

ACAF Code of Practice - Interests and liabilities

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Interests and liabilities

Declaration of interests and management of conflicts

- As an independent, open and transparent advisory body, Members must provide clear declarations of interests. [The FSAs Approach to Managing the Interests of its External Scientific Advisers | Science advisory committees \(food.gov.uk\)](#) gives detailed guidance on how interests should be declared and how any potential conflicts should be managed. This guidance should be consulted by all Members, however a summary is provided below:
- Not all interests are necessarily ones that will cause conflict with a Member's work for the ACAF. Interests that may be seen to have relevance to their role (either personal, non-personal or those of family/friends) or the specific

topics under discussion at an ACAF meeting should be declared so the Secretariat can make an assessment of whether it could be considered a potential conflict of interests and what action may be needed in response.

- 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 invited to complete a declaration form once a year.
- The Secretariat maintains a register of interests for each Member that is updated and published online regularly. The register of interests should contain current or previous interests (including things like employment, consultancies, memberships, investments or other personal interests) that may, in general, be seen to directly affect the perceived independence of the Member or benefit from information gained whilst acting as an ACAF Member (that is not already public).
- The register of interests should be kept up-to-date and be open to the public. The Committee should discuss the register periodically as a group, to provide peer support and challenge on declaring interests.
- At the start of any formal meeting, the Chair should ask if there are any changes to the register of interests.
- Members will be asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest when assigned the role of rapporteur for a dossier.

- At the beginning of each agenda point in the meeting, the Chair should ask Members to declare any interests potentially relevant to the items under discussion relating to themselves or their close family members.
- Based on this information, the Chair will consult with the Secretariat, FSA staff and potentially other SAC Members, and decide on an approach to managing the interest.
- In the case of interests declared by the Chair, the same process will apply as to when there is an absence of the chair; the relevant FSA staff are responsible for deciding whether an interest is a conflict and if so, how it should be managed. FSA staff may also request input from other ACAF Members on appropriate action.
- The interests declared, and the chosen action should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting with the rationale for this decision.

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.

Openness and publication of documents - general principles

- The Committee operates to the standards of openness and transparency. It will work in accordance with guidelines by the FSA and relevant guidance and rules established across Government. These include:

1. [The cross-Government Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees \(CoPSAC\)](#), which includes the:

2. Principles of Scientific Advice to Government
3. The FSA's Good Practice Guidelines for SACs
4. The provisions under the [Freedom of Information Act 2000 \(the Act\)](#).
5. Committee meeting agendas, minutes and reports are published on the Committee's website.
6. The Committee publishes an annual report.