



UNIT ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS and CONTAMINANTS

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON CONTAMINANTS IN THE FOOD CHAIN

MINUTES OF THE 115TH PLENARY MEETING

Audio-web conference, 18-20 May 2021

(Agreed on 8 June 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:

Not applicable

■ European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

Frans Verstraete, Ivana Poustkova and Veerle Vanheusden (European Commission, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit E2).

■ EFSA:

BIOCONTAM Unit:

Maria Anastassiadou, Marco Binaglia, Federico Cruciani, Ernesto Liebana Criado, Karen Mackay, Luisa Ramos Bordajandi and Hans Steinkellner.

DATA Unit:

Davide Arcella and José Angel Gomez Ruiz (for Item 8.), Claudia Cascio (for Items 7.1. and 8.).

PREV Unit: Csaba Szentés (for item 7.3.)

■ Others:

Not applicable

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

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. No Apologies were received.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

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 114th Plenary meeting held on 23-24.03.2021

The minutes of the 114th Plenary meeting⁴ held on 23-24 March 2021 were agreed by the CONTAM Panel on 20 April 2021.

5. Report on written procedures since the 114th Plenary meeting held on 23-24.03.2021

Not applicable.

6. New mandates

Panel was informed about the following two mandates issued by the European Commission (EC):

- Request for technical assistance as regards the presence of nitrofurans and their metabolites in gelatine.
The request is to deliver an EFSA Scientific report by end of September 2021. A small EFSA WG was setup and the draft report will be subject to peer review and presented to the CONTAM Panel for endorsement before the approval.
- Request for a scientific opinion on fluoride in food and drinking water.

Due to the nature of the request falling in the remit of different EFSA Panels, it was discussed at the 103rd meeting of the EFSA Scientific Committee and the mandate was allocated to the Scientific Committee. A WG is being set up and several Panel members expressed possible interest to join it.

7. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and possible adoption

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/114th-plenary-meeting-contam-panel>

7.1. Evaluation of the shucking of certain species of scallops contaminated with domoic acid (EFSA-Q-2020-00246)⁵

The Chair of the WG on Shucking of scallops noted that the approach to take had already been endorsed at the last Plenary together with several subsections that have been endorsed as well pending proposed amendments from Panel members which have been duly considered for the update of the opinion. The Panel then went through the entire opinion giving an emphasis to the new text. The CONTAM Panel endorsed the draft for sending it for written consultation with EU MS, after which it will be tabled for adoption at the July Plenary. The Chair of the Panel thanked the WG and EFSA staff for their work.

7.2. Update of the risk assessment of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) in food (EFSA-Q-2018-0432)⁶

The Chair of the WG on Brominated flame retardants (BFRs) presented selected sections of the draft Opinion on PBDEs in Food for discussion and possible endorsement. The feedback provided by the Panel on the sections on Supporting information for the assessment, Toxicokinetics in experimental animals and in humans, PBK models and Toxicity in experimental animals will be taken into account by the WG to continue with the development of the risk assessment.

7.3. Hydroxymethylfurfural in feed for bees (EFSA-Q-2020-00510)⁷

The Chair of the WG on hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF) in feed for bees introduced the opinion noting that the approach to the assessment has been approved already at the last Plenary. A particular issue at the previous Plenary was the choice of the study used for setting the reference point for toxicity. The WG has carried out thorough analyses of the different toxicity studies upon which they retained their previous choice to which the CONTAM Panel agreed. The CONTAM Panel went through the sections tabled for discussion and a series of suggestions regarding update of structure and text were made, in particular on the sections of chemistry, analytical methods and metabolism. The choice of the BMR for derivations of BMC/BMD as reference points was also discussed and agreed by the Panel. Overall, the sections presented have been endorsed by the CONTAM Panel pending proposed changes.

8. Feedback on the use of Occurrence data in exposure assessment.

The Scientific Officers of the DATA Unit feedback to the Panel on the possible approach to deal with occurrence data falling between the level of detection (LOD) and the level of quantification (LOQ) of the applied analytical method and for which data providers report a value that is declared as 'quantified'. The current best practice in such cases is to consider those samples left-censored and to apply a substitution method where: 0 is assigned to lower bound (LB) and LOQ to the upper bound (UB). A possible alternative approach was presented where in such cases the LOD is considered for the LB and LOQ for UB. After a discussion highlighting pro and cons, the Panel agreed that in such instances the results as left-censored and a substitution method where LB=LOD and UB=LOQ should be applied. However when such results look 'suspicious' (e.g. (i) the applied analytical

⁵ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2020-00246>

⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2018-00432>

⁷ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2020-00510>

method and/or the related LOQs/LODs are markedly different from the rest; (ii) one or more quality criteria for the method are not met; or (iii) when these data represent a large fraction of the results available for the given opinion) it would be adequate to check with the data provider to better enquire in those results. When this alternative substitution method is used, it should be clearly documented in the opinion.

The Scientific Officers of the DATA Unit presented to the Panel the possible approach for **Feedback from the Scientific Committee/ Scientific Panels, CONTAM Working Groups, EFSA, the European Commission**

8.1. European Commission

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.

8.2. Update from CONTAM Panel Working Groups

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

See item 7.2

- **WG on Scallops**

See item 7.1.

- **WG on Feed detoxification**

The WG Chair informed the Panel that, as already indicated at the 114th meeting of the CONTAM Panel, following a technical hearing with the applicant of the dossier groundnuts detoxification from aflatoxins via ammoniation, the Standing Working Group on feed detoxification will finalise the draft opinion based on the information available.

- **WG on Hydroxymethyl furfural in bees**

See item 7.3.

- **WG on High pressure processing**

The WG member representing the CONTAM Panel informed the Panel about on the findings in the selected literature related the chemical risks of the high-pressure process due to contaminants. The draft part of the protocol and the text will be presented at the July Plenary meeting.

- **WG on Mineral oil hydrocarbons**

The WG Chair informed the Panel that the activity is proceeding well and the next WG meeting will take place on 28 May 2021. The CONTAM Team Leader informed the Panel that following the award of a tasking Grant, the coordination of this WG will be supported by a staff member of BfR.

- **WG on N-nitrosamines**

The WG Chair informed the Panel that the activity is proceeding well and the next WG meeting will take place on 9-10 June 2021.

8.3. EFSA

The CONTAM Team Leader informed the CONTAM Panel that at the 116th Plenary meeting a new election of the Panel Chair and Vice Chairs will take place. Written information to all Panel members will follow in the next weeks. Despite all Panel members being able to express their interest to run for the election until the day of the election, they were encouraged to inform the Unit in advance of the Plenary meeting. The 116th Panel meeting will be also open to external observers, with the same procedures already applied in the previous years. Finally an update of the outsourcing activities was provided, including the EFSA procurements on extensive literature searches for mineral oil hydrocarbons (report under finalization) and nitrosamines (on going), and the calls for technical and scientific support for the preparatory activities on Tetrabromobisphenol and brominated phenols (on going), grayanotoxins (in preparation) and poly-chlorinated naphthalenes (in preparation)

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

The Panel Chair reported on the main points discussed at the 103rd meeting of the EFSA Scientific Committee⁸. In particular, the Scientific Committee adopted the opinion on a system-based approach to the environmental risk assessment of multiple stressors in honey bees, discussed the draft review of the existing health based guidance values for copper and its exposure assessment from all sources and the draft guidance on risk assessment of the application of nanoscience and nanotechnologies in the food and feed and the draft guidance on scientific criteria for grouping chemicals for human risk assessment of combined exposure to multiple chemicals. In addition, the Scientific Committee discussed the new mandate on fluoride (cfr. Item 6. of these minutes) and feedback on possible update of some cross-cutting guidance documents provided by the CONTAM Panel following the discussion held at the 114th CONTAM Panel meeting⁴.

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, WG on Copper and the WG on Chemical mixtures.

9. Any other business

Not applicable.

⁸ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/events/event/102nd-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>