



European Food Safety Authority

Brussels, 19 December 2003
EFSA/CONTAM/74 final

MINUTES OF THE 4TH PLENARY MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON CONTAMINANTS IN THE FOOD CHAIN (CONTAM) HELD ON 25 AND 26 NOVEMBER 2003 IN BRUSSELS

(ADOPTED BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE ON 15 DECEMBER 2003)

PARTICIPANTS

Panel Members:

Jan Alexander, Herman Autrup, Denis Bard¹, Christina Bergsten, Angelo Carere, Lucio Guido Costa, Jean-Pierre Cravedi, Alessandro di Domenico, Roberto Fanelli, Johanna Fink-Gremmels¹, John Gilbert, Philippe Grandjean², Niklas Johansson, Agneta Oskarsson, Andrew Renwick², Jirí Ruprich, Josef Schlatter, Greet Schoeters, Dieter Schrenk, Rolaf van Leeuwen, Philippe Verger

EFSA

Claudia Heppner (Scientific Co-ordination CONTAM Panel), Herman Koëter (Deputy Director and Director of Science), Tlaitmass Bounou (Administrative Secretariat CONTAM Panel)

European Commission

Barbara Gallani (DG Health and Consumer Protection), Taina Säteri (DG Health and Consumer Protection), Frans Verstraete (DG Health and Consumer Protection), Martin Slayne (DG Health and Consumer Protection)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The chair of the Panel, Josef Schlatter, opened the meeting, welcomed the participants and introduced new EFSA staff. Ms. Tlaitmass Bounou has joint the Secretariat and will handle all administrative related matters of the CONTAM Panel. The Panel welcomed the new staff. Apologies for absence were received from the European Commission Achim Boenke (DG Research).

¹ Only present on 25 November 2003

² Only present on 26 November 2003

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The proposed agenda was adopted after a re-ordering of a few agenda items.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared an interest for agenda item 8, methylmercury in food:

Philippe Grandjean, who is one of the authors of the Faroe Island study. This is one of the two pivotal studies on which the FAO/WHO Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) based its methylmercury evaluation.

Andrew Renwick, who was WHO Temporary Adviser for FAO/WHO JECFA and assisted with its discussion of the kinetic issues and uncertainties in the evaluation on methylmercury.

Josef Schlatter, who was a member of JECFA, co-ordinated the Committee's discussion on methylmercury during the sixty-first meeting of JECFA, and was co-author of the evaluation of methylmercury.

Philippe Verger, who was member of JECFA and participated in the discussions on methylmercury.

The Panel agreed that the above mentioned members can fully participate in the discussions on mercury and methylmercury in food (agenda item 8).

4. FEEDBACK FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The chair updated the members of the CONTAM Panel on the last meeting of the Scientific Committee held on 19 to 20 November 2003. Details can be found in the minutes ([EFSA/SC/30](http://www.efsa.eu.int/pdf/minutes_sci_04_adopted_en.pdf))³ from the Scientific Committee (SC).

³ http://www.efsa.eu.int/pdf/minutes_sci_04_adopted_en.pdf

5. GENERAL INFORMATION FROM EFSA

The scientific co-ordinator of the CONTAM Panel, Claudia Heppner, informed the members of the Panel on following items:

- Research inputs for work program 2005 and 2006
The Commission, DG Research, has asked EFSA to make Panel members aware of the 2005 and 2006 work program with respect to future food research needs in Europe. Experts were invited to submit research ideas which fall within the remit of the Sixth Framework Programme, priority 5 (food safety and quality) either directly to the RTD Scientific Officer, Achim Boenke or via the [internet](#)⁴.
- Travel arrangements
The Panel was informed about EFSA's rules regarding travel arrangements related to the participation of experts in meetings. A note for the attention of all Panel and working group (WG) members will be distributed by the Secretariat.

6. GENERAL INFORMATION FROM THE COMMISSION

The Service within the Commission responsible for relations with EFSA, Taina Säteri, informed the Panel that the Commission has initiated the legal procedure to phase out azodicarbonamide (AZDC).

The Service within the Commission responsible for legislation, Martin Slayne, reported back from the Commission's workshop on ways to reduce acrylamide in food which was held on 20-21 October in Brussels.

The Panel was informed that with regard to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) the Commission is in the process to develop maximum levels for benzo(a)pyrene in food. The initial proposal was sent to the Member States and comments on this document are awaited until 17 December 2003. The Secretariat was asked to forward this document to the Panel. The Commission is also waiting for the Scientific Co-operation on questions relating to food (SCOOP) report on the assessment of the dietary exposure to PAH of the population of the EU Members States.

The Service within the Commission responsible for legislation, Frans Verstraete, reported back from the Commissions Ochratoxin A and Fusarium Forum days held on 16 and 17 October 2003 in Brussels. A follow up meeting with the governmental expert group will take place in the beginning of January 2004.

⁴ http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/biosociety/forum/bioforum_en.htm

Furthermore two consultation papers have been distributed to European stakeholder organisations for comments and input.

One consultation paper concerns Ochratoxin A and comments were expected by the end of September 2003 and another one concerns Fusarium toxins for which comments are expected before 5 December 2003.

The discussions with the Member States on possible measures to reduce the presence of ochratoxin A and Fusarium-toxins in food will continue intensively from the beginning of 2004 onwards, whereby the received comments will be carefully considered and, if justified, taken into account.

In the context of Directive 2002/32/EC⁵ on undesirable substances in animal feed the Panel was informed that the Commission recently amended on a provisional basis, pending the detailed scientific risk assessments by EFSA, Annex I to Directive 2002/32/EC⁶ to ensure that the supply of some essential and valuable feed materials is not endangered because the level of an undesirable substance in some feed materials due to normal background contamination is close to or exceeds the maximum level laid down in the Annex I to Directive 2002/32/EC.

A short presentation on the recently established HEATOX project sponsored by DG Research was given by the CONTAM Panel member Jan Alexander. The presentation outlined the objectives relevant to the CONTAM Panel.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 Official requests to EFSA received from the European Commission

The scientific co-ordinator informed the Panel that EFSA received a request from the Commission for a scientific opinion concerning the presence of non-dioxin like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in feed and food. This request falls within the mandate of the Panel.

7.2 Potential self tasking perfluorooctane sulfonates (PFOS)

The Panel discussed a draft proposal for a potential self tasking on PFOS which was prepared by Niklas Johansson and Dieter Schrenk. This compound could be used as a model for other fluorinated substances of the same class which have a long half-life and are accumulating in humans and in the environment. The Panel was in favour to approve the proposed self tasking request subject to exploring the reports available by OECD and the risk assessment on PFOS carried out by the

⁵ OJ L 203, 12 August 2003, p.40

⁶ OJ L 285, 1 November 2003, p. 33

U.S. E.P.A. The chair invited the above mentioned Panel members to prepare a draft mandate on PFOS using the EFSA standard format.

The WG on food-contact materials (FCM) of the Panel on food additives, flavourings, processing aids and materials in contact with food (AFC) has recently received a dossier on a PFOS and the Panel suggested a close interaction between the Panel and the WG in case the self tasking request is approved by the Executive Director of EFSA. Two members of the CONTAM Panel will be invited to the next meeting of the FCM WG in March 2004, when dealing with the PFOS mentioned above.

7.3 Update on undesirable substances in animal feed

The chair of the WG on undesirable substances in animal feed (USAF), Johanna Fink-Gremmels, informed the Panel that the two WG sections on heavy metals and mycotoxins have met once in October 2003. The WG has designed table of contents (TOCs) and distributed the tasks for the different parts. The Panel approved the TOCs subject to incorporation of a few minor editorial changes. The Panel suggested further to address in the opinions how the contaminants get into the feed whenever this information is available.

The chair of the WG on USAF pointed out that the deadlines for delivering the opinions on heavy metals is quite tight and, although some progress has been made since the first meeting of the WG, it is very likely that not all expected opinions will be ready by February 2004. The Service within the Commission responsible for legislation was asked for advice on this matter. The Service accepted to delay the deadline of some of the requests by 2 month if needed. However, out of the four requests related to heavy metals it would be desirable to have an opinion on cadmium and lead by February 2004.

The chair of the WG on USAF reported on the progress in the area of mycotoxins. A scientific opinion on Aflatoxin B1 is planned to be submitted to the next Panel meeting.

The chair of the WG on USAF was asked by the Panel to set up also a WG section on persistent organic pollutants (POP's) in January 2004.

7.4 Update on non-dioxin like PCBs

The chair of the WG on non-dioxin like PCBs (NDL-PCBs), Rolaf van Leeuwen, informed the Panel on the outcome of the first meeting of the WG held in October 2003. At this meeting the WG members presented and updated the part of the draft opinion on occurrence and exposure, technical and reconstituted mixtures as well as on benchmark modelling. Deborah Rice from the U.S.A. agreed to write a background document on non-cancer health effects of PCBs in animals considering the most relevant endpoints and most sensitive organ systems. For the next WG meeting it is foreseen that WG members will present a short state of the art paper

on the above mentioned topics. However, there will be no drafts submitted to the next Panel meeting. It was pointed out that it would be useful to look on benchmark modelling at a horizontal level and the chair of the Panel was asked to bring this again to the attention of the SC.

7.5 Update on organotin compounds

The chair of the WG organotin compounds (ORGTs), Angelo Carere, updated the Panel on the last meeting of the WG which took place in November 2003. The missing chapter on risk characterization has been drafted and the suggestions of the Panel members made at the last plenary were taken into account. Further, the Panel was informed that WG members concluded after intensive discussions to derive a group TDI. The part on the exposure assessment will be discussed at the next WG meeting in December 2003. It is planned that a draft opinion for potential adoption will be available for the next plenary meeting of the Panel. The chair of the WG on ORGTs also informed the Panel that the Scientific Committee for Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment (CSTEE) WG on organotins will need this opinion to carry out an over all risk assessment on organotins taking both the food and non-food aspect into account. Therefore, three members of the CONTAM WG on ORGTs will attend the next WG meeting of the CSTEE in January 2004.

8. Mercury and methyl mercury in food. Draft opinion

On an international level, different risk assessments on mercury and methylmercury have recently been carried out (e.g. Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), National Research Council (NRC) etc). The Panel discussed whether a full risk assessment should be done by the Panel or whether the existing scientific evaluations are sufficient for use as a basis for the Panels answers to the Commission request (terms of reference). The Panel was of the opinion that resources should not be used to conduct an own full risk assessment as the expected outcome would be of minor difference compared to the existing recent risk assessments, and that resources should be reserved for other important evaluations. However, the Panel pointed out again that generic issues such as methods used for benchmark modelling and questions on how to include uncertainties in the analysis of epidemiological data should be addressed on a horizontal level. These issues should be either taken up by a WG of the SC or by a WG under the CONTAM Panel in the very near future. The result of such an analysis would be a major determinant of the outcome of any new assessment of the available data on methylmercury. The Panel agreed to work on the prepared draft opinion focussing on the JECFA evaluation and amend it with potential drawbacks and caveats in order to have a final draft version ready for potential adoption at the next plenary meeting.

9. Presentation: Ochratoxin A – risk assessment

The chair invited Wolfgang Dekant, member of the AFC Panel, to present the preliminary outcomes of a project on the mechanisms of ochratoxin A (OTA) induced carcinogenicity as a basis for an improved OTA risk assessment. The project (No.: QLK1-2001-01614) is sponsored by the Commission, DG Research, under the Fifth Framework Program and it is anticipated to be finished by the end of 2004. It was presented that the interim results demonstrate that OTA is only a weak genotoxin which does not bind directly to DNA. Currently other mechanisms of action than DNA interaction in the OTA induced tumour induction are explored.

The Panel appreciated the presentation as it gives helpful background information for a potential risk assessment. The Service within the Commission responsible for legislation informed the Panel that EFSA will receive a request for a scientific opinion once the comprehensive results of the research project are submitted by the co-ordinator on behalf of the research consortium to the Commission.

10. Feedback “Formation of Acrylamide in Food”

The scientific co-ordinator of the CONTAM Panel reported back from the workshop on acrylamide formation in food which was held by EFSA on 17 November 2003 in Brussels. About 60 participants from EU, Turkey, Canada and the U.S. attended this meeting. The workshop was opened by presenting an update on the various activities ongoing in Europe, on an international and industry level. Two breakout groups had been set up to discuss current knowledge on formation of acrylamide in food, key issues, gaps of knowledge, research needs and potential methods for information exchange. The outcome of the meeting, a written report will be circulated for comments to all the participants of the workshop by December 2004. The results of this workshop will be presented to the Panel and will be published on the Authority’s web page by February 2004.

11. Potential meeting dates 2003/2004

All the dates previously set for the CONTAM plenary meeting in 2004 were confirmed expect for April 2004. It was agreed that this meeting will take place on 5-6 of April 2004. As it is foreseeable that the agenda of the February 2004 meeting will be heavy, the Panel agreed to start this meeting already at 9 am.

12. Any other business

The Panel agreed with a proposal of the chair to establish a list of on-line journals which are available to Panel members and to EFSA. This list should be used only in emergency situations. The Secretariat was requested to initiate this list.