

General

# Summary of Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) Activity and key issues discussed in the last 6 months

**Paper by Paul A. Nunn, Sandy Thomas, Claire Nicholson, John O'Brien and Jonathan Wastling**

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# Summary

1. This paper contains a summary of activities in the following FSA Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) over the last 6 months along with observations on issues that may be of interest to the Council from Science Council members who attend these committees.
2. Science Council members are asked to:
  - Consider the updates and feedback from their fellow members and;
  - Discuss any topics that they consider will be beneficial following up.
  - Agree to the proposed approach to participating in SAC meetings in future.

# Introduction

1. Science Council members attend the following SACs as observers:
  - **Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP):**  
Claire Nicholson
  - **Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety in Food (ACMSF):**  
Prof Jonathan Wastling
  - **Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS):** Prof Sandy Thomas
  - **Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT):** Prof John O'Brien
  - **Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COC):** Prof John O'Brien
  - **The Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COM):** Prof John O'Brien
  - **Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN):** N/A
2. Their role is to participate in these meetings and make note of issues that may be of interest to the Science Council and report these back to the plenary.
3. Discussion
  1. **Annex 1** contains the feedback provided by Council members that attended meetings of these SACs with their thoughts on topics that may be of interest to the Science Council.
  2. **Annex 2** of this paper contains an update of activity for the SACs listed above (as of 15 November).
  3. **Annex 3** contains a list of upcoming scheduled meeting dates for SACs which Science Council members attend.

4. **At the last Science Council open meeting it was agreed the secretariat would propose a practical guide to help decide whether members need to attend a particular SAC meeting or to catch-up with the Chair afterwards to obtain necessary insight. The secretariat proposed an approach circulated ahead of this meeting (see Annex 4)**

## **Recommendation(s)**

1. Science Council members are asked to:
  - Consider the update and feedback from their fellow members and;
  - Discuss any topics that they consider will benefit from follow up.
  - Agree to the proposed approach to participating in SAC meetings in future.

## **Annex 1: Science Council attendee feedback on SAC key topics**

**Sandy Thomas (ACSS):** 20/7/22 “I was pleased to attend the ACSS Plenary meeting and gave an update on the Science Council’s activities over the past six months and reflected on its successes and challenges as well a forward look into the future activities. This account covered our recent meeting with the FSA Board, the Chairs of Government SACs meeting, progress on our food safety and net zero carbon working group, new Council members, the upcoming SAC review, and possible new work disruptors to the food supply chain. This was also an opportunity to thank the ACSS, particularly Deputy Chair Julie Hill, for their input in the net zero work.”

Note – John O’Brien (as Vice Chair) attended the ACSS catch-up with Julie Hill on 12 October.

**Claire Nicholson (ACNFP):** Meetings of 7/9/22, 16/11/22

**Allergenicity and applications for alternative proteins:** Growth in consumption of alternative proteins is identified by the Science Council’s working group 6 as a key issue in the changes anticipated due to net zero. The FSA will be relying on the work of the ACNFP to assess food safety risks arising from novel and alternative proteins.

The ACNFP continues to have concerns about novel proteins and allergenicity and whether the list of 14 allergens should be reviewed.

The dilemmas in assessing products with allergic potential is illustrated by the consideration of Mung Bean protein, used as an egg substitute. Mung Bean protein might well be helpful for egg allergy sufferers and for consumers wishing to follow a vegan diet, however, Mung Bean Protein may also present a risk to consumers with a legume allergy.

**Supplements - foods or medicines?:** Many ACNFP applications are for food supplements which consumers might purchase for perceived health benefits, blurring the lines between foods and medicines. Recent examples include: *Tetradenia riparia* and Calcidol. Better knowledge about how consumers use supplements when not under medical supervision would be useful when assessing these types of application. Confusion for consumers and suppliers can also arise with different requirements in the internationally about health claims. Online advice (and supply of products) does not always recognise national borders. Companies like Amazon are helpful when breaches are found, but they are unable to keep pace with everything their third party suppliers list.

**CBD Oil:** The ACNFP has formed a sub-group to work on CBD related consumer safety issues, with particular consideration of the toxicological data. The sub-group is aiming to determine whether consumer advice on consumption of CBD products should be updated.

**Use of solvents in CBD production processes:** The ACNFP discussed how to establish when solvents are used as extraction solvents in production processes for CBD products. The use of extraction solvents may require ACNFP assessment.

**Precision bred organisms:** A sub-group of the ACNFP has been considering the safety issues arising from Precision bred organisms. A workshop was held on 15<sup>th</sup> November to consider how and when additional scrutiny by the FSA is needed to protect consumer safety without creating unnecessary regulatory burdens for industry.

**John O'Brien (COT, COM & COC):** Meetings of 9/6/22 COM; 21/7/22 COC; missed COT meetings

**COT.** The COT discussed a number of food-supplement related safety questions during the course of 2022. These included turmeric and curcumin; raspberry leaf; green tea polyphenols. The COT hosted a workshop in July on "Opportunities and

outlook for UK food and chemicals regulation post EU exit” This was a valuable update and well appreciated. There was ongoing work on maternal toxicity in association with questions posed by the Scientific Committee on Nutrition during its risk assessment on nutrition and maternal health. The COT finalized its second draft statement on the effects of lead on maternal health.

**COC.** The horizon scanning activity of COC was particularly useful. A few topics worth noting were microplastics/microparticles; the challenge of regulation of the same substance under different product scenarios (e.g. food vs toys); and the potential link between endocrine activity and carcinogenesis. The COC has referred to and discussed the recent paper by Doe *et al.* (2021) (Arch. Toxicol. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00204-022-03324-z>), which proposed a new approach to the classification of carcinogenicity compatible with the new approach methodologies (NAMs) which would classify carcinogens based on both mode of action and potency. The time devoted to horizon scanning by SACs and the development and updating of guidance documents is an important means of staying ahead of scientific/market trends.

COC had an important discussion on the way the SAC advice is formulated, how it is used and the overall impact.

**COM.** Discussed the EFSA paper on the re-evaluation of acrylamide genotoxicity in the light of the recent Eisenbrand (2020) paper (Arch. Toxicol. 94, 2929). While agreeing that there remain unanswered questions regarding the mode(s) of action of carcinogenicity of acrylamide, COM opined that the new data did not resolve the complexity. COM agreed with the conclusion of the EFSA review.

**All of the above SACs have devoted time to the development of guidance documents.** A useful draft document was entitled “How the committees evaluate the relevance and reliability of data when assessing a chemical of concern”. This is a valuable generic communication and guidance tool which addresses the SAC process, the assembly of evidence, the weighing of evidence, and the assessment of the relevance and reliability of evidence including statistical considerations. Some of the guidance documents are complementary and should be considered as part of a joined-up risk assessment paradigm: e.g. “The use of biomarkers in genotoxicity risk assessment” (COM) and “The use of biomarkers in carcinogenic risk assessment” (COC). Such guidance documents are valuable references for the work of several SACs.

**Jonathan Wastling (ACMSF):** Meeting of 20/10/22 [Contribution not received ahead of this meeting]

**Peter Gregory (ACNFP - Products of Genetic Technology (PGT) Sub-Group):** Meetings of 11/10/22, 21/11/22

I attended two, full day meetings of the recently established PGT sub-committee of ACNFP on 11 October and 21 November as an observer. The sub-committee is charged with establishing a process to assess the safety of food and feed produced through precision breeding. As the first step of this process ACRE (a DEFRA committee) decides which organisms will be categorised as Precision Bred Organisms which are equivalent to Traditionally Bred Organisms.

The PGT subcommittee discussed the possibility of a two-tiered assessment process for precision bred food and feed. The purpose of the two-tiered system is to permit proportionate examination of the proposed food or feed. My knowledge of substantial equivalence procedures has contributed to the discussions.

Much detail remains to be discussed to ensure that a robust assessment process is in place, if the bill currently moving through parliament permits the commercial growth of precision bred crops and animals.

## **Annex 2: Summary of SAC Activity over the last 6 months**

### **Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS)**

**Chair:** Julie Hill

**Secretariat:** [acss@food.gov.uk](mailto:acss@food.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://acss.food.gov.uk/>

**Updated:** October 2022

**Last meeting:** 20th July 2022 (9<sup>th</sup> plenary, open session). Minutes and papers are available on the [website](#).

#### **Key update items:**

- Julie Hill has started her role as Chair of the ACSS.
- Three new members joined the committee in October, Dr Charlotte Hardman, Professor Fiona Gillison and Dr Naomi Maynard. In October, we held a successful induction event to welcome the new members to the committee.

- ACSS secretariat and Julie Hill are attending the DEFRA SSEG (Social Science Expert Group) meeting in Cambridge in November.

### **Working group highlights:**

- The *Assurance* working group are coming to the end of their work on the 'good science' quality assurance toolkit to support the production of high-quality research. The group have also contributed to the Social Science Gateway Process, and as such review the research questions and methodology of all new social science projects.
- The *Kitchen Life 2* working group continues to support the innovative, cross-cutting and multi-disciplinary research project Kitchen Life 2. Fieldwork for the project has now been completed and the working group members are set to contribute to the behavioural interventions workshop in November.
- The *Climate Change and Consumer Behaviour* working group had a recent publication around the [impact of climate change on consumer food behaviours](#). The group has paused until new members are in position.
- The *Wider Consumer Interests* working group continues to support this new ARI and focus on Household Food Insecurity and the Consumer Insight Tracker.
- The *Economics* working group have reviewed the economic work plan for the next financial year and are provided with monthly updates on key activity within the economics team.

**Next meeting:** 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023.

## **Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP)**

**Chair:** Dr Camilla Alexander-White

**Secretariat:** [acnfp@food.gov.uk](mailto:acnfp@food.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://acnfp.food.gov.uk/>

**Updated:** September 2022

**Last meeting:** 7 September 2022

### **Key update items:**

- The Barley rice protein draft opinion was returned for further review with a request for further information regarding outstanding issues.

- The acetylated fatty acids draft opinion was also reviewed with a copy to be circulated to Members for further input.
- A new application, Magnesium-L-threonate was reviewed for the first time with more information to be requested from the applicant.
- The first meeting of the ACNFP/COT subcommittee held on 27/07/2022 considered toxicology datasets and concluded that a list of toxicological uncertainties must be tackled before opinions on the safety of CBD isolates can be made. The next meeting will be on 28/10/2022 discussing CBD isolates and Synthetics CBD products with the hope to provide an outlook on CBD validation going into the new year.
- A workshop was held to review the latest discussion of the Products of Genetic Technologies (PGT) Subcommittee on the development of framework for Precision Bred Organisms. Further work is being planned for the PGT Subcommittee.

**Next meeting:** 16 November 2022

## **Sub-Committees**

### **Products of Genetic Technologies Subcommittee (PGT)**

**Date:** 11 October 2022

#### **Key update items:**

Format and level of details for minutes, executive summaries, and opinions reviewed; opinions for applicants RP188, RP212 and RP652 (GM renewals) and minutes for PGT1 and PGT2 to be agreed by correspondence. The meeting also included three Precision breeding workshops.

**Next meeting:** 21 November 2022.

### **Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes and Committee on Toxicity on CBD and Hemp Derived Products**

**Date:** 28 September 2022

#### **Key update items:**

Format and level of details for CBD updates implemented for future CBD updates, level of details for minutes and datasets reviewed. Opinions for the advisory levels of CBD isolates reviewed twice thus far and concluded to be settled using a reserved ADI of 10mg/kg. Minutes for CBD1 has completed review, with CBD2



soon to follow. A package containing the minutes of CBD1 and CBD2 is planned.

**Next meeting:** 30 November 2022 – ACI Consortium Dataset to be discussed using the reserved ADI

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

**Chair:** Professor Bill Keevil

**Secretariat:** [acmsf@food.gov.uk](mailto:acmsf@food.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://acmsf.food.gov.uk/>

**Updated:** October 2022

**Last meeting:** 20 October 2022

### **Key update items:**

#### [Matters arising](#) (ACM/1391)

- The Secretariat produced an information paper that summarised action taken on points arise from the minutes of previous meetings.

#### Horizon Scanning Workshop Output (ACM/1392)

- The Committee considered the finalised version of the output from the June 2022 horizon scanning workshop (paper to be published after meeting)

#### [Quality Assurance of Microbiological Strategic Risk Assessments](#) (ACM/1393)

- Members discussed the process used to review the FSA's microbiological food safety strategic risk assessments.

#### UK Food Safety Network

- Members were updated on the objectives of the network as well as research priorities that have been developed with food stakeholders, and the network's planned activities.

#### [Dates of future meetings](#) (ACM/1394)

Epidemiology of Foodborne Infections Group (ACM/1395) **Reserved Business**

- Members received update on the outcome of the EFIG meeting held on 7 June 2022.

Survey of microbiological quality of ready to eat food sold on social media (ACM/1396) **Reserved Business**

- Food Standard Scotland presented an overview of a proposed survey to provide a baseline understanding of the microbiological quality of Ready To Eat (RTE) food sold through social media.

Update/milestones IID3 (ACM/1397) **Reserved Business**

- Members received a presentation on the third study of infectious intestinal disease in the UK project (IID3) and updated on current progress.

Information papers:

- ACM/1398: [ACMSF Work plan](#)
- ACM/1399: [Update from other committees](#)
- ACM/1400: [Items of interest from the literature](#)
- ACM/1401: [Food and You Wave 4](#)

**Next meeting:** 9 February 2023

## **Advisory Committee on Animal Feeding stuffs (ACAF)**

**Chair:** Prof Nicholas Jonsson

**Secretariat:** [acaf@food.gov.uk](mailto:acaf@food.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://acaf.food.gov.uk/>

**Updated:** - November 2022

**Last meeting:** 6 October 2022

**Key update items:**

- The plenary discussed:
  - Dimethylglycine sodium salt RP665
  - Hostazym RP593
  - Lactococcus lactis DSM 11037 RP686
  - Saccharomyces cerevisiae RP694

**Next meeting:** 9 December 2022

## **Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT)**

**Chair:** Professor Alan Boobis

**Secretariat:** [cot@food.gov.uk](mailto:cot@food.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://cot.food.gov.uk/>

**Updated:** November 2022

**Last meeting:** 25th October 2022.

### **Key update items:**

At their **October** meeting the Committee discussed:

- [volatile organic compounds](#) in aircraft cabin air in comparison with work environments;
- can coating;
- a review of the guidance levels for [fortificants](#) in bread and flour regulations; and
- provided comments on a Public Consultation on a draft EFSA draft opinion on [N\[1\]Nitrosamines](#) in Food.

They also considered a draft statement on:

- the potential risk to human health of [turmeric and curcumin](#); and
- the draft COT workshop report.

**Next meeting:** 14th December 2022.

## **Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COC)**

**Chair:** Professor David Harrison

**Secretariat:** [COC@phe.gov.uk](mailto:COC@phe.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/committee-on-carcinogenicity-of-chemicals-in-food-consumer-products-and-the-environment-coc>

**Updated:** November 2022

**Last meeting:** 17 November 2022

**Key update items:**

- Meeting held as workshop - “Changing the paradigm: How should we assess cancer risk in the UK?”

**Next meeting:** 16 March 2023

**Further meetings:**

- 20 July 2023
- 16 November 2023

## **The Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COM)**

**Chair:** Prof Gareth Jenkins

**Secretariat:** [COM@phe.gov.uk](mailto:COM@phe.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/committee-on-mutagenicity-of-chemicals-in-food-consumer-products-and-the-environment>

**Updated:** November 2022

**Last meeting:** 13 October 2022

**Key update items:**

- Review of EFSA opinion on titanium dioxide
- TMBPF-DGE can coating (reserved)
- Horizon scanning
- Draft guidance statement “The Use of Biomarkers in Genotoxicity Risk Assessment
- Non expert summaries for COM website

**Next meeting:** 23 February 2023

**Further meetings:**

- 15 June 2023
- 12 October 2023

## **Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN)**

**Chair:** Professor Ian Young

**Secretariat:** [SACN@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:SACN@dhsc.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-committee-on-nutrition>

**Updated:** November 2022

**Last meeting:** 11 November 2022

### **Key update items:**

- Feeding young children aged 1-5
- Vitamin D fortification update
- Updated SACN framework

**Next meeting:** 16 March 2023

### **Further meetings:**

- 22 June 2023
- 23 November 2023

## **Annex 3: Confirmed plenary meeting dates for Scientific Advisory Committees (SACS) over the next 12 months**

(as of 15 November)

### **Science Council (SC)**

- 7 September 2023 (13<sup>th</sup> open meeting)

**Advisory Committee on Social Science (ACSS),** Prof Sandy Thomas (observer)

- 2 February 2023 (10<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting)

**The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT),** Prof John O'Brien (observer)

- 14 December 2022
- 7 February 2023
- 28 March 2023
- 16 May 2023
- 11 July 2023
- 5 September 2023
- 17 October 2023
- 12 December 2023

**Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COC), Prof John O'Brien (observer)**

- 16 March 2023
- 20 July 2023
- 16 November 2023

**Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COM), Prof John O'Brien (observer)**

- 23 February 2023
- 15 June 2023
- 12 October 2023

**Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP), Claire Nicholson (observer)**

- 16 November 2023
- 8 February 2023
- 26 April 2023
- 14 June 2023
- 13 September 2023
- 15 November 2023

**Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety in Food (ACMSF), Prof Jonathan Wastling (observer)**

- 9 February 2023
- 22 June 2023
- 19 October 2023

**Advisory Committee on Animal Feedstuffs**

- 9 December 2022

- 15 February 2023
- 4 April 2023
- 8 May 2023
- 26 July 2023
- 5 October 2023
- 7 December 2023

### **Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN)**

- 16 March 2023
- 22 June 2023
- 23 November 2023

## **Annex 4: Secretariat proposal for engaging with other Scientific Advisory Committees in future.**

To ensure efficient use of Council member's time when they participate in other Scientific Advisory Committee's meetings:

1. When you receive the agenda for an upcoming SAC meeting, please review the items under discussion and consider which are likely to be of interest to Science Council and require you are present at the meeting. If you are uncertain, then please discuss with secretariat or the Science Council Chair.
2. If the majority of the agenda qualifies your attendance, then you are encouraged to attend the whole meeting.
3. If only a few agenda items qualify your attendance you should consider attending only for those parts of the meeting where possible.
4. If the agenda contains items that are of interest but could instead be addressed by catching up with the Chair afterwards (e.g attending the full assessment of a novel food dossier is not necessary when a summary from the Chair after will do). In this case, we suggest you contact the secretariat to notify them that you won't be attending but ask them to arrange a 30-minute meeting with the SAC Chair shortly after the meeting to catch-up on what was discussed and whether Science Council could assist.
5. The Science Council Chair suggests that observers should not be attending more than a third of meetings with fireside chats being used to cover those not attended.

### **Reporting back to the Science Council**

Within a week of attending the SAC meeting or meeting with the SAC Chair, please send an e-mail to Science Council secretariat with a subject line starting "Readout" followed by the SAC acronym and the date of the relevant meeting. In the main body of the e-mail please

1. indicate if this is about a meeting or a catch-up with the SAC Chair,
2. provide a short readout of relevant discussion to Science Council and
3. any follow-up for the Science Council to take forward (*optional*).