

Science in the Food Standards Agency

Report to the Food
Standards Agency Board
17 July 2008

A still life photograph featuring two bottles of wine, a bowl of fruit, and a bowl of salad. The wine bottles are dark with white labels that read 'CHATEAU DE COSTIS' and 'BORDEAUX'. The bowl of fruit contains bananas, an orange, and a melon. The bowl of salad is filled with green lettuce, red tomatoes, and dark olives. The scene is set on a blue surface, possibly a tablecloth, with a cork and a small white object in the foreground.

Colin Blakemore
Chair of the General Advisory Committee on Science

The remit of GACS

To provide independent challenge and support to the Food Standards Agency in its use of science



Membership of GACS

Colin Blakemore

Chairs of the nine SACs advising the Agency (or Deputies)

Professor Janet Bainbridge

Professor Jeya Henry

Professor Duncan Maskell

Professor Anne Murcott

Mrs Pamela Goldberg

Mrs Leen Petré

In attendance

Dr Andrew Wadge (Chief Scientist)

Dr David Atkins (Chief Scientist Team)

Dr Sharn Bowen (Strategy Division)

Secretariat

Dr Patrick Miller (GACS Secretary)

Dr Paul Willetts (Chief Scientist Team)

Mr Jalal Ahmed (Chief Scientist Team)

Initial views of GACS

The background of the slide is a photograph of a dining table. In the center, there are two dark glass wine bottles with white labels. To the right of the bottles is a white bowl filled with a colorful salad of greens, tomatoes, and other vegetables. The table is set with a white tablecloth and a blue napkin. The overall scene is softly lit and slightly out of focus, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere.

- Agency science: strengths and challenges
- Chief Scientist's Annual Report
- What GACS is planning to do

Science in the FSA – strengths

- Openness, transparency
- Commitment to science and evidence-based work
- Appointment of Chief Scientist and Team
- Willingness to invite and respond to challenge – including from GACS
- Existing structures: Strategy; expert Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs); governance tools

Science in the FSA – challenges

- Getting the best out of the Agency's own research spend
- Optimising the use of SACs
- Governance
 - developing good practice further
 - ensuring science input/feedback on how science is used to develop policy and advice
 - obtaining and using different types of evidence
 - evaluation of the assessment and use of evidence
- Engaging with wider expertise and opinion
 - Who? Science community, industry
 - Why? Input of ideas and information, broadening the research base

Chief Scientist's Annual report

- Annual Report is good practice
 - Summarised CS's view on present state of play & areas for development
 - Raises Agency's profile as science-based organisation
 - Provides basis of comment from GACS and others
- Puts Agency science in context
 - How the Agency has used science to inform its policies and advice, to benefit consumers
- Collaboration and partnership
 - Quite strong during the period of the Report
 - Need to be constantly seeking to use partnerships to raise effectiveness and influence

GACS: progress so far

- Successful first meeting
 - strong commitment from members
 - robust discussion about Agency science
 - conscious of need to provide credible independent challenge
- Defining the scope of GACS work
 - many ideas and complex issues
 - have agreed initial priorities
- Outcomes of first meeting
 - rapporteurs to report on Agency's own research
 - Working Group on measures of success
 - GACS Work-Plan
- **Panel debate** (part of NSEW)
 - role of evidence in decisions about food
 - many suggestions about issues and governance

GACS Work-plan: priorities – 1

- Best use of the Agency's research spend
 - Review of Strategic Plan & Science Strategy
- Horizon Scanning and the development of science strategy
- Governance
 - Review tools and procedures in light of experience and challenges
 - uses of scientific evidence and advice
 - the relationship between risk assessment and risk management

GACS Work-plan: priorities – 2

- Territories and ways of working of SACs
 - Missing or overlapping areas of expertise?
 - Facilitating interaction between SACs (Annual Conference)
- Engagement; communication; collaboration
 - College of Experts
 - web-based tools
- Measures of success
 - develop tools and process for regular evaluation

Thank you!

