

# COT Preface - 2023

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## Preface



Head and shoulders Image of Prof Alan Boobis, standing in front of a patterned background. Prof Boobis is wearing half framed glasses and a light-coloured striped shirt.

The Committee continues to have a full and varied programme of work throughout the year, considering both new topics but also continuing to work on larger, longer standing items. The Committee met on seven occasions in 2023.

Amongst the range of topics discussed by the Committee were titanium dioxide, bisphenol A, per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the mycotoxins T2 and HT2, the aircraft cabin air environment, the potential effects of microplastics by the inhalation route, and emerging marine biotoxins.

The Committee continued its review of components and contaminants in the maternal diet in support of the risk assessment currently being undertaken by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), considering both ergot alkaloids and inorganic arsenic, a review which also took a detailed look at the epigenetics of inorganic arsenic. The Committee also reviewed pica as a potential route of exposure during pregnancy.

In 2023, the Committee continued to oversee and assure the risk assessment of regulated products that were previously assessed in Europe, considering a number of Joint Expert Group (JEG) opinions on food additives, food contact

materials, and recycling processes.

The Committee are now also being tasked with requests for advice from the Nutrition Labelling Composition and Standards Policy Group, who co-ordinate the policy approach in this area across the UK. The Committee continued to work on fortificants in bread and flour and green tea catechins.

The Committee also contributed comments to a number of public consultations from European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), including those on vitamin B6, mineral oil hydrocarbons and polybrominated diphenyl ethers.

The joint COT and SACN Working Group continued to work on a benefit- risk assessment of plant-based drinks consumed as an alternative to cows' milk. It is expected that this WG will report in 2025 following a period of public consultation. Committee Members have been involved in several other working groups and joint working groups, covering areas as diverse as cannabidiol (CBD), PFAS and allergenicity thresholds in food. The Committee has also worked closely with their sister Committee on Mutagenicity on the review of titanium dioxide and with the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants on the risk from exposure to microplastics via inhalation.

The Committee held a workshop "Evolving our assessment and future guiding principles", which took place in May 2023. The purpose of the workshop was to start the process of updating the Committee's guidance on toxicity testing and risk assessment, which it is hoped will begin later in 2024.

In 2023, the Committee welcomed new Members Professor Peter Barlow from Edinburgh Napier University and Dr Steven Enoch from Liverpool John Moores University. Along with the other FSA Scientific Advisory Committees, the COT has been trialing an Associate Members scheme, where early career researchers can join the Committee for a one year period to obtain experience of advisory Committee work with a view to applying for full Membership in due course. We were pleased to welcome Professor Jeanette Rotchell, Dr Samantha Donnellan, Dr Ben Amies-Cull, Ms Eimear O' Rourke, Dr Charlotte Mills and Dr Tarek Abdelghany as Associate COT Members. This has been an interesting and valuable initiative, and it is hoped that it will continue in the future.

As Chair, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my fellow Committee Members for all of their hard work and commitment to the COT and its sub-groups over the last year. I am particularly grateful to the deputy chair, Dr Sarah Judge, for taking on the additional task of chairing the Committee's discussions on

titanium dioxide. The Committee could not function without its joint scientific secretariat, and on behalf of all Members I would like to express our great appreciation to the joint Scientific Secretaries and their respective staffs for their support of the Committee.

**Professor Alan Boobis (Chair)**

**OBE PhD FBTS FBPhS**