

THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY'S APPROACH TO MANAGING THE INTERESTS OF FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Report by Colm McKenna, Chair Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) Executive has reviewed the FSA's approach to managing interests of its external non-scientific advisers, including its Food Advisory Committee (FAC) Members. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) has considered the revised approach and endorsed this at its meeting on 3 March 2020.
- 1.2 The Board is invited to:
 - **confirm** that it agrees the guidance on managing interests for the FSA's external non-scientific advisers, including its Food Advisory Committee Members (at Annex A).

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The FSA's FACs and other external expert advisers are a key element of the FSA's capability and practice. Managing the interests of these advisers and any consequent conflicts is key to mitigating risk to the FSA's reputation as an open, independent, evidence-based regulator.
- 2.2 In March 2019, the FSA Board approved the approach to managing the interests of its external scientific advisers, including its Scientific Advisory Committees.
- 2.3 The Board asked that consideration be given to the development of this approach and that the principles be extended to the FSA's non-scientific advisers.
- 2.4 Action was taken to identify the non-scientific advisers. After investigation, the country-specific Food Advisory Committee members were found to be the only advisers that the principles should be applied to.
- 2.5 The FSA has two Food Advisory Committees: the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC); and the Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC).
- 2.6 The role of the FACs is defined in the Food Standards Act 1999 and they act as advisory bodies to the FSA.

- 2.7 They are chaired by the Board member for the respective jurisdiction and each FAC usually has seven other members.
- 2.8 Their role is to advise the FSA on food safety and standards issues, with particular emphasis on either Northern Ireland or Wales. The FACs work closely with the FSA and support the FSA's strategic outcomes.

3. Recruitment

- 3.1 Members of FACs are appointed by the relevant Minister in each jurisdiction following a fair and open recruitment process.
- 3.2 After a member has been appointed, they are asked to fill in and submit a Declaration of Interests Form. A copy of the form can be found in Annex A. After the form is submitted, it is considered by the FAC Secretariat and posted on the FSA website.
- 3.3 The FAC Secretariats are responsible for ensuring that members are aware of their obligations regarding interests.

4. Meetings

- 4.1 At the start of each meeting, the FAC Chair should ask FAC members to declare any interests potentially relevant to the items under discussion relating to themselves or their close family members. The FAC Secretariat should remind the Chair to do this if it does not happen.
- 4.2 Members should be encouraged to flag any additional interests at later points if they believe there are any relevant interests that they have failed to declare at the start of the meeting. This includes interests relating to any significant items which emerge in discussion but were not foreseen in advance.
- 4.3 If any relevant interests are declared, the Chair should consult with the FAC Secretariat, FSA staff and potentially other FAC members and decide on an approach to managing the interest. For example, a FAC member may be advised or asked to leave the meeting while the matter relating to the interest is discussed.

5. Review

- 5.1 FAC members should be aware that they are to inform the relevant Secretariat and FSA staff of any change in their interests when it occurs. If a change occurs, this is to be reflected in the interests held on file and updated on the FSA website.
- 5.2 FAC Secretariat staff are to contact all members annually to ensure that interests are up to date and make the relevant changes on the FSA website.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The Board is invited to:

- **Confirm** that it agrees the guidance on managing interests for the FSA's external non-scientific advisers (at Annex A).

NAME:

Personal Interests

Consultancies and / or direct employment

Fee Paid Work

Shareholdings

Clubs and other organisations

Other Personal Interests

Non-personal Interests

Fellowships

Indirect Support

Trusteeships

Land and Property

Other public appointments

Other non-personal interests