

FSA Science Council 3rd meeting Work programme (information paper)

Background

1. At the first meeting of the Science Council in June 2017 the FSA Chairman Heather Hancock outlined the three strategic priorities the FSA needs to concentrate on over the next two to three years: Delivering the Regulating Our Future (ROF) transformation; anticipating, planning for and delivering the consequences of exiting the EU; doing the day job exceptionally well. Heather introduced the main issues and challenges on which the FSA would like input from the Science Council in its first two years of operation:
 - I. To advise the Board on how it can get confident that we have access to the right science capability and capacity.
 - II. What does the Council advise to be best practice in establishing and communicating risk and certainty?
 - III. What should the FSA do to improve its horizon scanning and its understanding of global food systems risks (and opportunities)?

Current Science Council work programme

2. Working Groups of the Science Council have been set up to answer the questions, taking a phased approach so that the Council delivers useful outputs as it works.
3. The Science Council Chair provided her first annual report¹ on the Science Council's work to the FSA Board at the 14 March 2018 open Board meeting.
4. The Working Groups set up to answer questions I and II above are completing the final phase of their work with reports to the June 2018 meeting. The next step will be to finalise and hand over their recommendations to the FSA in July 2018.
5. Working Group 3 is working to a longer timetable. It will report on progress at the June 2018 Council meeting and plans to provide its final report to the December 2018 meeting.
6. The Council Chair and FSA would like to start to discuss possible priorities beyond this and they have invited Science Council Member Patrick Wolfe to consider what further work the Council could undertake in the area of data exploitation.

Future work programme

7. The Science Council will have a feedback/reflection session after the meeting on 27 June and this will also generate some ideas for future work to bring into discussions at future Council meetings.
8. Some ideas for possible issues were set out at the Council's December meeting (and are reproduced below). These arose in the course of

¹ <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa180306.pdf>

discussions with the FSA Chair, CSA, Council Chair and Secretariat. They are presented as ideas for discussion, not as a set of agreed priorities.

Innovation in the food chain

9. Part of the rationale for the FSA's Regulating our Future approach is that it wants to be more on the front foot, anticipate future risks and harness innovation. Innovation in food preparation and delivery and technological innovation are topical and of particular interest to the FSA.
10. In March 2016, the Triennial Review of FSA Scientific Advisory Committees recommended that: "FSA should replace the risk advisory functions of the ACNFP and the ACAF with a new core expert Committee, which would retain any future functions required from these two committees within the framework of a wider remit on innovation in the food chain."
11. The FSA has completed some in-house scoping work to evaluate the FSA's need for advice on innovation and to propose an approach to obtaining expert advice.
12. Fully worked up advice proposals were developed for seven different areas across FSA, and following a prioritisation exercise three of these were selected for the pilot stage.
13. The Council's role could be to consider and comment on these proposals to help identify the inputs in terms of evidence and expertise which would be needed to address them.

How should FSA science work following UK exit from the European Union

14. Does the FSA require the Science Council's advice on strategic science issues specifically related to its preparations for the UK exiting the European Union? It should be clear what sorts of outputs the FSA might require from this work. It should also be noted that the FSA's contingency planning for EU Exit does not pre-empt the outcome of the ongoing negotiations, and the Science Council advice would need to provide the flexibility to reflect this.

Future food systems

15. The question on 'what might a future food system look like and how should the FSA be prepared' is incorporated in the remit and research to inform Working Group 3.
16. However, there is scope for ongoing work for the Council to consider how the research findings will inform and shape its future work activities.