

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

Minutes of the meeting held at 10.30 am on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023 by Teams.

Present

Chair: Professor D Harrison

Members: Mr A Bhagwat  
Dr M Cush  
Dr R Dempsey  
Prof G Jenkins  
Prof N Pearce  
Ms J Rix  
Dr L Stanley

Secretariat: Miss B Gadeberg UKHSA Scientific Secretary  
Ms C Mulholland FSA

Assessors: Ms A Adjei MHRA  
Ms K Boss FSS  
Ms F Hill DBT-OPSS  
Ms A Muller HSE  
Mr N O'Brien VMD  
Mr J Smith HSE

Invited Experts and Contractors: Dr R Bevan IEH Consulting

Officials: Ms S Macchiarulo UKHSA  
Mr M Symington UKHSA

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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, from the FSA Secretariat Dr D Gott and Ms C Potter, Prof J Weeks from IEH Consulting, assessors Dr O Sepai (UKHSA), Ms M James (FSS), Ms V Swaine (HSE) who was represented by Ms A Muller and Mr J Smith and Dr J O'Brien (FSA Science Council).
2. The Committee was informed that Ms V Swaine had taken on the role as HSE Assessor.
3. It was noted that the facilitated discussion on horizon scanning intended for the present meeting had been removed from the agenda due to unforeseen circumstances.
4. Members were reminded to declare any interests they may have in an item before its discussion.

## **ITEM 2: Minutes of meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (CC/MIN/2023/01)**

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

## **ITEM 3: Matters arising**

### ***Item 3 Guidance Statements, and joint document on relevance and reliability***

6. The Secretariat is continuing to work on finalising draft updates on various guidance documents for Chair's approval.

### ***Item 3 Feedback to the COC on use of its advice***

7. The Secretariat was aware of the need to action this and hoped to do so in the autumn.

### ***Item 9 COT workshop***

8. The Secretariat had given a short presentation on COC guidance at a COT workshop in May 2023 on the COT's future principles and guidelines. A number of COC Members had participated and were thanked for their attendance.
9. Members who participated noted that it had been a useful workshop with good discussion of upcoming issues as well as on the need to focus on exposure assessment in more detail.
10. The Chair noted that COC and COM are keen to have joint working with COT on guidance and ensure, where relevant, that COC and COM aspects are linked in any new COT guidance.

**ITEM 4: For Information – Hill et al (2023) Lung adenocarcinoma promotion by air pollutants (CC/2023/05)**

11. Dr Dempsey noted that her background in the tobacco industry had parallels with the considerations in this study on air pollution; as this was not a direct interest it was agreed that Dr Dempsey could fully participate in the discussion.

12. This information paper presented a recent publication on promotion of lung adenocarcinoma by air pollutants. The paper had also been discussed by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) at its meeting on 10th July 2023, subsequent to a presentation from Professor Swanton at the November 2022 COMEAP meeting. The Secretariat flagged a number of points noted by COMEAP which were: COMEAP had queried whether mechanisms by which air pollution promoted cancers characterised by the EGFR mutation would also lead to promotion of other cancers initiated by mutations in other genes; the study did not rule out the possibility that air pollutants, e.g. PAHs, might also have an initiating role in addition to the mechanisms demonstrated in the paper; and in view of a continuing possibility of a cancer initiation role, COMEAP was unlikely to revise recommendations with respect to cessation lag used in mortality impact assessments, which assume that some of the benefits of air pollution reductions might not be realised until up to 20 years later.

13. The Committee noted that the study was a thorough piece of work covering many different aspects associated with carcinogenicity, in particular the cancer promotion and non-genotoxic mechanisms associated with cancer. It was noted that a number of papers are available from the 1970's and 1980's indicating cancer promotion as a mechanism, i.e. it is not just direct genotoxicity that causes cancer, and as such this was not necessarily new science, but it was a detailed exploration of cancer in the context of air pollution. Similarities to aspects considered by the tobacco industry were noted, where consideration was made of the impacts of direct genotoxic effects compared to the promotion effects.

14. It was noted that there was unlikely to be a complete absence of mutation occurring as a result of exposure to air pollution, and there are a number of papers on mutations associated with particulate matter. The particulate matter used in the study was low in PAHs content. It was noted that this might reduce the potential for genotoxicity.

15. It was agreed that the COC should consider this paper further probably alongside COM to pick up the aspects relating to genotoxicity.

**ITEM 5: November 2023 Workshop**

16. Members were informed that the November 2023 meeting would be an in-person workshop covering cosmetics and personal care products following on from the first workshop on pesticides held in November 2022.

17. Members were invited to send suggestions for speakers and participants, as well as questions to discuss, to the Secretariat by the end of July.

## **ITEM 6: Any other business**

### ***Annual report – affiliations and declaration of interests***

18. Members were reminded to confirm with the Secretariat their affiliations and declarations of interest to add to the annual report.

### ***Panorama***

19. The Committee was informed of a Panorama programme on ultra-processed food which had aired in June 2023, which discussed the work and interests of COT members and in particular the COT Chair. Following the broadcast, the FSA has re-affirmed that all the FSA Committees members interests are managed in line with the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees. FSA also recognised that scientists who serve on Committees will have undertaken a range of work including for academia and private sector but noting that this will not make them biased.

20. The COC Chair noted that this highlighted the importance of declaring interests, including possible perceived interests, so they could be documented, and appropriate decisions taken on Members involvement in discussions.

### ***Aspartame***

21. The Committee was made aware that IARC had classified aspartame as possibly carcinogenic to humans (2B); at the same time JECFA announced that it had concluded its review of aspartame and the data, including those on carcinogenicity, allowed the previous ADI to be reaffirmed.

22. The COC noted that media reporting of the topic had been well balanced and allowed people to make their own decisions on use of aspartame though no regulatory action was required. It was also noted that the considerations by IARC and JECFA had very different questions and the reporting from the two organisations was clear.

### ***BTS workshop***

23. Three Members had led and participated in a BTS workshop about what UK Expert Committees are and how to engage with them. The session had been busy with many people asking questions, including younger scientists indicating a means of potentially identifying associate members.

24. It was noted that the July 2023 COT meeting had been the first meeting of new COT full and associate members, and the COC discussed the potential for co-opting or having associate members. It was noted that there was a difference in remuneration between different Committees, with COC and COM as DHSC sponsored committees not receiving reading or attendance fees, while others sponsored by other Government Departments did.

## **ITEM 7: Date of next meeting**

25. The Secretariat would circulate a poll for dates to hold a half-day session in the autumn to pick up the facilitated discussion on horizon scanning.

26. Following this, the next meeting would be held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 comprising the in-person workshop.