Defra Science Advisory Council

Minutes of the teleconference, 9 January 2019

Actions arising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action number</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action (19) 01:</td>
<td>African Swine Fever (ASF): CSA to discuss the risks and communication issues concerning ASF with the CVO and deputy CVO.</td>
<td>CSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action (19) 02:</td>
<td>Futures workshop: Members to feedback to the secretariat the expected outcomes and views on publication of the futures workshop outputs.</td>
<td>SAC members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action (19) 03:</td>
<td>Work plan: Secretariat to add the circular economy to the work plan.</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action (19) 04:</td>
<td>Pollution from fertilisers: SAC to send comments on the expert group to the secretariat and propose potential chairs for the group.</td>
<td>SAC members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. CSA update

The Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) provided an update of activities in the CSA Office and wider Defra. These included EU exit activities, the Spending Review 19 (SR19) bid and the Strategic Priorities Fund.

EU exit continues to dominate the department’s activities with some areas put on hold either because of the resource implications or uncertainty over the future parameters and direction until decisions on EU exit are made. There is currently a lot of activity on mitigating the acute risks.

The SR19 bid is an opportunity to set the longer term themes and objectives. Sir Patrick Vallance, Government CSA, has been leading a coordinated approach for the science components. This positive collaboration has enabled cases to be strengthened and the sharing of bids between departments where there is a common cause.

The second wave of the Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) is to be considered on the 10th January. The SPF distributes funds to the research councils to address strategic issues. In the first wave Defra secured four areas of funding; clean air analysis and solutions, towards a new decision-making framework for land assets, climate resilience and constructing a digital environment. Defra is leading four bids for the second wave; food nutrition and human health, marine resources, clean air and the circular economy. Defra will be involved in the selection process. The SAC requested that the governance process extends beyond the decision making to the running of the programme and suggested that the science boards
would be the most appropriate mechanism to achieve this. They also stressed the need to use a logical framework for evaluation rather than the standard checklist which isn’t fit for purpose. There was a general concern that the unique goals of the programme would not be met if they are treated like a standard project.

2. African swine fever

Professor Wood gave an update on the current African Swine Fever (ASF) situation. It is spread widely across China. There have also been recent cases reported in Belgium in the wild boar population. Communications have been good to the organised sector. There are, however, particular concerns for the UK small holder and pet pig sector as they have not been reached by the communications to the wider pig sector. They are also most likely to be fed food waste, which is one of the disease transmission vectors, particularly cured pork products from Eastern Europe. Professor Wood has written to CSA with his concerns.

CSA has been engaging with Defra’s Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) and deputy CVO. Significant resource is required to reach the small holding sector. CSA will pursue this with CVO and APHA. The SAC Exotic Diseases sub group (SAC-ED) is meeting in March to discuss this further.

**Action (19) 01:** CSA to discuss the risks and communication issues concerning ASF with the CVO and deputy CVO.

3. Horizon scanning

The SAC were briefed on the proposal for the horizon scanning futures workshop on the 6th and 7th March 2019. The aim is for the work to run in parallel with the strategic 2030 programme. The SAC will provide an independent perspective ensuring Defra’s strategy is resilient and prepared for the future. There will be build up activities ahead of the workshop. These include 3 horizon scans and conducting interviews with each SAC member using the 7 Questions technique. The workshop will develop four plausible scenarios and their implications for Defra.

The SAC was keen for the material to contain a provocation piece to work towards. A template will be provided for the 3 horizon scans which will use challenge questions. The SAC was asked to consider the minimum satisfactory outcomes and views on publication.

**Action (19) 02:** Members to feedback to the secretariat the expected outcomes and views on publication of the futures workshop outputs.

4. Work plan

The SAC reviewed the current work plan and highlighted areas that should be included. Professor Monks asked for the circular economy to be added as it hasn’t been brought to the SAC previously. Other SAC members supported this as there is currently a polarisation of views in this area. Defra are to consider where the SAC could add value on the circular economy.

**Action (19) 03:** Secretariat to add the circular economy to the work plan.
5. Clean air

The SAC discussed the plan to convene an expert group on pollution from fertilisers. The expert group is a product of the Clean Air Strategy which will be published in the next few weeks. The strategy includes commitments to reduce the pollution from fertilisers. The SAC considered the policy recommendations required to go beyond the remit of a SAC sub group. However, the SAC was supportive of a group and the involvement of SAC members as expert advisers.

The SAC agreed that this is an incredibly complex issue. Additional areas which the SAC thought should be included were; economic gains, social sciences in relation to farmer behaviour, the drivers for fertilisation, relation to food production and agriculture economics. The SAC was asked to send further comments to the secretariat.

**Action (19) 04:** SAC to send comments on the expert group to the secretariat and propose potential chairs for the group

6. AOB

No further business was raised.

**Attendees**

**SAC members**

Charles Godfray (Chair)
Wayne Powell
Lin Field
Rosie Hails
Paul Monks
James Wood
Sarah Whatmore
Henrietta Moore
Rowland Kao
Tim Jickells

**Devolved Administration Observers**

Andrew Millar – Scotland
Katherine Raymond – Wales
Alistair Carson – Northern Ireland

**Defra Officials**

Ian Boyd – Chief Scientific Adviser
Iain Williams – Deputy CSA
SAC secretariat
Strategic Design Team
Environmental Quality

Apologies

Peter Cox – SAC member