Background

In this guide

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This is a paper for discussion. This does not represent the views of the Committee and should not be cited.

1. The Committee Terms of Reference specify "To advise at the request of" (……government departments). Therefore, the work of the Committee is primarily reactive and the agendas are set by the Secretariat based upon the need for advice from Government Departments and Agencies particularly, but not exclusively, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the UK Health Security Agency (HSA).

2. The Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (Office of Science and Technology, December 2021), specifies that "committees should ensure that they have mechanisms in place that allow them to consider on a regular basis whether new issues in their particular areas of responsibility are likely to emerge for which scientific advice or research might be needed".

3. Members have agreed that it would be useful to have an annual agenda item to discuss potential future topics. A list of upcoming topics is also displayed on the Committee's website: Forthcoming COT meetings | Committee on Toxicity.

4. As Members are aware, now that the UK has left the European Union the authorisation of regulated products that would have been done by EFSA is being done in the UK. Two Joint Expert Groups (JEGs) have been established to cover the authorisation of regulated products and these will be over seen by the COT who will provide challenge, comment and assurance of their work. The FCMJEG covers food contact materials and AEJEG covers food additives, enzymes and other regulated products. An additional AEJEG group is working solely on the reauthorisation of smoke flavourings.

5. Details of completed JEG assessments are available on the FSA website Research projects | Food Standards Agency using the Scholastica publication format.

6. Requests for COT advice are also being received from the Nutrition, Labelling Composition and Standards Group which is a risk management group for the 4 countries of the UK and covers legislative areas such as infant formula and follow on foods, food supplements, and nutrient sources where the policy lead is the responsibility if the Department of Health and Social Care in England, FSA Northern Ireland, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly; topics previously raised by NLCS include green tea catechins, fortificants in bread and flour and folic acid hypersensitivity.

7. This has been reflected in the agendas of the Committee, although it is still unclear how much Committee time this will represent in the long term.