 year's experience directing and leading food safety programmes for food retailers globally.

Prof Emily Burton

Prof Emily Burton is Prof of Sustainable Food Production and co-lead for Nottingham Trent University Sustainable Futures Research Theme. She has worked alongside the poultry industry on research programmes for 25 years and now leads the University's Poultry Nutrition Research Unit.

Members' interests are recorded in the Science Council register of interests which can be found on the Science Council website at https://science-

council.food.gov.uk/RoI.

Left Science Council during the reporting period:

Prof Sandy Thomas

Prof Thomas is Director of the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, and an Honorary Prof at the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex.

Doctor Paul Turner

Doctor Turner is an MRC Clinician Scientist and Clinical Senior Lecturer in Paediatric Allergy & Immunology at Imperial College London, and Clinical Associate Prof at the University of Sydney.

Prof Patrick J Woolfe

Prof Wolfe is Frederick L. Hovde Dean of Science and Miller Family Prof of Statistics and Computer Science at Purdue University. He holds chairs in statistics and computer science at University College London, where he specialises in the mathematical foundations of data science.

Appendix II: Science Council self-assessment against good practice guidelines for the independent scientific advisory committees

Twenty-nine principles of good practice have been developed by the Chairs of the SACs that advise the FSA. These FSA Good Practice Guidelines for Science Advisory Committees were reviewed and updated in 2012.

Different committees have different duties and discharge those duties in different ways. Therefore, not all the twenty-nine principles set out below will be applicable to all of the committees, all of the time. This list of principles is considered by each committee annually as part of the preparation of its annual report and is attached as an Appendix to it.

Response by the FSA Science Council for the period of its Annual Report (from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024)

The role of the Science Council is to provide high-level, expert strategic insight, challenge and advice to the FSA's Board and executive of the FSA and Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) on the FSA's use of science to deliver FSA objectives. Its role does not require it to carry out risk assessments or detailed investigations of scientific dossiers on specific risks, products or processes.

It did, however, engage with experts to identify potential hazards associated with moving to net zero agriculture/food production and considering wider impacts in risk-based food safety assessment, and in doing so, sought to abide by the principles of good practice developed by the FSA and Government Office of Science.

SAC Principles

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 back 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 Secretariat will discuss this with the FSA to ensure the definition and rationale for the work and its expected use by the FSA are clear.

Complies: The FSA's CSA attends most Science Council meetings and discusses the rationale for the questions posed to or by the Council with them. The Science Council Chair also has regular meetings with the FSA's CSA, and the Chief Executive where any questions from the FSA or initiated by the Council are considered further. FSA contributions to Working Groups (such as meetings with staff who lead on relevant policy/science areas and contributions to meetings) enables ongoing discussion and clarification.

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.

Complies: Science Council holds full open plenary meetings once a year. Most of the management of Science Council reviews do not meet in public but is reported

during open sessions and published as final reports. Working Groups consult stakeholders and the FSA's SACs as and when appropriate. The 13th Science Council open meeting was specifically used as a workshop consulting experts to shortlist 50 key research questions from a longlist of 262 across the FSA remit provided by those experts beforehand. For the wider impacts project external experts were consulted on the development of the case studies that were used in a later workshop.

3. Wherever possible, SAC discussions should be held in public.

Complies: Science Council holds open meetings once a year whose proceedings are published. Science Council reviews often do not hold working meetings in public, but all reviews are published.

4. The scope of literature searches made on behalf of the SAC will be clearly set out.

Complies: The scope of literature considered as part of preparing the report of the WG6 review is provided in the report.

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.

Complies: The Science Council does not routinely consider detailed primary scientific documents, but it does rigorously examine the evidence that is presented. Members and the secretariat are expected to bring relevant additional materials to the attention of the Council. During the initial stages of the Wider Impacts Project experts in the three case study topics were consulted and they provided insight and guidance on key publications for consideration.

6. Data from stakeholders will be considered and weighted according to quality by the SAC.

Complies: The Science Council weighed all relevant information according to quality, irrespective of its source. Experts engaged with for the Wider Impacts Project and key research questions workshop were selected based on their type and degree of expertise, consulting with Science Council and FSA officials to find the best fit.

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.

Complies: The Science Council kept this principle under review, and it has the option to co-opt or invite external input where necessary, through mechanisms such as the FSA's Register of Specialists.

As the "Future of Food Safety" workshop and the Wider Impact Project cover a diversity of food issues the Science Council has consulted with experts in many fields including animal feed, aquaculture, novel proteins and sustainability.

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.

Complies: Working Groups consult the FSA SACs as appropriate. The Council has regular engagement with other FSA SACs and, as well as the Council Chair attending the regular workshops of SAC Chairs and the cross-government Chairs of SACs, Council members are paired with a SAC relevant to their expertise, for regular updates and cross-engagement. The ACSS has been frequently consulted on the social science aspects of Science Council work, including their Chair Julie Hill participating in the "Future of Food Safety" workshop and the wider impacts review.

Validation

9. Study design, methods of measurement and the way that analysis of data has been carried out will be assessed by the SAC.

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.

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.

12. When considering what evidence needs to be collected 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.

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.

9-13. Science Council complies, to the extent these criteria apply to its work: The Science Council does not generally consider the type of detailed risk assessment and analyses of scientific data that are the primary focus of these criteria. However, it does advise on foresight, best practice, governance and assurance of the FSA's use of science.

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.

15. Any assumptions made by the SAC will be clearly spelled out, and, in reviews, previous assumptions will be challenged.

16. Data gaps will be identified and their impact on uncertainty assessed by the SAC.

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.

14-17. Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: The Science Council does not generally consider the type of detailed risk assessment and analyses of scientific data that are the primary focus of these criteria. However, it does advise on foresight, best practice, governance and assurance of the FSA's use of science. In reporting the results of its strategic reviews, the Science Council always seeks to be clear about limitations on data informing conclusions and any caveats on their conclusions.

Drawing Conclusions

18. The SAC will be broad-minded, acknowledging where conflicting views exist and considering whether alternative interpretations fit the same evidence.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: This is implicit in the Science Council's role to provide high-level, expert strategic insight, challenge and advice to the FSA's Board and executive and CSA on the FSA's use

of science to deliver FSA objectives. For the wider impacts project the Council sought several perspectives where it was felt necessary to get a rounded view of each case study.

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.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: The Science Council does not carry out formal assessments of risk and/or benefits as such. It would consider the advantages and disadvantages of different options in making its recommendations. The Science Council will always make clear any caveats or limitations on its advice.

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.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: This is covered explicitly in the Science Council Code of Practice.

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.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: Science Council aims to follow this principle. When reporting Science Council clearly caveats its recommendations, setting out the uncertainty and limitations on the conclusions it has reached given the evidence (qualitative or quantitative) it used to reach them.

22. SACs will make recommendations about general issues that may have relevance for other committees.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: This is implicit in the Science Council's role to provide high-level, expert strategic insight, challenge and advice to the FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser, the Board and the executive of the FSA on the FSA's use of science to deliver its objectives.

Communicating SAC's conclusions

23. Conclusions will be expressed by the SAC in clear, simple terms and use the minimum caveats consistent with accuracy.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: Given the high-level strategic advice the Science Council provides; this tends to lend itself to minimal use of jargon and technical terms and it aimed to make its reports clear and concise to the lay audience. The Science Council's published papers and reports are reviewed against accessibility criteria so that the Council's work is inclusive.

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.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: Science Council meeting papers and minutes made clear the origin of issues under discussion. It puts its conclusions in the context of other work where appropriate.

25. The conclusions will be supported by a statement about their robustness and the extent to which judgement has had to be used.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: The Science Council made clear the basis for its recommendations and any assumptions and caveats.

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.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: The Science Council did not carry out risk assessment or assessment of detailed scientific data of the type that is the focus for this criterion. However, it does include a list of references in its wider impacts review report.

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.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: The Science Council followed this criterion.

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 particular issues within their committees' remits, in advance of discussion at open Board meetings.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: This did not apply directly, since the Science Council did not carry out full risk assessments or detailed reviews of scientific evidence. This is because the Science Council reviews topics of strategic science interest and presents recommendations based on those reviews but does not carry out risk assessment or assessment of detailed scientific data. However, Science Council annual activity and review reports (where commissioned by the Board) are presented to the FSA Board, in most cases by the Science Council Chair and the Chair of the relevant review. During this reporting period, however, no review commissioned by the FSA Board was reported to the Board.

The Science Council Chair (Prof. John O'Brien) would normally have reported Science Council activity over the last year to the FSA Board in March at the end of this reporting period, but this was postponed to October 2024.

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.

Science Council complies to the extent these criteria apply to its work: When submitting recommendations at the end of a review, the Science Council asks for feedback and reports from FSA on progress in acting on these recommendations (typically 12 months from the review report being presented to the FSA Board). The Working Group 6 report on net zero and food safety was presented to the FSA during this reporting period. Science Council will most likely ask for an update on FSA activity in response to its recommendations around May 2025.