

Science Council advice to the FSA

These reports provide advice and recommendations from the Science Council Working Groups to the FSA.

Working Group 1 on science capability and assurance

The Science Council Working Group One (WG1) on Science Capability and Assurance has addressed the challenge set to the Council by the FSA Chairman at the Council's first meeting on 16 June 2017: 'To advise the Board on how it can be confident that FSA has access to the right science capability and is using science to the best of its ability'.

The WG has taken a two-phased approach. Phase one focused on how the FSA identifies and accesses the scientific evidence, advice and capabilities it needs. Phase two addressed how the FSA uses these inputs to inform its decisions and policies.

- [FSA Science Council WG1 Capability and Assurance final report](#)

Working Group 2 on risk and uncertainty

The Council established a Working Group to address the question 'What does the Council advise to be the best practice in establishing and communicating risk and uncertainty?', in a phased approach. The first phase (December 2017) considered the current FSA (and other relevant) approaches to establishing risk and uncertainty, and produced advice in the form of draft principles for best practice and what the FSA should do where any gaps exist or opportunities to improve arise. The second phase (June 2018) built on this and considered current and best practice in communicating risk and uncertainty and any opportunities for the FSA to improve. It was useful for phase one to consider the key findings that need to be communicated about, to ensure these were covered in the approach to

establishing risk and uncertainty.

- [FSA Science Council WG2 Risk and Uncertainty final report](#)

Working Group 3 on food system risks and horizon scanning

Science Council Working Group 3 (WG3) on Food System Risks and Horizon Scanning was established to address the challenge set to the Science Council by the FSA Chairman on the 16 June 2017: “What should the FSA do to improve its horizon scanning and its understanding of global food systems risks (and opportunities)?” Drivers for this question are set out in the [WG3 Terms of Reference](#) , arising in part from one of the goals in the Regulating our Future programme: to anticipate future risks, harness innovation and be active rather than reactive.

WG3 worked with the FSA to design a tender commissioned by FSA for a desk study, carried out by RAND Europe to help better understand the current global food system context and its emerging issues, aligning the FSA’s place within it, aiding the development of a function capable of identifying gaps which exist in the FSA’s ability to respond to potential risks

- [FSA Science Council WG3 Food System Risks and Horizon Scanning final report](#)

Working Group 4 on data usage and digital technology

The Science Council Working Group on Data Usage and Digital Technology (Working Group 4) has aimed to provide independent advice and assurance to the Food Standards Agency’s (FSA) Board on how the FSA might be assured that it is and remains best equipped to understand the next phase of opportunities (and challenges) associated with the digitalisation of our food system.

Working Group 4 has provided six high-level recommendations which seek to protect and encourage the FSA’s strategic positioning on data and digital opportunities. These could perhaps be summarised as supporting the key areas of governance, capability and culture.

[View FSA Science Council WG4 Data Usage and Digital Technology final report as PDF](#) (437 KB)

Working Group 5 on food hypersensitivity

The Science Council Working Group (WG) on food hypersensitivity (FHS) was established to answer the question set by the FSA Board in May 2019 asking that the Science Council:

- Consider and advise on future research priorities and direction in respect to FHS.
- Conduct a review of the science and evidence base for addressing FHS, and the part the FSA and others should play in enhancing knowledge.

The Science Council conducted a review which looked at the previous and current Research programme, including an assessment of best practice in undertaking such a programme. This was done via structured interviews with FSA staff. This part of the review was presented as an interim report to the FSA Board in September 2020.

PDF

[View Science Council Working Group 5 on Hypersensitivity Interim Report as PDF](#) (250.38 KB)

PDF

[View Science Council Working Group 5 on Hypersensitivity Interim Report Annexes as PDF](#) (699.71 KB)

It then looked to the future, carrying out a Priority Setting Exercise (PSE) with wide stakeholder input, to identify research priorities for the FSA over the next 5 years in the area of FHS, and a review of the existing literature associated with these identified priorities. This was followed by a horizon scanning workshop for identification of future priorities in a 5 to 15-year timeframe. The results were presented at the FSA Board meeting in June 2021.

PDF

[View Science Council Working Group 5 Review on Food Hypersensitivity \(Final Report\) June 2021 as PDF](#) (882.51 KB)

Rapid Evidence Review 1: Critical Appraisal of Third-Party Evidence

The Science Council Working Group Rapid Evidence Review 1 on the Critical Appraisal of Third-Party Evidence was established in September 2020. Its final report was provided to the FSA in June 2021. This review established a set of guidelines for the quality of unsolicited third party evidence sent to the FSA for consideration.

PDF

[View The FSA Science Council's Rapid Evidence Review on the Critical Appraisal of Third-Party Evidence as PDF](#) (398.25 KB)

Working Group 6 on Food Safety and Net Zero Carbon

This review looked at which changes to help achieve NZC in primary food production (i.e. agriculture, aquaculture) may have implications in the next decade for the FSA delivering its role in ensuring food safety. It also identified which changes warrant further FSA investigation. The review's focus is the implications of changes to reduce carbon emissions on food safety, not the effect of climate change itself.

The report containing the review's recommendations was published in May 2023

[FSA Science Council Working Group 6 Final Report - Food Safety in the Net Zero Era](#)