

## COMMITTEE ON TOXICITY OF CHEMICALS IN FOOD, CONSUMER PRODUCTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### Revised COT Terms of Reference and Code of Practice

#### Introduction

1. The Chair of the FSA Board is trying to encourage greater consistency among the different FSA Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) in their Terms of Reference (ToR) and Codes of Practice (CoP). A template has been developed by the FSA Science Council and the current COT ToR and CoP have been revised to follow the common format. In general, this has involved including the same information but revising the order that it has been presented in.
2. However, the COT is different to the other FSA SACs in that it is one of three sister Committees along with COC and COM which are jointly sponsored by the FSA and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and therefore any changes will also need to be acceptable to these committees.
3. The text used here is based on that published in the annexes to the COT/C/M Annual Report but some of the same information is also on the COT website

#### Revisions to COT/C/M ToR and CoP

4. The revised document is attached at Annex A and contains notes and tracked changes. Some information that was unique to the COT/C/M CoP has been included where useful. Other areas of text have been identified that may need to be reconsidered to ensure they reflect current practice. The major items are as follows.

#### Terms of Reference (page 3)

5. Are any revisions needed to the current COT ToR? The current terms of reference list a number of Government Departments- should this be simplified?

#### Role of Observers (page 7/8)

6. The text on observers is was drawn up for COT after some specific issues with observers but has been used elsewhere by other Committees. Should this be revised, and does it need to remain in the CoP or just included on the COT website?

#### Interactions with the media (page 9)

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

7. The Code of Practice currently states that “Questions or approaches from the media should normally be directed to either the Chair who will act as official COT spokesman or the Food Standards Agency or PHE press office”. However, in practice the media tend to contact the Secretariat or the Press Office in the first instance. This could be revised to say “Questions or approaches from the media should normally be directed to the Food Standards Agency or PHE press office. Where needed, the Chair (or a nominated Member) will act as official COT spokesman.

Withdrawal from meetings (page 12)

8. The current texts states that:

- If a declaration of interest has been made where the Chair decides that the member should not participate in the discussion and should withdraw from the meeting (even if held in public), this should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The Chair may first allow them to make a statement on the item under discussion.

The Secretariat is not aware of any instances where a separate statement has been made by a Member who has withdrawn from a meeting – is this provision still necessary? In addition, since the business of the Committee is largely in the public domain, would a Member still need to withdraw from the meeting or only when the item concerned is reserved?

Meetings (page 13)

9. Information on the practical aspects of how a meeting is run has not previously been included in the COT/C/M CoP. Is it useful to include this?

Work programme (page 24)

10. The information on the forward work plan on the COT website is currently out of date and will be rectified in due course. Do Members have any views on what needs to be included?

11. A number of minor points are also noted in the text. These include:

- Definition of a quorum (page 3)
- Is the information on the status of the three Committees in the right place? (page 6)
- Role of other officials, invited experts and contractors (page 7). Invited experts and contractors have not been included in the CoP previously- is additional text needed?
- Different kinds of interest are listed in the main text of the current COT/C/M CoP but attached as an Annex in the new template – should this be included in the main text? (page 9)

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- Statement of liability- Does this need to be on the website or retained in the main text of the CoP (page 12).

### Questions for the Committee

12. Members are asked to comment on the revised Terms of Reference and Code of Practice

**Secretariat  
April 2020**

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**Annex A to TOX/2020/??**

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Secretariat

April 2020