

Parma, 7 April 2008
EFSA/CONTAM/737

**MINUTES OF THE 25TH PLENARY MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON
CONTAMINANTS IN THE FOOD CHAIN (CONTAM) HELD ON FROM 19 TO 21
FEBRUARY 2008 IN PARMA**

Adopted by written procedure on 4 April 2008

PARTICIPANTS

Panel Members:

Jan Alexander, Diane Benford, Andrew Cockburn¹, Jean-Pierre Cravedi, Eugenia Dogliotti, Alessandro di Domenico², María Luisa Fernández-Cruz, Johanna Fink-Gremmels (vice-chair)³, Peter Fürst, Corrado Galli, Philippe Grandjean, Jadwiga Gzyl, Gerhard Heinemeyer, Antonio Mutti, Josef Schlatter (chair), Rolaf van Leeuwen (vice-chair)⁴, Carlos van Peteghem and Philippe Verger.

EFSA:

Valeria Bernazzali (Administrative Assistant, Unit on Contaminants), Ulla Bertelsen (Senior Officer, Unit on Contaminants), Jean-Lou Dorne (Senior Officer, Unit on Contaminants), Mari Eskola (Scientific Officer, Unit on Contaminants), Stefan Fabiansson (Head of Unit on Data Collection and Exposure), Claudia Heppner (Head of Unit on Contaminants), and Francesco Vernazza (Senior Scientific Officer, Unit on Data Collection and Exposure).

European Commission:

Frans Verstraete (DG Health and Consumer Protection)² and Almut Bitterhof (DG Health and Consumer Protection)⁵.

1. WELCOME

The CONTAM chair, Josef Schlatter welcomed the members of the CONTAM Panel to the 25th plenary meeting.

¹ Only present on 19-20 February 2008

² Only present on 19-20 February 2008

³ Only present on 19 February 2008

⁴ Only present on 20-21 February 2008

⁵ By phone conference call on 20 February 2008

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from following members of the CONTAM Panel Guðjón Atli Auðunsson and Niklas Johansson and from Michael Walsh from the European Commission.

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The proposed agenda was adopted.

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Following interests were declared for item 8. Philippe Verger participated in June 2006 in the assessment of the carcinogenicity of ingested nitrate for the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). The members of the CONTAM Panel agreed that the participation in this project is not considered to be a conflict and that he can fully participate in the discussions.

5. CARRY-OVER OF DECOQUINATE INTO NON-TARGET ANIMAL FEED. DRAFT OPINION

The chair of the WG presented the revisions made to the draft opinion on the carry-over of decoquinate into non-target animal feed (question number: EFSA-Q-2005-220H). The CONTAM Panel adopted the opinion subject to incorporation of changes as suggested during the meeting. The chair of the CONTAM Panel expressed his appreciation for the work to the WG.

6. CARRY-OVER OF ROBENIDINE INTO NON-TARGET ANIMAL FEED. DRAFT OPINION

The chair of the WG presented the draft opinion on carry-over of robenidine into non-target animal feed (question number: EFSA-Q-2005-220G). The CONTAM Panel adopted the opinion subject to incorporation of changes as suggested during the meeting. The chair of the CONTAM Panel expressed his appreciation for the work to the WG.

7. CARRY-OVER OF HALOFUGINONE HYDROBROMIDE INTO NON-TARGET ANIMAL FEED. DRAFT OPINION

The chair of the WG presented the draft opinion on carry-over of halofuginone hydrobromide into non-target animal feed (question number: EFSA-Q-2005-220I). The CONTAM Panel adopted the opinion subject to incorporation of changes as suggested during the meeting. The chair of the CONTAM Panel expressed his appreciation for the work to the WG.

8. NITRATE IN VEGETABLES. DRAFT OPINION

The chair of the WG presented the revisions made to the draft opinion on nitrate in vegetables (question number: EFSA-Q-2006-174) as requested by the Panel members during its 24th CONTAM plenary meeting. The members of the CONTAM Panel appreciated the current draft version which took into account the requested changes, but proposed further modifications in the chapter “uncertainty analysis”, and in the exposure assessment. The opinion will be re-submitted for possible adoption to the next CONTAM panel meeting (9-11 April 2008). The Service within the European Commission (EC) responsible for legislation on food safety indicated that the delay of the adoption of this opinion is acceptable, but further delays with the adoption beyond the CONTAM Panel meeting in April would result in difficulties in meeting the legal deadline of 31 December 2008 for the review of the EU legislation on nitrate in vegetables, to be based on this opinion.

9. MERCURY AS UNDESIRABLE SUBSTANCE IN ANIMAL FEED. DRAFT OPINION

The chair of the WG presented the draft opinion on mercury as undesirable substances in animal feed (question number: EFSA-Q-2005-288). The CONTAM Panel adopted the opinion subject to incorporation of changes as suggested during the meeting. The chair of the CONTAM Panel expressed his appreciation for the work to the WG.

10. GERMAN FINDINGS ON 3-MCPD ESTERS IN FOODSTUFFS

EFSA was asked to provide a statement with the initial views of the CONTAM Panel related to the conclusions of a recently issued opinion from the German Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung (BfR) on fatty acid esters of 3-monochloropropane-1,2-diol (3-MCPD esters)⁶ and by taking also into account recently published scientific literature. In December 2007 the BfR concluded that in certain circumstances and under certain assumptions the Tolerable Daily Intake (TDI) of 2 µg/kg b.w. was exceeded for adults consuming large amounts of refined vegetable oils and for infants receiving infant or follow-on formula. The CONTAM statement will help the EC in preparing its position on 3-MCPD in liquid condiments containing acid-hydrolysed vegetable protein for the April 2008 Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food. The CONTAM Panel exchanged views and asked the Secretariat to draft a statement on 3-MCPD esters for a possible adoption by written procedure. The statement was adopted on 28 March 2008⁷.

⁶ Available at URL:

http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/saeuglingsanfangs_und_folgenahrung_kann_gesundheitlich_bedenkliche_3_mcpd_fettsaeureester_enthalten.pdf

⁷ Available at URL: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/Statement/contam_statement_3-MCPD_en.0.pdf

11. PERFLUOROOCTANE SULFONATE (PFOS), PERFLUOROOCTANOIC ACID (PFOA) AND THEIR SALTS. DRAFT OPINION

In absence of the chair of the WG a member of the WG on PFOS/A presented the revisions made to the draft opinion on PFOS/A (question number: EFSA-Q-2004-163) as requested by the Panel members during its 23rd CONTAM plenary meeting. The members of the CONTAM Panel appreciated the current draft version and adopted the opinion subject to incorporation of changes as suggested during the meeting. With this adoption the CONTAM Panel finalises its self-tasking work. The chair of the CONTAM Panel expressed his appreciation for the work to the WG.

12. AFSSA RISK ASSESSMENT ON NDL-PCBs

The Service within the EC responsible for legislation on food safety asked the members of the CONTAM Panel if the recent risk assessment of the Agence Française de Sécurité Sanitaire des Aliments (AFSSA) on non dioxin-like polychlorobiphenyls (NDL-PCBs) presents new scientific information compared to the opinion on NDL-PCBs of the CONTAM Panel from 2005.

The Panel noted that the same datasets have been used in both opinions. The AFSSA concluded, as did EFSA, that the indicator PCBs should comprise six (PCB-28, 52, 101, 138, 153, 180) and not seven congeners as PCB-118 represents a DL-PCB.

Based on neurological effects in monkeys which were given a mixture of PCBs that is typical for human milk, the AFSSA derived a tolerable daily intake (TDI) of 20 ng/kg body weight for the sum of 209 PCB congeners and 10 ng/kg body weight for the sum of the 6 indicator PCBs, respectively. The CONTAM panel noted that the mixture given to the monkeys contained more than 20% of DL-PCBs by weight. Moreover, possible impurities of the NDL-PCBs with potent DL-PCBs were not taken into account. Even small impurities of NDL-PCBs with DL-PCB congeners can have a severe influence on the outcome of the studies and thus it can not be excluded that the observed effects are caused by DL-PCBs. Therefore, the CONTAM Panel did not establish a TDI for NDL-PCBs in its previous assessment and no new scientific information at present is available to reconsider this conclusion.

The CONTAM Panel noted that at a national level a good correlation between NDL-PCBs and exposure is possible due to the fact that often a specific PCB mixture was used in a particular country. However, the CONTAM Panel had to consider the general situation in Europe and in this situation no good correlation between DL-PCBs, NDL-PCBs was found.

13. FEEDBACK FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (SC) MEETING

The minutes of the 29th⁸ plenary meeting of the SC are published on the EFSA web page. The chair pointed following items out:

- The call for expression of interests for membership in the two new EFSA Panels on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources added to Food (ANS) and Food contact materials, enzymes, flavourings, and processing aids (CEF) was extended until 17 March 2008. The formal establishment of these two new Panels is subject to ongoing comitology procedure and will replace in the near future the current AFC Panel.
- EFSA is aiming to raise further awareness of its scientific outputs such as scientific opinions and efforts are made by EFSA to find EFSA opinions with search engines such as Pubmed. The CONTAM Panel welcomed this approach. In addition, the CONTAM Panel strongly recommended that EFSA should produce a proper annual electronic EFSA journal including a cover page and a table of content. This would lead to an improved visibility of the current form of the EFSA journal. The Panel also discussed publishing of scientific papers related to the work of the CONTAM Panel. The Panel supported scientific publications by EFSA staff in peer-reviewed journals, but noted the need for EFSA to have a common policy in place. The CONTAM Panel expressed its concern if only parts of the opinions would be published.

14. GENERAL INFORMATION FROM EFSA

The Panel members were informed that EFSA is organising a colloquium on acrylamide in food on 22-23 May 2008. More information can be found in the announcement⁹. Due to lack of time no further items were discussed.

15. GENERAL INFORMATION FROM THE COMMISSION SERVICES ON MATTERS RELATING TO CONTAM

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

16. WORKING PROGRAMME

Due to lack of time items 16.1 to 16.4 and 16.7 were deferred to the next meeting.

⁸ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/Event_Meeting/SC_minutes_29th_plenmeet,2.pdf

⁹ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1178694670469.htm

16.5. UPDATE FROM THE WG ON PAH

The members of the CONTAM Panel were informed that the deadline was extended to June 2008 due to errors in the data submissions from Germany. As a consequence the occurrence and exposure assessment of the draft opinion has to be revised as the German data present the majority.

16.6. UPDATE FROM THE WG ON HEAVY METALS

The chair of the WG gave a brief update on the work related to the cadmium opinion. The members of the CONTAM Panel were informed that biomarker data (already published once, but also new data from Sweden) will be modelled. It was pointed out, that the Swedish data need either officially be submitted to EFSA or to be published before the adoption of the CONTAM opinion.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The 27th CONTAM Panel meeting (9-10 June 2008) will be held in Berlin instead of Parma.