CC/MIN/2023/01

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

Minutes of the meeting held at 10.30 am on Thursday 16th March 2023 by Teams.

Present

Chair:	Professor D Harrison	
Members:	Mr D Bodey	
	Dr G Clare	
	Dr M Cush	
	Dr R Dempsey	
	Dr J Doe	
	Prof G Jenkins	
	Dr L Stanley	
Secretariat:	Miss B Gadeberg	UKHSA Scientific Secretary
	Ms C Mulholland	FSA
	Dr E Hudson	FSA
Sponsor:	Ms R Armstrong	DHSC
Assessors:	Ms H Alpren	Defra
	Ms F Hill	BEIS-OPSS
	Mr N O'Brien	VMD
	Dr O Sepai	UKHSA to Item 5
	Mr A Tucker	HSE
Invited Experts and Contractors:	Dr R Bevan	IEH Consulting
	Prof J Weeks	IEH Consulting to Item 5
Observers:	Mr A Bhagwat	Incoming Lay Member
	Ms J Rix	Incoming Lay Member

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ITEM 1: Announcements and apologies for absence

1. The Chair welcomed Members, and other attendees to the meeting. Apologies were received from Dr R Haworth and Prof N Pearce, from the FSA Secretariat Dr D Gott and Ms C Potter, and Dr J O'Brien (FSA Science Council).

2. The was the last Committee meeting for Mr Derek Bodey, Dr Gill Clare and Dr John Doe, and they were thanked for their contributions to the COC since they joined the Committee in 2013.

3. Dr Meera Cush, Dr Ruth Dempsey, Dr Richard Haworth and Dr Lesley Stanley had been reappointed to the Committee for a further 3 or 4 year term to stagger the terms of office of Members.

4. Two incoming Lay Members had been identified during the recent round of appointments and were attending the meeting. Mr Amit Bhagwat and Ms Juliet Rix were welcomed to the Committee, and their terms of office would start officially on 1st April 2023.

5. The Sponsor and Secretariat team were continuing to work with the Chair to recruit to the vacancies for Expert Members and consideration would be made for recruiting Associate Members to bring on early-mid career scientists who might not consider themselves ready to be Expert Members. Members would be kept informed and were encouraged to share the vacancy notices when available.

6. Members were reminded to declare any interests they may have in an item before its discussion.

ITEM 2: Minutes of meeting held on 21st July 2022 (CC/MIN/2022/02)

7. The first draft minutes, main and reserved, were agreed.

ITEM 3: Matters arising

Item 4 Matters Arising – Position paper: The Tumour Microenvironment

8. This paper had been published on the Committee website.

Item 4 Matters Arising – Cancer Risk Characterisation Methods G06 Update

9. This statement had been published on the Committee website.

Item 4 Matters Arising – COC Guidance Statement (G04): The Use of Biomarkers in Carcinogenic Risk Assessment – final draft – updated following COM comments (CC/2022/04)

10. This document was being finalised for Chair's approval.

Item 4 Matters Arising – First draft updated Guidance Statement (G03): Hazard Identification and Characterisation: Conduct and Interpretation of Animal Carcinogenicity Studies

11. This document was being finalised for Chair's approval.

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Item 4 Matters Arising – Second draft of updated Guidance Statement G07: Alternative approaches to the assessment of potential carcinogenicity of chemicals

12. This document was being finalised for Chair's approval.

Item 4 Matters Arising – Use of COC guidance

13. The Secretariat had been delayed in considering this further, however this would be followed up to identify means of obtaining feedback for the Committee on the use of its advice.

Item 5 – How the Committees evaluate the relevance and reliability of data when assessing a chemical of concern

14. This document had been updated and was being prepared for circulation to COC, COM and COT members for final comment before approval by the Committee Chairs.

ITEMS 4 & 5: Follow up to Horizon Scanning – March 2022 (CC/2023/01) and Presentation on approach to Horizon Scanning

15. No interests were declared for these items.

16. This paper presented the standing update on horizon scanning following the full discussion in November 2021 and the updates in March and July 2022. Professor Jason Weeks (IEH Consulting) had been invited to give a presentation to the Committee on approaches to horizon scanning as an opportunity for the Committee to consider how it undertakes horizon scanning and whether a more structured approach would be helpful and if wider aspects need to be considered.

17. A presentation on the benefits and methodologies to developing horizon scanning using a more purposeful, structured and focussed approach was considered by members to be useful. The incorporation of wider drivers such as society and ethics using a STEEPLE (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal, Ethical) approach would provide insights on public attitudes and perceptions that may influence future committee decisions. This would also include drawing in information from wider sources than for example peer-reviewed literature, and ensure that horizon issues wider than those which the Committee is aware of, i.e. emerged issues, are picked up.

18. An example of use of artificial intelligence (AI) was provided as part of the presentation, in particular the use of AI in writing papers which could in the future be part of the evidence base presented to the COC, and that some peer-reviewed journals were writing policies on the use of AI for this purpose. Such outputs from AI were noted as being plausible, but there wasn't fact checking to ensure the information on which it was developed was correct. It was noted that the Committee had commented in the past about use of AI for data-mining, but consideration of use of AI tools and potentially a policy on this would be useful.

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19. Societal considerations were flagged as important to ensure the Committee addresses issues of relevance and concern to the public, and supporting appropriate communication of COC opinions to the public, as well as feedback on COC outputs.

20. It was agreed that further discussion would take place to define the activities to be taken forward.

ITEM 6: Interim Position Paper on the safety of hydroxyanthracene derivatives for use in food – First draft (CC/2023/02) (Reserved business)

21. Dr Dempsey had previously declared that she undertakes consultancy for a company producing nutritional supplements, and had subsequently confirmed that this did not include any products containing aloe. It was agreed that Dr Dempsey could participate fully on this topic.

This item was discussed in reserved session. The minutes will be made public in due course.

ITEM 7: Summary of COC Workshop "Changing the paradigm: How should we assess cancer risk in the UK?" 17 November 2022 (CC/2023/03)

27. No interests were declared for this item.

28. This draft paper comprised a summary of the presentations made at the COC workshop held in November 2022, along with notes of the plenary and breakout group discussions.

29. The principal aim of the workshop had been to determine definitive steps that could be taken to make progress towards improvement of the chemical risk assessment process and regulatory requirements for carcinogenicity, based on research undertaken over the last 10-20 years. This first workshop focused on issues in the context of pesticides, but further discussions of different regulatory areas is planned.

30. The paper was considered by members to accurately reflect the workshop discussions and it was agreed that a short forward-looking COC 'viewpoint' document be prepared from this, to capture the definitive points to be taken forward. It was hoped that this could encourage opportunities for industry, and other parties, to provide additional data alongside that required by the 2-year bioassay, which may help to validate its application in replacing the 2-year data.

31. COC papers were also proposed on the areas of 'weight of evidence' and 'communication/societal perceptions' which were important recurring themes discussed at the workshop. In addition, it was suggested that the COC Guidance documents should be checked to see how language was used with respect to data to underpin the assessment of cancer risk, and moving focus away from solely utilising the 2-year bioassay.

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32. It was agreed to hold a follow-up workshop with a focus on cosmetics, for which regulations do not permit animal testing, as this is the opposite end of the spectrum to the data rich pesticide registration process discussed in November 2022. Members of COM and representatives of relevant industries and organisations were suggested as essential contributors to such a workshop.

ITEM 8: Draft COC Annual Report 2022 (CC/2023/04)

33. No interests were declared for this item.

34. This paper presented the draft COC annual report for 2022. It was suggested that consideration be made on whether the section on guidance statements should be expanded.

35. Members were also reminded to confirm their affiliations and declarations of interest.

ITEM 9: Any other business

COT workshop.

36. Members were informed that the COT would be holding a workshop on 17th May 2023 to discuss developing COT guidelines following EU Exit. It was noted that input from COC and COM would be important as it would also be important to link between the three Committees, and further information would be circulated when available.

Meeting format

37. It was noted that the format of COC meetings would continue as either in person for workshops or longer meetings and otherwise virtual meetings would be used where the agendas were shorter. The meeting on 20th July 2023 would likely be online via Teams, with the aim for the in person workshop on 16th November 2023.

Member appraisals and mentorship

38. It was noted that no formal request for Members appraisals had been received as yet, however the Chair was happy to have informal discussion with Members as necessary. Members were also invited to comment to the Chair on any issues with their performance.

39. One aspect that could be improved was the option of mentorship of new Members and especially if Associate Members are brought into the Committee in the future. This was positively received by the Committee, despite potential challenges of working in a virtual format compared to working face-to-face. Members were invited to inform the Chair and Secretariat if they would be interested in talking on a mentorship role in the future.

ITEM 10: Date of next meeting

40. The next meeting would be held on 20th July 2023 and was anticipated to be an online Teams meeting.

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