

Parma, 11 November 2009  
EFSA/CONTAM/1017

**MINUTES OF THE 34<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON  
CONTAMINANTS IN THE FOOD CHAIN (CONTAM) HELD FROM 16 TO 18  
SEPTEMBER 2009 IN PARMA**

Adopted by written procedure on 10 November 2009

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**PARTICIPANTS**

*Panel Members:*

Jan Alexander, Diane Benford, Sandra Ceccatelli, Jean-Pierre Cravedi, Alessandro Di Domenico<sup>1</sup>, Daniel Doerge, Eugenia Dogliotti, Lutz Edler, Peter Farmer, Metka Filipič, Johanna Fink-Gremmels, Peter Fürst, Thierry Guerin, Helle Katrine Knutsen, Miroslav Machala, Antonio Mutti, Josef Schlatter (chair), Rolaf van Leeuwen and Philippe Verger

*EFSA:*

*Unit on Contaminants (CONTAM unit)*

Carolina Di Bona, Anna Castoldi, Jean-Lou Dorne, Mari Eskola, Sandra Gracci, Claudia Heppner, George Kass, Valentina Mota, Luisa Ramos Bordajandi and Marc Vandebroek

*Unit on Data Collection and Exposure (DATEX unit)*

Stefan Fabiansson and Elena Scaravelli

*Unit on Scientific Cooperation (SCO unit)*

Carola Sondermann<sup>2</sup>

*Unit on Scientific Committee and Advisory Forum (SC/AF unit)*

Djien Liem<sup>2</sup>

*European Commission:*

Marina Marini (Health and Consumer Protection, 03 Science and Stakeholder relations) and Almut Bitterhof (DG Health and Consumer Protection, E3 Chemicals, Contaminants, Pesticides)<sup>3</sup>

**1. WELCOME**

The chair of the CONTAM Panel welcomed the members to the 34<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting. The members of the Panel were informed that Chris Livesey has resigned from the CONTAM Panel. EFSA is in the process of identifying experts from the

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<sup>1</sup> Only present from 17 to 18 September 2009

<sup>2</sup> Only present on 18 September 2009

<sup>3</sup> By phone conference call

reserve list preferably with a similar expertise to replace the expert. A proposal for nomination will be presented to the EFSA Management Board in December 2009. Sandra Gracci, George Kass and Marc Vandebroek recently joined the Unit on Contaminants at EFSA and were introduced to the members of the CONTAM Panel.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the CONTAM Panel: Alan Boobis. From the European Commission Frans Verstraete had sent apologies.

## **3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Agenda item 7.4 “Other information” was added. Under agenda item 7.2 the Scientific Committee (SC) opinion on uncertainty was not presented as the CONTAM Panel is already applying the recommendations in its risk assessments. The slightly modified agenda was adopted.

## **4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

EFSA secretariat screened both the annual and specific declaration of interests (ADoI, SDoI) filled in by the scientific experts invited at this meeting in accordance with EFSA’s Policy on declarations of interests.

With regard to the ADoI, SDoI and this meeting no other interests than those already declared in the ADoI or in a previous SDoI and screened by EFSA in accordance with its Policy on Declaration of Interests and implementing documents thereof was declared by the experts.

## **5. ARSENIC IN FOOD. DRAFT OPINION**

The chair of the working group (WG) presented the draft opinion related to arsenic in food (question number: EFSA-Q-2008-425). The CONTAM Panel discussed the approach taken for the exposure assessment, the dose-response calculations for the various endpoints and the calculated margin of exposures. Changes to the draft opinion were suggested during the meeting and thus the members of the CONTAM Panel will be asked to adopt the scientific opinion by written procedure.

## **6. FEEDBACK FROM THE INAUGURATION MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the inauguration plenary meeting of the SC held from 21 to 22 July 2009 in Parma are available on the EFSA web page<sup>4</sup>. The chair pointed the following items out:

- The draft work programme of the SC was discussed.
- The opinion on botanicals and botanical preparation is now published on the authority's web. The ESCO report on botanicals was endorsed by the SC.
- The SC will continue the work in the area of nanotechnology (self-tasking).
- The following new WGs of the SC are in the process of being set up: harmonisation of risk assessment terminology used by different panels, 90-day feeding protocol, genotoxicity testing strategies, and statistical approaches to assess adverse effects. Some members of the CONTAM Panel will join these new established WGs.

## **7. GENERAL INFORMATION FROM EFSA**

### **7.1 NEW TEMPLATES FOR SCIENTIFIC OUTPUTS AND EFSA JOURNAL**

A staff member of the SCO Unit outlined the new templates for scientific outputs and provided further details regarding the launch of the new EFSA Journal. All EFSA's scientific outputs will be published in a dedicated web area of the EFSA Journal as part of the Authority's corporate website. The EFSA Journal aims to be indexed in bibliographic databases and to comply with the best practices in academic publishing. The following main points were highlighted to the members of the CONTAM Panel: the Panel is the co-operate author and an abstract can be added in addition to the summary. This abstract may be published by bibliographic databases.

The editorial board will consist of the non-chairs of the SC and the two EFSA directors of risk assessment and scientific co-operation. The editor-in-chief is Vittorio Silano (chair of the SC). In addition, an editorial team will be set up. The launch of the EFSA Journal requires the use of harmonised templates for the scientific outputs. The use of the templates is mandatory from 1 September 2009 onwards. In the new template it is foreseen that WG experts can be acknowledged on the first page in footnote 3 and not as previously on page 3. The experts of the CONTAM Panel congratulated EFSA for this major achievement making the EFSA Journal reality and are looking forward to its launch by mid December 2009.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at URL:

[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/cs/BlobServer/Event\\_Meeting/sc\\_minutes\\_37th\\_plenmeet\\_en.pdf?ssbinary=true](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/cs/BlobServer/Event_Meeting/sc_minutes_37th_plenmeet_en.pdf?ssbinary=true)

## **7.2 SC OPINION ON TRANSPARANCY**

The head of the SC/AF Unit provided an overview of the two SC opinions related to transparency in risk assessment which were adopted in August 2006 and May 2009. The first opinion covers process-related transparency issues, whereas the second opinion describes science-related transparency issues. The SC pointed out that it is of importance to clearly document and explain the objectives and scope of the risk assessment, the methodological aspects, the output and conclusion in a clear, understandable and reproducible manner. All assumptions should be documented and explained in the risk assessment. In addition, it is important to identify the variability and uncertainties within the risk assessment. Wherever it is possible harmonised risk assessment terminology should be used, and opinions issued by other bodies/committees should be considered and their relevance be evaluated.

## **7.3 35<sup>TH</sup> CONTAM PANEL MEETING**

The head of the CONTAM unit indicated that the agenda for the 35<sup>th</sup> CONTAM Panel meeting is quite full and asked the members of the CONTAM Panel whether an extension of 0.5 day would be possible. The panel members agreed to have a 2.5 day plenary meeting, starting on 24 November 2009 at 9.00 hrs until the 26 November 2009 at 13.00 hrs.

## **7.4 OTHER INFORMATION**

The members of the CONTAM Panel were informed by the head of the CONTAM unit on the following matters:

- Art. 36 calls  
The two Art. 36 projects on mycotoxins and veterinary drugs which were initiated in 2008 will be finalised by October/November 2009.  
For the 2009 Art. 36 call related to a 90-day animal study on 3-MCPD esters one proposal was submitted to EFSA. The opening and evaluation meetings are scheduled in October 2009. The Panel will be kept informed if the application was successful.
- Advisory forum meeting  
The next advisory forum meeting will take place on 24-25 September 2009 in Stockholm (SE). Related to contaminants the following issues will be discussed: Germany will present data on glycidol fatty acid esters in refined vegetable fats. Austria will report on findings of benzene in food and will ask for possible actions by EFSA and Member States. Sweden will present a three year time trend related to acrylamide levels in Swedish food products. Within this context the panel was also informed that the CONTAM unit received a PhD thesis from Janneke Hogervorst on dietary acrylamide intake and human cancer risk. Part of the outcome of the PhD work was published in 2007

indicating an association between dietary intake of acrylamide and an increased risk of ovarian and endometrial and breast cancer.

- Staff

Two scientific officers Marc Vandebroek, veterinarian and George Kass, toxicologist have joined the CONTAM unit. Anna Castoldi, toxicologist, will leave the CONTAM unit end of September 2009 and join the CEF unit as there was a career development opportunity. Eve Feinblatt Meleze finished her traineeship at the CONTAM unit and will take up a PhD work in Philippe Verger's group investigating if uncertainties in risk assessment have an impact on risk management. Adrienne Moro who was in the CONTAM unit on a temporary basis to cover a vacant administrative post has returned to Hungary to continue her studies in law.

Per Bergman was appointed as GMO Head of unit and Billy Amzal, AMU unit, will leave EFSA at the end of November 2009.

- WHO

On 26 October 2009 WHO will visit EFSA to share workprogrammes and discuss possible co-operations.

## **8. GENERAL INFORMATION FROM THE COMMISSION SERVICES ON MATTERS RELATING TO CONTAM**

The members of the CONTAM Panel were informed that the European Commission (EC) has presented a working document proposing to follow the EFSA conclusion to set maximum levels (ML) for the sum of 4 polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in addition to the ML for benzo(a)pyrene. However, further discussions with Member States are needed.

The Commission and Member States continue their discussions on cadmium and possible changes to the current maximum levels. The EFSA report on monitoring data related to acrylamide issued by the DATEX unit was shortly discussed at an EC expert meeting in June 2009 and will be presented by EFSA in detail in a forthcoming EC expert meeting.

The Panel was informed that the alignment of EU legislation to Codex decisions as regards aflatoxins was in a final stage and that the maximum levels for aflatoxins will be adapted to Codex for almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios and brazil nuts. New maximum levels for aflatoxins are foreseen for oilseeds, other than groundnuts, for direct human consumption, for crude vegetable oil for direct human consumption and for apricot kernels.

Following difficult risk management discussions on the follow up of the CONTAM Panel opinion on ochratoxin A in food, new maximum levels for ochratoxin A in

spices and liquorice are foreseen in addition to the existing maximum levels for ochratoxin A in foodstuffs.

The technical discussions at expert level on setting maximum levels for non-dioxin-like PCBs in food are being finalised. The amendments to the Annex of Directive 2002/32/EC on undesirable substances in feed as regards mercury, free gossypol, nitrites and Madhuca, proposed by the Commission following EFSA opinions, have received a favourable opinion from the Member States.

The measures provided for in the safeguard Decisions as regards melamine in products from China and mineral oil in sunflower oil from Ukraine are foreseen to be significantly alleviated.

## **9. WORKING PROGRAMME**

### **9.1. OFFICIAL REQUEST TO EFSA FOR CONTAM PANEL**

The head of the CONTAM Unit informed the Panel members on the outcome of the assessment of the radiological risks of uranium which was carried out recently by a group of experts of Art. 31 of the Euratom Treaty related to the opinion on uranium in foodstuff and particular water of the CONTAM Panel<sup>5</sup>. The final report summary with conclusions related to uranium will be available in November 2009.

EFSA has received a letter requesting to assess the possible abiotic risks to public or animal health related to the use of glycerine from the production of biodiesel in animal feed. The members of the CONTAM Panel did not see the need for setting up a WG on this matter but proposed that EFSA staff should prepare a draft output for possible adoption for the CONTAM Panel.

### **9.2. UPDATE FROM THE WG MARINE BIOTOXINS**

The chair of the working group (WG) informed the members of the CONTAM Panel that he and the head of the CONTAM unit attended a technical meeting of the European Commission, the Community reference laboratory for marine biotoxins and the respective national reference laboratories and representatives of shellfish producers on 10 September 2009 to present the outcome of the risk assessments related to marine biotoxins of the CONTAM Panel. The meeting reached a consensus that the way forward would be using analytical methods e.g. LC-MS/MS for the detection of shellfish toxins. The WG will continue to draft risk assessments related to the non-regulated shellfish toxins. An opinion on palytoxins will be the first one which will be presented for possible adoption to the CONTAM Panel.

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<sup>5</sup> Available at URL:

[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/cs/BlobServer/Scientific\\_Opinion/contam\\_op\\_ej1018\\_uranium\\_in\\_food\\_en\\_rev1\\_0.pdf?ssbinary=true](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/cs/BlobServer/Scientific_Opinion/contam_op_ej1018_uranium_in_food_en_rev1_0.pdf?ssbinary=true)

### **9.3. UPDATE FROM THE WG LEAD**

An EFSA scientific officer of the CONTAM unit informed the members of the CONTAM Panel on the progress of the draft opinion on lead in food. The occurrence and exposure part is nearly finalised. However, the WG has not yet a proposal for a possible health based guidance value. The WG is still looking into the various endpoints, e.g. IQ in children, cardiovascular and nephrotoxicity. Dose-response analysis will be carried out for these endpoints. The WG hopes to finalise the opinion for possible adoption at the 35<sup>th</sup> CONTAM plenary meeting.

### **9.4 UPDATE FROM THE WG MELAMINE**

The chair of the WG informed the members of the CONTAM Panel on the progress of the draft opinion on melamine in food and feed. The WG is in the process to identify the different sources of background exposure to melamine in food and feed. The WG decided not to use app. 2000 occurrence data linked to the Chinese melamine incident in 2008. Related to the toxicity of melamine the members of the WG will reflect on the possible use of an additional uncertainty factor to allow for combination effects of melamine and cyanuric acid.

### **9.5. UPDATE FROM THE WG EVALUATION OF PREVIOUS CARGOES**

The chair of the WG informed the members of the CONTAM Panel on the progress related to the evaluation of previous cargoes. The opinion is progressing well and the members of the WG hope to be able to deliver this opinion to next panel meeting for possible adoption.

### **9.6. UPDATE FROM OTHER EFSA WGS WITH THE PARTICIPATON OF CONTAM EXPERTS**

The SC WG on Threshold of Toxicological Concern (TTC) is investigating revising the database in order to have a more solid database.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The expert from the CONTAM Panel and EFSA staff who attended the EUROTOX conference 2009 in Dresden Germany provided some feedback on the highlights of this conference. It was also mentioned that Alan Boobis received the Eurotox Merit Award. The members of the CONTAM Panel congratulated Alan.