

ACAF Code of Practice - Meetings

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Meetings

Agendas

- Published agendas should contain enough background information to allow a reader to understand why the item is being discussed;
- Dates of meetings and agendas should be published in advance on the committee website.

Circulation of papers

Papers should be provided to the Committee or the Secretariat two weeks prior to the meeting at which they are to be discussed. Where papers are circulated for comment by correspondence between meetings, the aim is to allow Members 14 days to comment, where possible.

Minutes

- Minutes must reflect the proceedings and discussions that take place.
- Minutes will be recorded on a non-attributable basis except where the views of one or more Members need recording, for example when declaring an interest.
- Minutes of meetings of the ACAF should be made available via the ACAF's website.
- They should be written by the Secretariat as soon as possible after the meeting to which they refer and circulated to all Members in advance of the next meeting. The minutes will be reviewed by all Members in the next meeting and feedback is given to the Secretariat.
- The Secretariat will amend the draft minutes in the light of Members' comments and ensure that the amended draft is placed on the ACAF's website.
- Any further corrections will be made at the following meeting when the minutes will be formally adopted. The final version of the minutes will then be placed on the FSA's website.

Working papers

- To ensure openness and transparency the Committee must seek to keep the public and stakeholders informed as it develops advice.
- The Secretariat will publish discussion papers on the FSA website in advance of meetings to allow interested parties to comment.

Unpublished research

Where the Committee's disclosure of information would involve bringing into the public domain previously unpublished research, it should consider whether this could hinder the process of formal publication elsewhere and, if so, explore arrangements that avoid the problem (such as parallel publication).

Annual report

The ACAF will publish an Annual Report on its work.

Procedures for arriving at conclusions

The Committee should attempt to reach a consensus on the advice it gives, recognising that this might not always be possible. In cases where decisions are particularly significant the Committee should aim to reach a preliminary view which is then offered for comment either through public consultation or to stakeholder groups.

Dissenting views

- The Committee should not seek unanimity at the risk of failing to recognise different views on a subject. Any significant diversity of opinion among the Members of the Committee which cannot be resolved should be accurately reflected in the minutes or report.
- If a Member disagrees with the advice provided by committee and they wish to publicly express their dissenting view, then a Member should be allowed to do so. In such a case the Member must notify the Committee Chair and the ACAF Secretariat of their intention to do so. The Member would have to produce a minority report which would be published at the same time as the Committee Advice. The report would have to clearly state that it was a personal view of the Member and that their view did not represent the view of the Committee or the FSA.

Public Consultations

- To support the transparency and openness of the Committee's work, the ACAF will make available the outcomes of its assessment in line with the Food Standards Agency publication guidelines and publication agreements with Food Standards Scotland.
- The ACAF Secretariat will produce and publish a summary of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations, in the form of a Committee's Advice document. This is an overview of the advice that the Committee has provided to the FSA.
- The FSA/FSS will consider the ACAF's advice on the application and publish a second document, named "Safety Assessment", which forms the official opinion of the FSA/FSS, and will include other considerations relevant to the assessment.
- The FA Policy Team will initiate a public consultation on the Safety Assessment Document for a period of 8 weeks. This allows stakeholders to consider the Safety Assessments and comment on the applications that have been submitted for authorisation. Risk Managers will consider both the public views and the conclusions of the Committee as the basis for their risk management decisions. These will be captured in the legal mandate that authorises the additive for its commercialisation in Great Britain.