

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

POTASSIUM REPLACEMENTS FOR SODIUM CHLORIDE AND SODIUM BASED ADDITIVES- UPDATE ON FUTURE WORK

Introduction and background

1. The Committee on Toxicity (COT) has been asked by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) to advise on the possible effects of increased potassium intakes in vulnerable groups as a consequence of widespread use of potassium-based replacements for sodium chloride and sodium-based additives. Members have considered a number of discussion papers on this topic and a draft statement has been prepared and agreed along with a lay summary. These were recently finalised but have not yet been published.

2. While the COT have been considering this topic, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) have been finalising their work assessing the potential benefits of potassium replacements for sodium chloride and sodium based additives.

Future work

Joint COT/SACN sub-group

3. Since the two committees have separately considered the risks and the benefits of potassium replacements, it has been agreed by FSA and PHE that it would be helpful for risk managers if the two committees could take an integrated approach to assessing the risks and benefits.

4. To discuss the way forward, the COT chair recently met with Dr Ann Prentice and Professor Peter Aggett (the Chair and Deputy Chair of SACN) as well as members of the two Secretariats to discuss how to take forward the work on the implications for the potassium replacement for sodium salts. It has been agreed that a joint sub group will be set up to take a risk–benefit approach to the two strands of work so that a joint outcome can be agreed and presented to risk managers. The COT and SACN statement and reports will be published at the same time as the joint outcome.

Membership

5. The Sub Group will be co-chaired by Professor Boobis and Dr Ann Prentice. A number of SACN members who would like to be involved have been proposed and it has been suggested that an expert in food technology would also provide valuable expertise: colleagues at PHE are trying to identify a suitable candidate. COT members will wish to consider whether they would like to be involved in the sub-

group or if they have any suggestions for other possible Members or areas of expertise that should be considered.

Terms of reference

6. The following terms of reference have been proposed:

- COT and SACN to work together to undertake a risk-benefit analysis of the use of potassium-based sodium replacers in foods;
- Based on that risk-benefit analysis, to agree integrated advice for SACN to provide to the Department of Health.

These were circulated to SACN for comment, and the committee was content with them.

Questions for the Committee

7. Members are asked to consider:

- a) Whether they have any comments on the proposed terms of reference?
- b) If they have any suggestions for Membership of the sub-group or areas of expertise that should be included?
- c) If they have any suggestions for topics that should be considered or approaches that could be taken.
- d) Any other comments they may have.

Secretariat
November 2015