

Committee on the Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment Annual Report 2024

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Preface



Head and shoulders image of Professor David Harrison in front of a grey background wearing a white shirt with a blue and yellow striped tie.

The Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COC) evaluates chemicals for their potential to cause cancer in humans at the request of UK Government Departments and Agencies.

The membership of the Committee, agendas and minutes of meetings, and statements are all published on the internet [Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment - GOV.UK](#).

The Committee on Carcinogenicity exists to provide the best advice that will protect the public from an increased risk of cancer. This is based on careful scrutiny of available information and robust discussion, with complete transparency and full declaration of any possible conflicting interests by Members who are drawn from widely different backgrounds, appointed after a robust, open recruitment process. No one Member is more important than any other and each Member can be, and often is, challenged respectfully by colleagues. Each Member brings unique skills and experience: all of this variety contributes to discussions.

Members routinely demit office and I am grateful to all those who have given of their time to serve without remuneration.

Our aim is to distil all the evidence, using the skills Members bring from many different disciplines, to provide comprehensive advice that is useful, not just erudite. Sometimes, advice is targeted to a specific situation or request, but more often the Committee seeks to provide and review guidelines that are a framework for industry, regulators and researchers.

Members appreciate that our advice is only part of any assessment and that other factors are important before policy makers or regulators come to firm conclusions. To that end we have tried to “complete the loop” by identifying how Committee deliberations have helped make decisions. This is ongoing. Through a process of horizon scanning, the Committee spends time trying to discern situations, threats and concerns that may arise, whilst keeping up to date with new methods and technologies that may help (or possibly hinder) future assessments.

The Committee is supported by an excellent Secretariat, to whom I express gratitude, and also by contracted research consultants who ensure we delve deeply into published literature.

At Committee meetings, many assessors from different departments attend, and we do encourage all attendees to contribute to discussion where appropriate, though of course the Committee Members ultimately take responsibility for conclusions.

I finish where I started: COC’s purpose is to help provide advice regarding the increased risk of cancer associated with some chemicals and mixtures of chemicals in a way that supports clear, informed action where required, or reassurance that such action is not needed.

Professor David Harrison - Chair

MD DSc FRCPath FRCPEd FRCSEd