



SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON CONTAMINANTS IN THE FOOD CHAIN

MINUTES OF THE 113TH PLENARY MEETING

Audio-web conference, 26-28 January 2021

(Agreed on 15 February 2021)

Participants

■ Panel Members:

Margherita Bignami, Laurent Bodin, Kevin Chipman, Jesús Del Mazo, Bettina Grasl-Kraupp, Christer Hogstrand, Ron Hoogenboom, Jean-Charles Leblanc, Carlo Nebbia, Elsa Nielsen, Evangelia Ntzani, Annette Petersen, Salomon Sand, Dieter Schrenk, Tanja Schwerdtle, Christiane Vleminckx and Heather Wallace.

■ Hearing Experts¹:

Andy Hart (for Item 8.)

■ European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

Frans Verstraete, Ivana Poustkova and Veerle Vanheusden (European Commission, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit E2), Paolo Caricato and Patricia Herrero Sancho (European Commission, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G4).

■ EFSA:

BIOCONTAM Unit:

Marco Binaglia, Anna Christodoulidou, Federico Cruciani, Ernesto Liebana Criado, Michaela Hempen, Karen Mackay, Luisa Ramos Bordajandi, Hans Steinkellner and Carina Wenger.

AMU Unit:

José Cortiñas Abrahantes (for Item 6.2).

DATA Unit:

Sofia Ioannidou and Marina Nikolic (for Item 6.1), Claudia Cascio (for Item 6.2), José Angel Gómez Ruiz (for Item 7) and Davide Arcella (for Item 8 and 10.3).

¹ As defined in Article 17 of the Decision of the Executive Director concerning the selection of members of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Panels, and the selection of external experts to assist EFSA with its scientific work: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/expertselection.pdf

TS Unit:

Claudia Paoletti and Ingrida Miliute (for Item 9.)

■ **Others:**

Not applicable

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. No Apologies were received.

2. Adoption of agenda

The presentation on the on-going project of the Scientific Committee and Emerging risks Unit (SCER) on the Identification of potential emerging chemical risks in the food chain to the substances registered under REACH (Item 10) was postponed to the 114th CONTAM Panel meeting. The revised meeting agenda including this change was adopted.

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence² and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management³, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 112th Plenary meeting held on 24-25.11.2020

The minutes of the 112th Plenary meeting⁴ held on 24-25 November 2020 were agreed by the CONTAM Panel on 15 December 2020.

5. Report on written procedures since the 112th Plenary meeting held on 24-25.11.2020

Not applicable.

6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and possible adoption

6.1. Draft Update of the Scientific Opinion on Hexabromocyclododecanes (HBCDDs) in Food (EFSA-Q-2018-00433)⁵

The Chair of the WG on Brominated flame retardants (BFRs) introduced the changes implemented in the opinion based on the comments received during the public consultation, and the replies to the comments in a technical report of the public

² http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf

³ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

⁴ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/111th-plenary-meeting-contam-panel>

⁵ <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2018-00433>

consultation. The CONTAM Panel adopted the opinion including the proposed changes and endorsed the public consultation report that will be published together with it. The Chair of the Panel thanked the WG and EFSA staff for their work.

6.2. Evaluation of the shucking of certain species of scallops contaminated with lipophilic toxins (EFSA-Q-2020-00245)⁶

The Chair of the WG on Scallops introduced the changes implemented in the opinion based on the comments received during the consultation with the EU Members States. The CONTAM Panel adopted the opinion including the proposed changes. The Chair of the Panel thanked the WG and EFSA staff for their work.

7. Risks associated to the estimated levels of inorganic arsenic in food

Following the endorsement of the Scientific report on dietary exposure to inorganic arsenic in food (EFSA-Q-2020-00076)⁷, the EC requested the CONTAM Panel to express its view regarding the possible human health risks associated to the revised exposure assessment, considering the conclusions on the hazard characterization of inorganic arsenic available from the previous CONTAM Panel opinion (2009)⁸. An overview of the previous opinion on arsenic in food was presented by the CONTAM Team Leader for discussion. The CONTAM Panel noted that the new available evidence on the toxicity of inorganic arsenic published since 2009, as well as the revised guidance on the application of Benchmark dose analysis, would warrant an update of the previous opinion. The CONTAM Panel also discussed the possible inclusion of some organic species in a cumulative assessment of inorganic arsenic, however it was also noted that in general for all the organic arsenic species considerably less evidence is available on their toxicity and occurrence in food. In conclusion, the DG SANTE representative agreed to issue a new mandate for the update of the hazard characterization and risk assessment related to the presence of inorganic arsenic in food. For the organic species, the possibility to issue a specific mandate will be discussed after EFSA will perform a collection and review of more recent toxicity and occurrence data.

8. CONTAM approach to uncertainty analysis

The EFSA Scientific Officer coordinating the implementation of the uncertainty analysis in CONTAM opinions summarised the approach presented at the 112th Panel meeting. The approach is based on the identification, categorisation and prioritisation of a number of uncertainties in previous Scientific opinions of the CONTAM Panel in order to be used as a basis during the uncertainty assessment of a new opinion. The outcome of this work was collected in two lists, one on hazard identification and characterization, and one on exposure assessment. The hearing expert presented the prototype of an interface including the aforementioned uncertainties which would facilitate the use of this outcome. The Panel supported the approach and appreciated the proposal for the development of the interface. The Chair invited the Panel members to provide comments and further develop the lists.

9. Update on Transparency regulation

The Architecture (ART) Programme Manager (TS Unit) provided an update on the implementation of the Transparency Regulation. The presentation gave an overview of the changes in processes and documents under implementation to meet the provisions of the

⁶ <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2020-00245>

⁷ <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2020-00076>

⁸ <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2903/j.efsa.2009.1351>

Transparency regulation, as well as the initiatives that will be organised for communication, training of experts and staff, and stakeholder engagement.

10. Feedback from the Scientific Committee/ Scientific Panels, CONTAM Working Groups, EFSA, the European Commission

10.1.

The European Commission representative gave an update on the activities in relation to the scientific opinions of the CONTAM Panel. Several amendments of current legislation are under discussion with the Member States as an outcome of the CONTAM Panel scientific opinions. In addition, an update was provided on the future mandates in preparation.

10.2. Update from CONTAM Panel Working Groups

- **WG on Brominated flame retardants in food**

The Chair of the WG informed that the PBDEs in Food draft Opinion is progressing well.

- **WG on Scallops**

The WG Chair informed the Panel that the work on the opinion on the shucking of certain species of scallops contaminated with domoic acid has already started. Likely a similar assessment approach as that applied previously for the opinion on lipophilic toxins will be followed. The deadline for adoption of the opinion is end of May this year. Therefore, the approach to be applied and also draft text needs to be discussed at the Plenary meeting in March.

- **WG on Feed detoxification**

The WG Chair informed the Panel that the applicant responded to the questions sent. The Standing Working Group on Feed detoxification is resuming its activities to prepare the draft opinion.

- **WG on Hydroxymethyl furfural in bees**

The WG Chair informed that the work on the opinion is progressing well. At the last WG meeting the toxicity data were discussed. Currently benchmark concentrations in bee feed and benchmark doses of Hydroxymethyl furfural (HMF) in bees are calculated based on these data. Industry was approached to provide data on occurrence of HMF in feed. Reference points for hazard characterisation and an approach to exposure assessment will be discussed at the next WG meeting end of February.

- **WG on High pressure processing**

The WG member representing the CONTAM Panel informed the Panel that the findings in the selected literature on the chemical risks of the high-pressure processes due to contaminants will be discussed at the next WG meeting.

- **WG on Mineral oil hydrocarbons**

The WG Chair informed the Panel that a first WG meeting took place where the background from the previous CONTAM opinion was discussed and the initial tasks were assigned. In the next WG meeting taking place in February the draft protocol will be discussed and an overview of the available occurrence data will be given.

- **WG on N-nitrosamines**

The Chair of the WG informed the Panel that the draft protocol of the risk assessment will be discussed at its next meeting.

10.3. EFSA

The Exposure assessment Team Leader (DATA Unit) informed the Panel on the approach that EFSA intends to follow with respect to the use of occurrence and consumption data received from the UK after its withdrawal from the EU (BREXIT). Occurrence data submitted by the UK before BREXIT will be considered for assessment of exposure since they can be still be representative of the contaminant levels in the EU, whereas those submitted after BREXIT will likely be excluded, as done for other non-EU countries. Similarly, the British consumption data will not be considered anymore in the exposure assessments. Ongoing opinions for which the assessment of exposure has already been carried out will maintain exposure estimates for the UK, but a footnote will explain that this has been produced when UK was still a member of the EU. The EC representative noted that this approach is generally in line with the approach of the EC, however indicated that an approach similar to that applied in the case of EFTA countries could be also applied to UK.

The CONTAM Team Leader informed the Panel that the current IT platform to submit declarations of interest will be soon replaced by a new IT platform. This will not imply any change in the EFSA policy on declarations of interest.

10.4. Scientific Committee and Working groups of interest to the CONTAM Panel

The CONTAM Panel Chair informed the Panel that the Scientific Committee requested feedback on cross-cutting issues that could be of interest for the activities of the Committee or that could indicate the possible need to update its Guidance documents. The CONTAM Panel agreed that several issues stemming from the discussions on risk assessment of contaminants could be of general interest in the area of chemical risk assessment and agreed to collect them on a systematic basis and communicate them to the Scientific Committee.

For the Working groups of interest for the CONTAM Panel, updates were given on the activities of the WG on Genotoxicity, the WG on the update of the Benchmark Dose guidance, the WG on Uncertainty and the WG on Chemical mixtures.

11. Any other business

Not applicable