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EFSA on Aspartame: a flawed analysis

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The draft EFSA ANS Panel report on aspartame (8 Jan. 2013) was deeply flawed, in two main ways:

- the criteria by which ‘evidence’ was selected, and
- the criteria by which studies were interpreted.

EFSA claimed: “The ANS Panel has taken all available information including new human safety data into consideration...”

But **All** available information was **NOT** taken into consideration.

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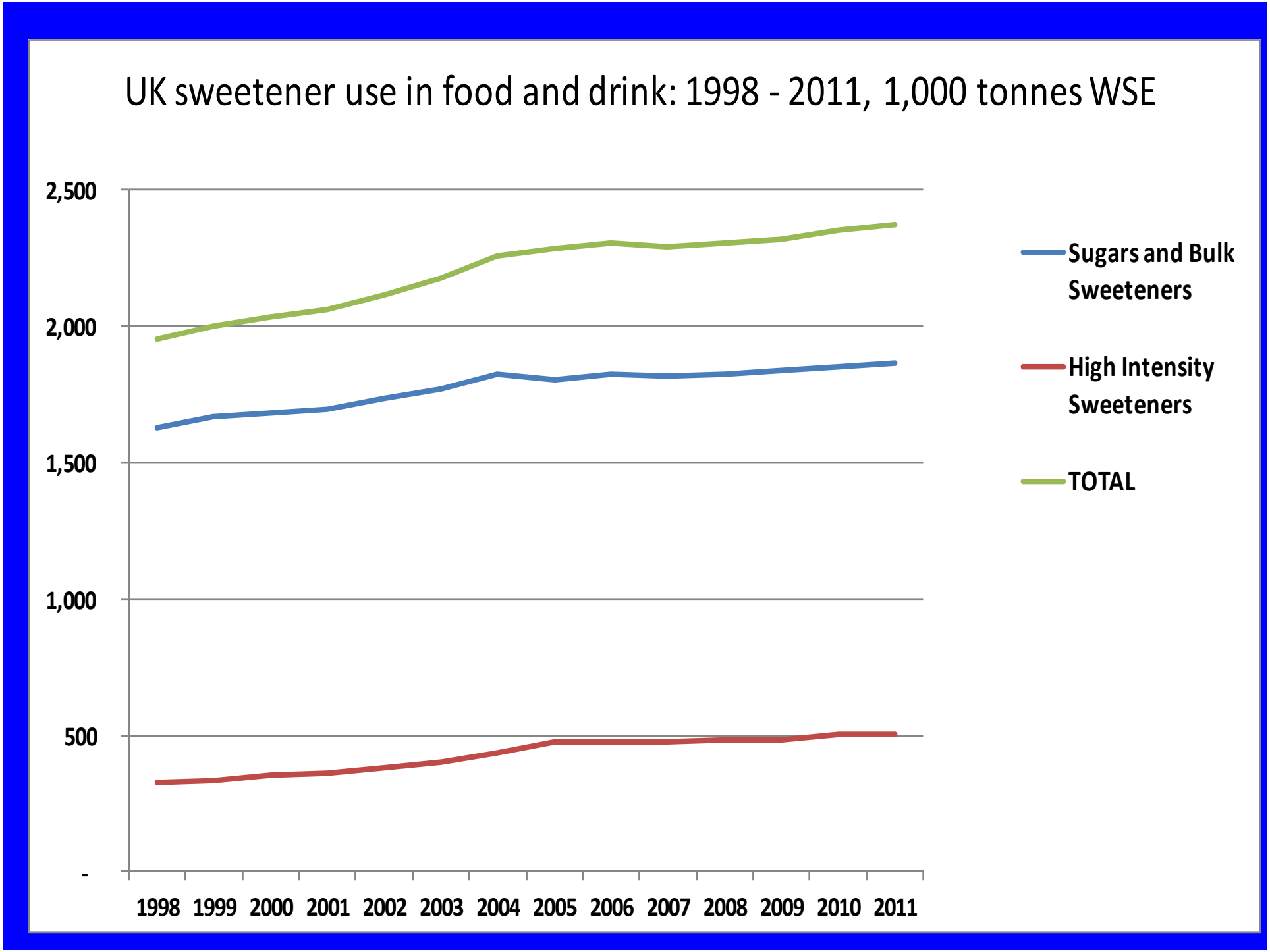
EFSA received 30 documents from me showing that:

1) 15 of the initial pivotal tests on aspartame were incompetently conducted and
2) misleadingly reported, and
3) how those errors were revealed and then concealed including by eg the FDA. (Flaws transferred to JECFA, SCF, CoT and EFSA.)

All 15 flawed early studies were included in the ANS review, and deemed reliable, but the counter-evidence was ignored and omitted.

The ANS panel also omitted any considerations of risks to nutritional public health.


UK sweetener use in food and drink: 1998 - 2011, 1,000 tonnes WSE
2,500
2,000
1,500
1,000
500
-
1998
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
Sugars and Bulk Sweeteners
High Intensity Sweeteners
TOTAL

Sweeteners are not replacing sugar but supplementing UK & EU sugar consumption. There is also evidence that sweeteners (especially aspartame) are **appetite stimulants**, so they may not just be ineffective but actively counter-productive for helping to control body weight.

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Research report

Saccharin and aspartame, compared with sucrose, induce greater weight gain in adult Wistar rats, at similar total caloric intake levels ☆

Fernanda de Matos Feijó [a], Cíntia Reis Ballard [a], Kelly Carraro Foletto [a], Bruna Aparecida Melo Batista [b], Alice Magagnin Neves [b], Maria Flávia Marques Ribeiro [b], Marcello Casaccia Bertoluci [a,c,*]

Neither EFSA nor the ANS panel has provided any explanation of why it focussed narrowly on toxicological considerations and omitted any discussion of the impact on public health nutrition and obesity.

The panel's interpretative criteria of the tox. studies were ***consistently inconsistent***.

On 80 occasions when the panel discussed studies that indicated no apparent risks they were taken at face value and assumed to be reliable.

On all 27 occasions when the panel discussed studies indicating that aspartame may pose risks, the panel was unremittingly critical, implicitly assuming that they must be misleading, so dismissing them.

Often those studies were discounted not because of evidence but on flimsy grounds, for example with speculative hypotheses but no supporting evidence.

Often ‘negative’ studies that were accepted were far weaker than the ‘positive’ studies that were discounted.

All of the 15 discredited early studies were included and treated as if reliable, while far more reliable studies eg those by the Ramazzini Foundation were discounted as if no reliance could be placed on their findings.

Before the results of the Ramazzini studies were published I used to argue that no-one know whether or not aspartame was acceptably safe.

But the evidence provided by Ramazzini is sufficient to demonstrate that **aspartame demonstrably fails to satisfy the requirements for being deemed acceptably safe**.

The ANS panel implicitly assumed that evidence of carcinogenicity only counts against a commercially useful compound if:

- There is a linear dose-related adverse effect
- in no more than 400 rats
- none of whom live beyond 30 months.

But that is indefensible from both a

- scientific and
- a consumer-protection

and public health policy point of view.

It effectively transforms a +ve to a –ve list system.

The panel's judgement was driven more by its consistently inconsistent and biased assumptions than by the evidence adduced.

The panel assumed that almost all 'negative' studies were reliable, though almost all were funded commercially, while all 'positive' studies were unreliable, although they were all funded non-commercially.

EFSA should discount the draft, convene a new panel composed of, and only of, experts with no conflicts of interest.

It should review all the evidence, not just some of it; and stipulate the minimum benchmarks for acceptance or rejection.

If EFSA accepts the ANS panel draft it will:

- forfeit all scientific and policy legitimacy,
- deserve to be abolished and replaced by a competent body,
- free of all commercial conflicts of interests.

My critique of the EFSA ANS Panel's draft review of aspartame is available at:

www.sussex.ac.uk/spru/documents/em-letter-to-efsa-on-aspartame-20feb2013.pdf