

Committee on \_\_\_\_\_  
**TOXICITY**

**PUBLICATION SCHEME**

Prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), and the Information Commissioners Office Model Publication Scheme

## Index

Section 1	Introduction	<b>4</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Who we are and what we do</li><li>▪ Financial Information</li><li>▪ What are our priorities and how are we doing</li><li>▪ How we work</li><li>▪ Other Information</li></ul>	
Section 2	COT Publication Scheme	<b>9</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ About the Freedom of Information Act 2000</li><li>▪ The model publication scheme</li><li>▪ Our copyright policy</li></ul>	
Section 3	Access to information under the scheme	<b>12</b>
Section 4	Information Asset Register (IAR)	<b>13</b>
Section 5	Complaints procedure	<b>14</b>
Section 6	Your feedback	<b>16</b>

# Section 1: Introduction

## Who we are and what we do

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT)

1. The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) is an independent scientific committee that provides advice to the Food Standards Agency, the Department of Health and other Government Departments and Agencies on matters concerning the toxicity of chemicals.
2. The Committee's terms of reference are:

To advise at the request of:

Food Standards Agency  
Health Protection Agency  
Department of Health  
Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform  
Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions  
Department of Trade and Industry  
Health and Safety Executive  
Veterinary Medicines Directorate  
Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency  
Home Office  
Scottish Executive  
National Assembly for Wales  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
Other Government Departments and Agencies

To assess and advise on the toxic risk to man of substances which are:

- a. used or proposed to be used as food additives, or used in such a way that they might contaminate food through their use or natural occurrence in agriculture, including horticulture and veterinary practice or in the distribution, storage, preparation, processing or packaging of food;
- b. used or proposed to be used or manufactured or produced in industry, agriculture, food storage or any other workplace;
- c. used or proposed to be used as household goods or toilet goods and preparations;
- d. used or proposed to be used as drugs, when advice is requested by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency;

e. used or proposed to be used or disposed of in such a way as to result in pollution of the environment.

To advise on important general principles or new scientific discoveries in connection with toxic risks, to co-ordinate with other bodies concerned with the assessment of toxic risks and to present recommendations for toxicity testing.

3. Committee members are appointed in accordance with the Nolan Principles, which aim to ensure fairness and transparency in appointments to public bodies.
4. The Committee consists of specialist members, including the Chair all of who were appointed as independent scientific and medical experts on the basis of their special skills and knowledge, and 2 non-specialist members appointed for their knowledge of consumer and public interest. The areas of expertise of scientific and medical experts include medicine, biochemistry, risk assessment, cell biology, toxicology, pathology, pharmacokinetics, statistics, pharmacology, molecular biology, nutrition, immunology, neurotoxicology, endocrinology, reproductive toxicology, epidemiology and paediatrics. Further details are available at: <http://cot.food.gov.uk/membership/members/>
5. The COT is supported in its work by a Secretariat provided from the Food Standards Agency(FSA), and the Health Protection Agency(HPA)/Department of Health(DH). The FSA Secretariat is responsible for issues specifically related to chemicals in food, while the HPA/DH Secretariat leads with those issues related to consumer products and the environment. The secretariat has scientific expertise that enables them to provide members with comprehensive background information and briefing papers that inform the decision making processes of the Committee.
6. The FSA is an independent food safety watchdog set up by the Food Standards Act 1999 to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food. Although the FSA is a Government Department, it works at "arm's length" from Ministers and is free to publish any advice it issues to Ministers or the public.
7. The HPA is an independent body that protects the health and well-being of the population. The HPA plays a critical role in protecting people from infectious diseases and in preventing harm when hazards involving chemicals, poisons or radiation occur. They provide information and support to the NHS and health professionals on toxicology. The Department of Health (DH) exists to improve the health and wellbeing of people in England.

## Financial Information

8. The COT has no independent budget or expenditure. The FSA covers the costs for the operation of the COT (including Secretariat support, Members fees and expenses, and administrative costs for meetings, publications and events), and these are recorded formally in the account of the FSA.
9. COT Members are not employed by the Agency and they do not receive a salary for their work on the Committee. They are however entitled to claim expenses and fees for attending meetings and, in some circumstances, for work between meetings.
10. In the financial year 2011/12 the FSA spent approximately £28,000.00, excluding Secretariat resources for the operation of the COT.

Committee members may claim a fee for Committee meetings:

COT Committee Chair £205 per day

COT Committee Member £160 per day

Where COT members are unable to attend a meeting but contribute in writing, a £50.00 reading fee is paid.

11. Fees in respect of the COT are set by the FSA. The FSA will review and revise COT rates every 2 years with the intention that rates should rise in line with the recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Board with regard to pay in the Senior Civil Service. The FSA will also take into account comparisons with rates paid in similar advisory bodies in the UK.
12. Committee members are entitled to reimbursement of reasonable travel and subsistence expenses necessarily incurred on official committee business. Members must seek value for money and are encouraged to use the most cost effective and environmentally sustainable options for travel and accommodation. FSA will only refund standard class travel costs.

## What are our priorities and how are we doing?

13. The COT performs an annual self-assessment of its performance against the Good Practice Guidelines developed by the FSA. At the Committee's first meeting of the year held in February each year, it will discuss the Annual Report which covers the Committee's activities, progress and future plans, and its annual self-assessment.

## How we work?

14. The COT website has a section which outlines the procedure for holding COT meetings in open session which describes how the Committee will operate. COT meetings are open to the public and papers, minutes and reports are published on this website. Agendas are published in advance of meetings. The Code of Conduct for Chair, members, assessors and observers outlines the expectations from those attending COT meetings.
15. The Committee's Code of Practice describes the procedures for handling commercially sensitive confidential information. It requires that data holders be asked to identify any confidentiality data and the reason for confidentiality.
16. The COT operates in accordance with the guidelines and procedures established by the FSA and to relevant guidance and rules established across Government for the operation of Advisory Committees and public bodies. These include the Agency's Good Practice Guidelines: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/goodpracguide.pdf> and the 2002 Report of the Review of Scientific Committees: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/CommitteesReview.pdf> and the cross-Government Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (CoPSAC): <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/goscience/docs/c/11-1382-code-of-practice-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf>
17. Appointments to the COT are made in accordance with the principles set out in the Nolan Report on Standards in Public Life. In making such appointments, the COT and the FSA are committed to affording equal opportunities to all those with the requisite qualifications and expertise irrespective of race, age, disability, gender, marital status, religion, sexual orientation, transgender and working patterns.
18. The overriding principle is that appointments are made on merit. Members are appointed for their individual qualifications and the expertise they can bring to the Committee, and not to represent any particular sector's interest. The balance of the Committee is intended to ensure that it has a wide range of expertise on which to draw, in order to enable it to advise the FSA effectively.
19. Vacancies and further information on procedures for appointments are published on this site when vacancies arise. Further information can be found at: <http://cot.food.gov.uk/membership/cotmembers>
20. The COT operates under FSA policies and procedures on complaints, records management and personal data, and charging for information. Further information on these policies is contained within this document.

## Other Information

21. The COT does not hold any assets itself. Information in respect of the committee is managed by the COT Secretariat and where relevant is recorded in the Asset and/or Information Asset Registers of the Food Standards Agency. (see Section 4 of this document)
22. The FSA is advised by a number of independent Advisory Committees to help ensure that the Agency's advice to consumers is always based on the best and most recent evidence. Each of these committees is separate to the FSA and each has its own publication scheme. Further information about the Advisory Committees and links to their websites are available at:  
<http://www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/committees>.



## Section 2: COT Publication Scheme

### About the Freedom of Information Act 2000

23. The **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000** came into force on 1 January 2005. It gave a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, provided exemptions from that right and placed a number of obligations on public authorities. The COT is one such authority. Any person who makes a request to a public authority for information must be informed whether the public authority holds that information and, subject to exemptions, be provided with it. In general, a response must be provided within **20** working days.
24. The COT, along with every other public authority operating under FOIA 2000, has a legal duty under Section 19 of the Act to adopt, maintain and keep under review a scheme for the publication of information that is approved by the Information Commissioner and to publish information in accordance with that scheme.
25. The COT publication scheme specifies:
  - the classes of information which the public authority publishes (or intends to publish);
  - the manner in which information in each class is, (or is intended to be), published (a link to each type of information on FSA or COT website is provided at the appropriate place in this document);
  - whether the material is (or is intended to be) available free of charge or on payment of a fee.
26. Please note that documents within the publication scheme may, on occasion, be edited where, in the view of the COT, specific information should not be disclosed on grounds of the exceptions for example under “Unpublished data” on the COT website <http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotunpublisheddata>.
27. If a document has been edited, it will be made clear to the user that this is the case it will be highlighted in red with the date the edit was made. Instances where this has occurred are minutes of meeting discussed under “reserved business” which were subsequently included in the existing minutes once the agenda item under discussion was no longer classified as “reserved”.

### Model Publication Scheme 2009

28. From 1 January 2009, all public authorities were required to adopt the model publication scheme developed by the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO). Further information is available on their website <http://www.ico.gov.uk>

29. The COT has adopted the model publication scheme. Our core value of openness means that we already publish a large quantity of information. However, for some areas of our work, the new model scheme has involved revising and extending the range of material which we publish.

The scheme contains seven classes of information. These are:

- Who we are and what we do
- What we spend and how we spend it
- What our priorities are and how we are doing
- How we make decisions
- Our policies and procedures
- Lists and registers
- The services we offer

The entire above are covered within this Publication Scheme.

30. The scheme commits the COT to:
- proactively publish information (including Environmental Information) which is held by it and contained within each class
  - proactively publish information in line with the access and charging statements
  - a means by which the authority can ensure the public are aware of the sorts of information the public authority has committed to make readily available, how they can access this and whether they will have to pay for it. Generally this will be an authority's existing website.
  - review and update the information (e.g. the website) on a regular basis.
31. The aim of the COT Publication Scheme is to bring together in one place the different types of information required by ICO, that are issued by the Committee in the discharge of its public functions in a clear and structured manner. The Scheme will categorise the information type and provide details on how to obtain it. The overall benefit to our stakeholders and others is to save time and effort in searching and securing relevant Committee information.

## **Our Copyright Policy**

32. The information supplied by the COT continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law. Documents except photographs and logos can be used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.
33. Most documents produced by a government department or agency including scientific advisory committees will be protected by Crown Copyright. Most

Crown copyright information can be re-used under the Open Government Licence (OGL): <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>

For information about the OGL and about re-using Crown Copyright information please see The National Archives website: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/uk-gov-licensing-framework.htm>

34. Copyright in other documents may rest with a third party. For information about obtaining permission from a third party see the Intellectual Property Office's website at [www.ipo.gov.uk](http://www.ipo.gov.uk)

<b>CLASS OF INFORMATION</b>	<b>WHERE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE</b>	<b>COST</b>
<b><i>COT Agendas</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On COT Website (<a href="http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/">http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/</a>)</li> <li>• On request to COT Secretariat</li> </ul>	Free*
<b><i>COT Meeting Papers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On COT Website (<a href="http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/">http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/</a>)</li> <li>• On request to COT Secretariat</li> </ul>	Free*
<b><i>COT Minutes</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On COT Website (<a href="http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/">http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/</a>)</li> <li>• On request to COT Secretariat</li> </ul>	Free*
<b><i>COT Annual Reports</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On COT Website (<a href="http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotreports/">http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotreports/</a>)</li> <li>• On request to COT Secretariat</li> </ul>	Free*
<b><i>Code of Conduct for Members of COT</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On COT Website (<a href="http://cot.food.gov.uk/membership/conduct">http://cot.food.gov.uk/membership/conduct</a>)</li> <li>• In annual reports</li> </ul>	Free*
<b><i>Members Interests</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On COT Website (<a href="http://cot.food.gov.uk/membership/">http://cot.food.gov.uk/membership/</a>)</li> <li>• In annual reports (<a href="http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotreports/">http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotreports/</a>)</li> </ul>	Free*

\* Please refer to Note 2 in all instances.

#### **NOTE 1: Contact details / addresses**

**COT Secretariat:** *Aviation House (Room 3B)*  
*125 Kingsway*  
*London*  
*WC2B 6NH*  
*Tel: 020 7276 8522*

*Email: [COT@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:COT@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)*

**NOTE 2: Administration costs**

*We will not normally charge a fee to supply hard copies of information or advice, unless the request is for a priced publication or data set. However, we reserve the right to make a reasonable charge to cover the costs of transcription, photocopying, packaging and postage, or where a considerable amount of staff time would be needed to identify; process and collate information for you. In some cases, there will be separate charging arrangements for the supply of information for commercial use. We will inform you of any charges that might apply before processing your request. You may complain if you believe the charges we have made to supply information are unfair*

## Section 3: Access to Information under the Scheme

35. The COT's general policy stemming from its Code of Practice on Openness is to be as open and transparent as possible in dealing with all requests for information.
36. If having searched the scheme you cannot find what you are looking for, you can make a written request for information under the Food Standards Agency's Code of Practice on Openness. This request may be handled under the terms of the FOIA 2000
37. A copy of the Agency's Code of Practice on Openness can be found at [http://www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/how\\_we\\_work/copopenbranch/](http://www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/how_we_work/copopenbranch/) or by contacting the Openness Team at:  
Food Standards Agency, Correspondence, Openness and Parliamentary Branch, Room 2C Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2 6NH or you can e-mail: [openness.team@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:openness.team@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)
38. We will treat all requests for information on a fair and equal basis, and without prejudice. Where we are unable to provide the information you request, we will explain why. Where we decide not to release the information you request, we will explain why and give you details of how you can complain against our decision.
39. Applications for information under the Agency's Code of Practice on Openness should be made in writing, by post or e-mail and should provide us with as much detail as possible to identify the information sought:

<b><u>In England, to:</u></b> Food Standards Agency Aviation House 125 Kingsway London WC2B 6NH e-mail: <a href="mailto:helpline@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk">helpline@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk</a>	<b><u>In Wales, to:</u></b> Food Standards Agency (Wales) 1st Floor, Southgate House Wood Street Cardiff CF10 1EW e-mail: <a href="mailto:wales@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk">wales@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk</a>
<b><u>In Scotland, to:</u></b> Food Standards Agency (Scotland) St Magnus House 6th Floor, 25 Guild Street Aberdeen AB11 6NJ e-mail <a href="mailto:scotland@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk">scotland@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk</a>	<b><u>In Northern Ireland, to:</u></b> Food Standards Agency (NI) 10C Clarendon Road Belfast BT1 3BW e-mail: <a href="mailto:infofsani@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk">infofsani@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk</a>

40. Where the information you want is available in a priced publication, we will give you details of the publication and where you may buy it.

## Section 4: Information Asset Register (IAR)

41. As part of the Government's commitment to openness and in line with our own Code of Practice on Openness, the COT has provided details of its publications to the FSA Information Asset Register (IAR). The FSA IAR gives details of information held by the Agency that has not been formally published and provides access to that information. Details of what information is already available on the FSA IAR are available on the FSA website:  
<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/iar/index.htm>.
42. The FSA Information Asset Register is updated on a regular basis as details of new unpublished information assets become available. Details of how to obtain copies of the information are given in the summaries on the website. Requests, mentioning the Information Asset Register, can also be emailed to:  
[helpline@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)
43. Inforoute is the gateway to all information held by UK Government bodies. It provides direct access to the Government's IAR which identifies;
  - what information the government holds;
  - how useful that information is; and
  - , a contact point to whom requests for the underlying information may be made (requests would be subject to the Open Government Code and, the FOIA).
44. Further information on the IAR is available on the Department for Business Innovation & Skills website at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/site/foi/information-asset-register> and the Office of Public Sector Information website <http://tna.europarchive.org/20100402134329/http://www.opsi.gov.uk/iar/index.htm> or requested by post from  
Information Asset Register  
OPSI e-Services Team  
102 Petty France  
London SW1H 9AJ  
e-mail: [inforoute@opsi.gov.uk](mailto:inforoute@opsi.gov.uk)

## Section 5: Complaints Procedure

45. Even the best organisations will sometimes get things wrong. If you are dissatisfied with something the COT has done or the way we have done it, please let us know. We will try to resolve any problem quickly, and explain what we have done and why. Hearing from you will help us improve by learning from our mistakes. Please contact the COT Administrative Secretary, Julie Shroff, Food Standards Agency, Room 3B, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH or e-mail: [COT@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:COT@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)
46. As the Committee reports to the FSA, and if you are not satisfied with the way the COT Administrative Secretary has handled your complaint you can get in touch with the **Agency's Complaints Co-ordinator** via the Openness Team:  
Food Standards Agency, Room 2C, 125 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6NH  
or E-mail: [Openness.team@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Openness.team@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)
47. If we (COT) cannot deal with your complaint immediately, we will acknowledge it within two working days (please always give us your full postal address). We will write to you with a full reply within 20 working days of receiving your complaint. If this is not possible, we will explain why and say when you will get a full reply.
48. If you are not satisfied with our response and would like to take your complaint further, please contact the FSA Complaints Co-ordinator at the address above. They will look at it again and give you a full reply within **20** working days.
49. If you are still unhappy, you can then ask the FSA Complaints Co-ordinator to refer your complaint to, Mr Tim Smith, Chief Executive, Food Standards Agency, at Aviation House stating clearly your reasons for doing so.
50. If you remain dissatisfied with the way the Agency has acted, you may then ask for your complaint and its handling to be investigated by the UK Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman). In this event you should write to a Member of Parliament (the referring MP does not have to be your local MP) asking them to refer your complaint to the Ombudsman. The telephone number for the House of Commons Information Office, where you can get information on contacting an MP, is 020 7219 4272 or you can e-mail: [hcinfo@parliament.uk](mailto:hcinfo@parliament.uk)
51. This complaints procedure applies across the Food Standards Agency to its headquarters in London, Executives in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment.
52. You can complain direct to the Information Commissioner's Office if you feel the COT have not complied with our obligations under the model Publication Scheme requirement. Further information on Freedom of Information is available from the Information Commissioner's office website at:  
[www.ico.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_cover.aspx](http://www.ico.gov.uk/what_we_cover.aspx)

53. If you prefer, you may alternatively contact the Information Commissioner's Office direct or through the website at <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

*The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF*

*Information Line: 01625 545745  
Switchboard: 01625 545700  
Fax: 01625 524510*



## Section 6: Your feedback

The COT's Publication Scheme along with the FSA Publication Scheme is part of the FSA's commitment to work in accordance with the Agency's **Statement of General Objectives and Practices** (published in line with Section 22 of the Food Standards Act 1999).

54. This Publication Scheme fulfils our legal duty under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We would positively welcome any **views and comments on the structure and / or content** of the Publication Scheme itself. This Publication Scheme will be treated as a 'living' document, which we will amend and develop in the light of our experience, as appropriate.
55. When commenting, we would particularly ask you to actively consider the following;
- did you find the structure and layout of this Publication Scheme easy to understand and navigate?
  - If you were looking for some specific information, did this publication scheme facilitate that search successfully?
  - if you were browsing, did the Publication Scheme help direct your search and make the process easier?
  - are there any types of information or areas that are not currently covered by the COT or FSA Publication Scheme that you would like to see in the future?
  - do you have any suggestions or other comments that might make this scheme more user-friendly or helpful?
56. Please send your views and comments on this publication scheme to: **COT@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk** stating your name, organisation (if relevant) and contact details. Alternatively, you can write to;

*COT Secretariat  
FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY  
Aviation House (Room 3B)  
125 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6NH  
Tel: 020 7276 8522*

57. The COT Publication Scheme Co-ordinator is Dr Diane Benford, Scientific Secretary to the COT.
58. The COT Publication Scheme will be maintained by Julie Shroff, COT Administrative Secretary.