Meeting

Second draft statement on the potential risk from citrinin in the maternal diet

This is a paper for discussion. This does not represent the views of the Committee and should not be cited.

Introduction

1. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) last considered maternal diet and nutrition in relation to offspring health, in its reports on ‘The influence of maternal, foetal and child nutrition on the development of chronic disease in later life’ (SACN, 2011) and on ‘Feeding in the first year of life’ (SACN, 2018). In the latter report, the impact of breastfeeding on maternal health was also considered. In 2019, SACN agreed to conduct a risk assessment on nutrition and maternal health focusing on maternal outcomes during pregnancy, childbirth and up to 24 months after delivery; this would include the effects of chemical contaminants and excess nutrients in the diet.

2. SACN agreed that, where appropriate, other expert Committees would be consulted and asked to complete relevant risk assessments e.g., in the area of food safety advice. This subject was initially discussed during the Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) horizon scanning item at their January 2020 meeting with a scoping paper being presented to the COT in July 2020. This included background information on a provisional list of chemicals proposed by SACN. It was noted that the provisional list of chemicals was subject to change following discussion by COT who would be guiding the toxicological risk assessment process: candidate chemicals or chemical classes can be added or removed as the COT considered appropriate. The list was brought back to the COT with additional information in September 2020. Following a discussion at the September 2020 meeting, COT agreed that papers on a number of compounds should be prioritised, which included the mycotoxin citrinin.

3. The COT considered a discussion paper on citrinin in the maternal diet (TOX-2024-39) at the October 2024 meeting. The discussion paper included detailed summaries of relevant toxicological studies, using the EFSA 2012 Opinion on citrinin as a baseline and considering any new data published since then. At the meeting the Committee agreed that red yeast rice (RYR) would not be considered further as there was no consumption/occurrence data available from the TDS on RYR supplements, and these products specifically state that they should not be consumed by pregnant women. However, the COT acknowledged that consumption of RYR by pregnant women could occur in some cultures where a higher consumption or use as an additive/colouring is customary. At the October 2024 meeting the COT also agreed that carryover of CIT from feed to food would not be considered further as CIT had not been detected in animal products in the TDS. The Committee requested the addition of an immunotoxicity section, including studies published since 2012. The studies were included, in brief, in the main body of the text, while longer summaries could be found in the Annex of the first draft statement presented at the July 2025 meeting.

4. At the July 2025 meeting, the COT requested that details of the risk assessment carried out by the National Institute for Public Health and Environment (RIVM) and commissioned by Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) be included in the statement as well as a separate uncertainties section. Following comments by Members, the statement has also been restructured, additional uncertainties in the assessment have been highlighted and detail has been added to studies, where applicable.

5. The following second draft statement (Annex A) provides the conclusions by and advice of the COT on whether exposure to citrinin would pose a risk to maternal health. The statement builds on the previous discussion paper and draws on the EFSA opinion from 2012, where appropriate, as well as studies published since 2012.

Questions on which the views of the Committee are sought

6. Members are invited to consider the following questions.

I. Do the Committee have any comments on the changes made to the content and structure of this statement?

II. Do the Committee have any other comments?

COT Secretariat September 2025