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TOX/2021/56

Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment

Topic proposals for a COT workshop in March 2022

Introduction

1. The COT secretariat are considering putting together a workshop to take place alongside the 29th March 2022 COT meeting, making it a potential 2-day out of town meeting (29th – 30th).
2. The secretariat has included 5 proposals for Members' consideration:
 - UK benchmark dose modelling guidance
 - Microbiome
 - Food Contact Materials
 - Mixtures
 - Metabolomics
 - 'Chemicals and food regulation in the UK; current structure and future development and divergence'

These are described in more detail below:

UK benchmark dose (BMD) modelling guidance

3. This is an idea that initially arose from discussion of the Horizon scanning paper in February 2021. During discussions on the EFSA nickel update "it was considered that UK guidance on BMD modelling was needed to ensure consistency in software use and in interpretation of the outputs".
4. Whilst carrying out its normal functions the COT is likely to come across instances where it will be essential that there is a good understanding of BMD

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modelling, including when it should be used; the software available and its respective limitations; and interpretation of the outputs. In addition, the secretariat, may also need to know how to carry out this modelling. In order that there is consistency in all of these aspects it is important that there is guidance from a UK perspective.

5. A COT (or wider UK) guidance document could be put together which would detail all of the above recommendations and also list relevant resources with links. Discussions with experts in-the-field would likely be necessary to ensure that the guidance is accurate, reliable and future-proof for the FSA and the COT.

6. A workshop could provide some presentations on BMD modelling including its uses, benefits and shortfalls. There could be a demonstration of one of the BMD software models that are regularly used. Following this there could be discussions on what Members would like to see included in the UK guidance and what level of experience Members and the secretariat should have and whether further training is required.

Microbiome

7. The secretariat is aware that previously some Members have requested an update on the microbiome and contacted colleagues at UK Health Security Agency (HSA) to seek their thoughts on whether it was time to have a review of the microbiome.

8. It was considered that this area hasn't moved on significantly in the last few years; particularly given the COT statement from 2020 ([Statement on interactions between xenobiotics and the human microbiota and their potential toxicological implications](#)) was recent and quite comprehensive. There are other ongoing studies in the CEFIC/LRI program, in particular, on the effects of antibiotics but these has not yet been completed.

9. However, if Members are interested, a presentation in the future might be possible. If Members have a specific question on the microbiome such as a

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particular food type or exposure then a workshop might be feasible, However, there does not appear to be enough new material for a general workshop.

Food Contact Materials

10. The aim of a workshop on food contact materials could be to cover the wide range of topics that spin off this topic:

- our work on biobased food contact materials ([position paper](#) and multiple sub papers including chitin and bamboo)
- coatings e.g. PFAS
- plastics
- advanced materials

Mixtures

11. The COT considered mixtures in 2002, with a working group producing a report on mixtures of pesticides and similar substances. Research was conducted to address some of the recommendations made in the report.

[COT Review of the Risk Assessment of Mixtures of Pesticides and Similar Substances \(2002\)](#)

The COT also commented on the recent EFSA consultation on grouping substances for a combined risk assessment.

12. A workshop could explore the combined effort of risk assessment in future for mixtures of chemicals. ([IGHRC –Chemical Risk Assessment of mixtures](#)). EFSA recently held a workshop “[EFSA International Workshop on Risk Assessment of Combined Exposure to Multiple Chemicals](#)” and it could be useful for Members to be kept updated and briefed on this field.

13. The workshop could look at the tools to explore exposure, grouping of chemicals as well as different methodologies available to assess multiple chemicals in an exposure.

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Metabolomics

14. This topic was suggested by a COT Member. It has not recently been reviewed by the COT. A workshop could reviewing the state-of-the-art methodologies available and how we might use these in risk assessment.

Chemicals and food regulation in the UK; current structure and future development and divergence.

15. This topic was suggested by a UK HSA colleague. It would revolve around past, present and future chemical legislation and frameworks; It would 1) a look back on the EU regulatory framework, 2) transfer to the UK, 3) potential divergence (NAMs in here but not in depth) and finally 4) the role and interaction with non-EU bodies (in the broadest sense, including the committees, OECD and NGOs), UK capability and gaps. The output could be a cross government workshop report based on the discussions session. Pesticides could be included as well as chemicals and food contact materials. It would be very broad ranging but give a view of the big picture.

Questions for the Committee

16. Members are asked to consider
- a) if any of the proposals set out above would be suitable for a workshop in March 2022
 - b) If any of the proposals set out above would be suitable for a workshop at a later date.
 - c) If they have other suggestions for a suitable topic.

Secretariat
December 2021