

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS

53rd Meeting of ACAF on 2 March 2011

**Report on the implementation of recommendations from the quinquennial
review of ACAF (2009)**

Information Paper

**ACAF Secretariat
February 2011**

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW OF ACAF (2009)

Purpose

1. This paper is to inform the Committee on the progress to implement the recommendations following the quinquennial review of ACAF that took place between September and November 2009.

Background

2. The 2002 Food Standards Agency Report of the Review of Scientific Committees¹ recommended that all Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) should be reviewed at least once every five years to determine ‘whether each committee fulfils its intended function and whether all the current committees are still needed.’ This regular review is also recommended as good practice in cross-Government guidance, and is reflected in the Agency’s Science and Evidence Strategy 2010-15.
3. A review of ACAF started on 14 September 2009 and ended on 30 November 2009. The main objectives of the review were to assess:
 - the continued need for the Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF);
 - the Committee’s role, methods of operation and effectiveness (including its terms of reference and composition);
 - the openness and transparency of its procedures and the relationships between ACAF, the commissioning Department and other bodies with related responsibilities (in particular the other SACs which advise the Agency); and
 - the implementation of the 2002 review recommendations, the revised Code of Practice for SACs² and the current governance structures.
4. At its March 2010 meeting, the Committee discussed the outcome of the quinquennial review. The report of the review recommended that there is a continuing need for ACAF as it adds value to the work of the FSA, UK agriculture departments and is of benefit to stakeholders. It is important that ACAF maximises the value that it provides and that it continues to demonstrate evidence of its value. The report had highlighted that ACAF had good practices in place including:

¹ food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/commswork/scicomrev

² www.berr.gov.uk/consultations/page39872.html

- the Chair and Secretariat routinely confirm at meetings that issues to be considered by ACAF are within its remit;
 - holding meetings in open session;
 - ACAF's meetings are an example of good practice in terms of well run meetings. Together with the agenda, papers and minutes of each meeting available on ACAF's website, these meetings provide a high level of openness and transparency;
 - each meeting providing updates on the work of other SACs in an information paper;
 - the Secretariat is held in high regard by members and stakeholders;
 - the recruitment procedure of members is in line with the FSA's requirements for the appointment of members to its scientific committees;
 - thorough and effective induction of new members; and
 - publication of an annual work programme.
5. The Committee was asked to consider and comment on the 17 recommendations from the review; ACAF provided comments on the review (Annex I). Fourteen of these were aimed primarily at ACAF, and three aimed primarily at the Agency.
6. ACAF's comments on the review were discussed at the GACS meeting on 4 March 2010. The Chief Scientist developed a proposed Agency response to the review, for consideration by the Board, which drew on views from ACAF and GACS. In September 2010, the Agency's Board supported the response.
7. Annex I summarises the recommendations and the responses agreed by ACAF and where appropriate the Agency, with an outline of progress made against the actions agreed.

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ANNEX I

ACAF's Response to the Recommendations of the Quinquennial Review**Summary of progress****(A) Recommendations aimed primarily at ACAF**

Recommendation	ACAF/GACS Response	Progress
1. It is important that ACAF maximises the value that it contributes and continues to provide evidence of its value.	The Committee suggested that Recommendations 1, 6 and 9 are related. It agreed to take this recommendation forward and will do this via annual reports, published documents and other routes. When the Committee commences work on a topic it will identify and agree desired outcomes.	It is the Committee's normal practice to agree desired outcomes before commencing new items of work.
2. The role of ACAF within its overall remit has evolved over time and clarification of the current role at the next ACAF meeting would be beneficial.	The terms of reference of the Committee are determined by Agriculture Ministers and the FSA. The Committee considered that these were suitably flexible and wide-ranging and did not require amendment given the breadth of issues on which the Committee is required to provide advice. The Committee will identify at the start of each year the key priorities it wishes to take forward. This will be reflected in the Committee's Forward Work Plan.	The 2010-11 Forward Work Plan is structured to show the areas of priority the Committee intends to address.

3. The exact remit with regard to animal health and welfare should be clarified and formal action taken and recorded in the minutes of the meetings with regard to appropriate liaison with Defra for animal welfare issues.	The Committee is satisfied that its current remit is clear and works well. It recognises that although its main focus is on consumer safety, animal health/welfare issues will inevitably be discussed.	The Committee fully recognises that its main focus is on consumer safety. However, discussions may inevitably cover animal health/welfare issues. The Defra assessor is present at meetings to advise on animal health and welfare issues, and indicates where issues considered may be under another SAC's remit. He also feeds back any health and welfare issues for Defra to follow up.
4. The process for determining the work programme should be improved to ensure that the potential value contributed by ACAF is maximised.	The Committee and Secretariat will work to ensure work areas important to the Agency, Defra and the devolved administrations receive priority treatment.	The process of determining the work programme for 2010-11 was streamlined and the main priority areas identified.
5. Work should be scheduled for each year so as to avoid 'light' agendas at meetings, with the number of meetings reduced if the required work does not warrant four meetings a year.	The Committee notes this recommendation and will take this into account when planning the workload for each meeting.	At the end of each calendar year the Secretariat will draw up outline agendas for the following year. This planning will help give an early warning if agendas are likely to be light and ensure remedial action is taken. This work commenced at the end of 2010.
6. Completed work should be summarised in terms of outcomes and impact achieved.	See Recommendation 1 above.	See Recommendation 1 above.
7. The Chair should continue to ensure that the Members of the	The Committee seeks and receives data from the FSA, Defra and the devolved	The Committee continues to comment on data requirements when it provides advice.

Committee are aware that they can and should request the commissioning of data from the FSA if the Committee's view is that it is required in order for them to provide advice.	administrations to assist in its deliberations. This will continue.	
8. It is recommended that the Committee takes greater steps to show evidence of scientific rigour by using the FSA's Science Checklist more explicitly and also routinely considering whether peer reviews are appropriate for work on which the Committee's decisions are based.	The Committee will continue to utilise the Agency's Science check list.	The Committee continues to utilise the Agency's Science Check List in every aspect of its work and where necessary considers the need for carrying out peer reviews.
9. A brief summary of the Committee's outcomes and impact achieved would provide an appropriate summary of the Committee's activities and achievements for the Board.	See Recommendation 1 above.	See Recommendation 1 above.
10. The Committee should be more explicit in stating the level	The Committee agreed to act on this point.	The COT chairman provides regular updates on this work to GACS. The work is expected to be of

and type of uncertainty associated with its advice.	<u>GACS</u> [Note from Chief Scientist Team: the COT is working on this issue and any generic aspects relevant to other SACS will be discussed through the GACS]	use across the SAC network.
12. It is recommended that ACAF should work with other committees as appropriate and take proactive steps to consider when that might be appropriate.	The Committee will continue to be proactive in this area and currently has several suitable work areas to process in this manner.	The Committee is actively involving other SAC Secretariats in preparation of discussions it intends holding on sustainability. There may be an opportunity in the future to set up a sub-group involving other SACs to discuss this work area.
15. There is some uncertainty with regard to the exact roles and responsibilities of officials and assessors on the Committee and it would be beneficial to confirm those at ACAF's next meeting.	The Chair, Members, Assessors and the Secretariat are fully aware of their roles. These were clarified at the Committee's open meeting on 3 March 2010.	Completed.
16. The out-of-London meetings are valued by members and stakeholders. It is recommended however that the FSA continues to monitor and take a view on the value of those meetings compared with the cost of	The Committee considers that, as a UK-wide body, at least one out of London meeting should take place each year. This helps to engage stakeholders from outside the South East of England and demonstrates the Committee's openness, transparency and accessibility. Clearly, budgetary	Although the Committee considers that there are benefits to holding one of its four meetings out of London, FSA senior management has decided that due to the current economic climate no out of London meetings will be held in 2011.

<p>running them and reassesses that approach at regular intervals.</p>	<p>considerations will be taken into account.</p> <p><u>GACS</u> [ACAF's Secretariat Comment] <i>Positive feedback is always received following out of London meetings. These meetings are valuable in establishing and maintaining a healthy dialogue with a wider audience and increasing the understanding of issues discussed.</i></p> <p><i>The Secretariat will continue to monitor and compare the value of these meetings against the running costs at regular intervals.</i></p>	
<p>17. ACAF should consider whether it may be appropriate to set up additional subgroups to address specific issues in the future, particularly if only one or two members have specific expertise directly relevant to the issue to be addressed.</p>	<p>Where circumstances arise, the Committee will endeavour to set up sub-groups in co-operation with other SACs.</p>	<p>No opportunities have arisen yet for the setting up of a sub-group. However, where circumstances arise the Committee will endeavour to set up sub-groups in co-operation with other SACs.</p>

(B) Recommendations aimed primarily at the Food Standards Agency

Recommendation	ACAF response	FSA response	Progress
<p>11. The FSA needs to ensure that the risk management advice it asks ACAF for does not go beyond advice on risk management options put to them by the Secretariat.</p>	<p>The Agency will act on this point.</p>	<p>One of the recommendations in the Science review which the Agency accepted was “<i>the Agency should do more work to make the functional separation of risk assessment and risk management more transparent</i>”</p> <p>The Agency asked GACS, given that the committee agrees how the separation works in principle, to look more closely at how to observe the separation in practice. GACS has now established a Working Group (WG) on Risk Assessment and Risk Management, to look at whether the distinction is clear and how it is observed in practice in the Agency.</p> <p>The WG will also consider the ACAF review as part of its work and will make recommendations to the Agency on any changes needed to guidance or procedures by March 2011.</p>	<p>The GACS WG made an interim report to GACS at its meeting on 19 October 2010 and will report back to the GACS meeting on 3 March with recommendations.</p> <p>The WG’s terms include considering whether any changes are needed to the description or management of the distinction between risk assessment and risk management.</p> <p>The Agency is updating the Science Check List to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose for all of the Agency’s science work, including the social sciences.</p>
<p>13. The FSA should have internal procedures in place to ensure that any differences of opinion</p>	<p>This is a generic issue on which the FSA/GACS needs to provide advice.</p>	<p>This relates to effective communication internally, particularly between SAC Secretariats and between Secretariats and policy</p>	<p>These actions have been implemented. In addition, the Agency’s Chief Scientist has established a ‘Science Leads Group’ of senior scientists across</p>

<p>between its own policy units with regard to risk management are handled appropriately.</p>		<p>customers. These actions will help address this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Scientist Team has reconstituted the Agency' SACs Secretariat Working Group to give it a more dynamic and interactive forum to ensure better communication between Scientific Secretariats. This will allow the Secretariats to carry out horizon scanning, discuss cross-cutting issues and issues that involve joint working between the SACs. • The GACS is also taking a more pro-active approach to ensuring communication and co-ordination across SACs. • The Chief Scientist Team is leading a number of strands of work to develop the professional scientific and policy skills of Agency staff including Secretariats and policy customers. • The Agency Chief Scientist and his Team will attend SAC meetings more regularly. 	<p>the Agency, to provide challenge and advice to him on science in the Agency. Its remit covers the work of the SACs and its membership includes the scientific Secretaries of the SACs.</p> <p>The Agency's Chief Scientist will meet each SAC Chair at least once a year for feedback on how the Committee is operating and how it is being supported by the Agency.</p>
14. The FSA should	This is a generic issue	The Chief Scientist has reviewed	This process has been developed and

<p>consider an alternative approach to the assessment of ACAF members and introduce an appropriate method of assessing the performance of the Chair.</p>	<p>for the GACS Secretariat to liaise with all SACs.</p>	<p>arrangements for assessing Members, Chairs and Committees. The key elements of the proposed process are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process should provide open, evidence-based assurance on SAC performance without disproportionate costs or burdens on Members, Secretariats or the Agency • Annual assessment of Members and Chairs, backed up by 5-yearly reviews of SACs, is needed to inform the annual reporting cycle for SACs Annual Reports and of the Agency Chief Scientist's reports to the Agency Board and to the Government CSA. • Assessment of Members and Chairs to be based on discussion and feedback between the Agency Chief Scientist and SAC Chair, informed by feedback provided to the Chief Scientist from Members, Secretariat and (for Chairs) from the GACS Chair and Secretariat. 	<p>agreed, following discussion with SAC Secretariats and Chairs. It will apply from 2011.</p>
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