

SCIENCE IN THE FSA: FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE 2007-09

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Chair of the General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS), Professor Colin Blakemore, will present the Committee's first Annual Report, outlining the Committee's progress to date and the key issues it foresees for the future in providing challenge and advice on the Agency's use of science.
2. The Board is asked to
 - **note and comment** on the report.

CHIEF SCIENTIST TEAM (GACS SECRETARIAT)

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Issue

1. The Chair of the General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS), Professor Colin Blakemore, will present the Committee's first Annual Report (Appendix 1), outlining the Committee's progress to date and the key issues it foresees for the future in providing challenge and advice on the Agency's use of science.

Strategic Aims

2. The independent advice and challenge from GACS contributes to the delivery of the Agency's core value of being 'science and evidence based'. Publication of its report contributes to the core value 'to be open and accessible'.

Discussion

3. The Board agreed in February 2007 to establish a General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS), tasked *"to support the Agency's Chief Scientist by providing independent challenge and advice to the Chief Scientist and the Agency Board on the Agency's governance and use of science."* The full terms of reference for the GACS are at Annex 1 of the Report and details of its membership at Annex 2.
4. The GACS was formally established in December 2007 and held its first meeting on 11 March 2008. Its first Annual Report covers the Committee's work since its establishment to the end of March 2009. It reports the Committee's achievements to date and its future priorities in fulfilling its terms of reference, providing independent challenge and advice on the Agency's use of science.
5. GACS' work and plans are described under the six key themes of its work plan, which reflect the GACS terms of reference:
 - i. Horizon scanning
 - ii. Agency Science Strategy and priorities and balance of Agency research
 - iii. Science governance and the work of the Scientific Advisory Committees
 - iv. Science collaboration and communication
 - v. Evaluating the Agency's science
 - vi. GACS' own performance and ways of working

Impact

6. The report has been published on the GACS web pages to coincide with its presentation to the Board (see: www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/gacs/). Printed copies have been sent to members of the Scientific Advisory Committees that advise the Agency, and to key stakeholders with an interest in the use of science in government, including the Government Office for Science and Defra's Science Advisory Council.

Sustainability

7. The Committee's independent commentary on the Agency's use of science is an important part of the scrutiny and assurance on how the Agency adheres to three of the Government's five principles of sustainable development: "Using sound science responsibly", "Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society" and "Promoting good governance".

Board Action Required

8. The Board is asked to:
 - **note and comment** on the report.