

COT Preface - 2022

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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 met on eight occasions during the year. In addition to their seven regular meetings, an extraordinary meeting was held to discuss the draft EFSA opinion on bisphenol A (BPA). As ever, the Committee have undertaken a busy and varied programme of work.

2022 brought a welcome return to face-to-face meetings, though now with the use of hybrid technology to allow the participation of Members not wishing or able to attend in person; this also allows the easier attendance of interested external observers, increasing the reach of the COT.

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). A number of new topics were considered as part of this work including lead, cadmium and ergot alkaloids along with ginger and raspberry leaf tea supplements.

Other topics discussed by the Committee this year have covered a wide range including nicotine pouches, ocean bound plastics, cows' milk, per and polyfluoroalkylated substances (PFAS), the inhalation exposure of microplastics, the genotoxicity of acrylamide and approaches to mixture risk assessment. The COT also started work on a review of the aircraft cabin air environment, considering a number of potential chemicals that could be present.

In 2022, the work of the Committee started to include overseeing and assuring the risk assessment of regulated products that were previously assessed in Europe. Joint Expert Groups (JEGs) were established as part of the FSA Scientific the Advisory Committee (SAC) structure to advise the FSA on these products; AEJEG covers enzymes, additives and other regulated products, while the FCM JEG covers food contact materials, respectively; along with the other SACs, the COT oversees the work of these Groups. A number of regulated product authorisations have now been reviewed by the Committee and this workstream will increase in the future as the authorisation process matures. The Committee are 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; this has led to work on the safety of green tea catechins and fortificants in bread and flour.

The Committee also contributed comments to a number of public consultations from EFSA, including BPA, acrylamide and nitrosamines.

The joint COT and SACN Working Group continues its benefit- risk assessment of plant-based drinks consumed as an alternative to cows' milk. It is hoped this WG will report in 2023.

The Committee held a workshop Opportunities and outlook for UK Food and Chemicals regulation post EU Exit which took place in Liverpool in July 2022. The purpose of the workshop was to review the food and chemical regulatory landscape from a number of different organisational perspectives, with a particular focus on the REACH classification process for chemicals. The workshop provided an opportunity for invited experts and organisations to share their knowledge, have roundtable discussions on the topic bringing representatives from industry, academia and regulatory agencies.

This year, the Committee said goodbye to Dr Caroline Harris and Dr Rene Crevel. On behalf of all Members, I would like to express the COT's sincere thanks to them for all their invaluable contributions to the work of the Committee over the years. We also welcomed a new Member, Dr Silvia Gratz from the Rowett

Research Institute to the Committee and look forward to working with her.

Next year, the Committee will hold a workshop to kick-start the process of updating its guidance on the risk assessment of chemicals in food and the environment, last revised several decades ago. This will be an opportunity to bring together a number of topics on which the Committee has been working over the last few years, including new approach methodologies (NAMs), dose-response assessment, assessing data-poor chemicals, and evidence integration. It is also proposed that, together with the COC and COM, a more holistic approach to assessing toxicity and carcinogenicity be explored.

I would like to thank my fellow Committee Members for their continuing support and expert contributions to the work of the COT and its sub-groups over the year. On a personal note, and on behalf of all Members, I very much appreciate the considerable support provided to the Committee by the joint Scientific Secretaries and all of their staff. They face many demands on their time and resources, and we are very grateful at how effectively they ensure the functioning of the COT.

Professor Alan Boobis (Chair)

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