

# Introduction - Handbook 2021 Workshop

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## About the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT)

The COT assesses chemicals for their potential to harm human health and provides advice on the risks to government departments and agencies.

Scientific evaluations are carried out at the request of the Food Standards Agency, Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health England, and other

Government Departments and Regulatory Authorities. The Committee's procedures for openness include the publication of these evaluations on the internet as statements or shorter position papers; meeting agendas, finalised minutes, agreed conclusions are also published on the committees website: [COT website](#).

The COT further provides expert advice to other advisory committees, such as the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, as well as having collaborative links with the Science Council, Veterinary Products Committee and the Expert Committee on Pesticides (formerly known as the Advisory Committee on Pesticides).

COT Members are appointed as scientific and medical experts on the basis of their specialist knowledge and expertise. In addition, two non-specialist lay members of the Committee are appointed for their broader insight into consumer affairs.

Members are required to follow the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees: [Scientific advisory committees: code of practice and map of connections - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). As part of this, they must declare any potential conflicts of interest, and depending on the nature of such conflicts, they may (at the Chair's discretion) be excluded from the discussion and formulation of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations in relation to relevant agenda items.

The COT is supported in its work by a Secretariat, which is provided by the Food Standards Agency and Public Health England. The Secretariat has scientific expertise which enables them to provide Members with comprehensive background information and briefing papers that inform the decision-making process of the Committee.

## **About the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA)**

The UK FSA is an independent Government department working across England, Wales and Northern Ireland to protect public dietary health and consumers' wider interests in food.

Our job in the FSA is to use our expertise and influence, so that people can trust that the food they consume is safe and is what it says it is.

The Science, Evidence and Research Division (SERD) of the FSA provides strategic analysis, insight and evidence across the FSA's remit to underpin the development of policies, guidance and advice on food safety. The FSA's approach to science is summarised on the [UK FSA website](#).

SERD is a multi-disciplinary team of approximately 100 staff that includes scientists, risk assessors, economists, statisticians, social scientists and operational researchers who provide high quality, timely and robust evidence. We strengthen our knowledge base using a range of external science capabilities, such as our independent Scientific Advisory Committees (independent groups of experts that advise the FSA on various aspects of food safety), by commissioning research and surveys, and engaging with academia and research councils through sponsoring PhDs and post-doctorate fellowships.

## **Notes on data and presentations at the workshop**

Oral presentations are unedited and represent the views of individual speakers and not necessarily those of the FSA, COT nor the institutions and/or employers of the speakers. Delegates are asked to note that the presentation of any data at the workshop largely represents work in progress, much of which is preliminary and as yet unpublished and therefore not in the public domain.

Delegates are asked to respect the confidential nature of the unpublished data presented at the workshop. Although the nature of this COT workshop is open, participants are requested to observe the usual courtesy of not discussing or circulating the data, or copies of it, to other parties until these data are in the public domain. As the workshop is being held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, additionally we kindly request that there is no electronic recording of any of the presentation or discussions.

**COT Secretariat December 2020**