

COT Internal Review 2022

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) has been internally reviewed by the FSA, following the Cabinet Office '[Guidance for the Review of Public Bodies](#)'. A self-assessment model (SAM) was used to assess the efficacy, efficiency, governance and accountability.

The FSA has concluded that the results of this SAM indicate that the COT does not require a full-scale review and will therefore be reviewed again as part of the next cycle of FSA Science Advisory Committee (SAC) reviews in 2025.

The conclusions and recommendations are summarised below.

Conclusions

Efficacy

There is not a complaints procedure published for the COT, this does not appear very relevant as there are no public facing services. Policy departments at the FSA and other risk management colleagues are where complaints should be received and dealt with.

Performance of the COT is appraised annually by the Chair, members, Secretariat and the FSA's Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA). This adheres to the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory committees ([CoPSAC](#)) and, therefore, is deemed suitable for the COT.

Efficiency

There are no areas of concern in this section.

Governance

There are no published guidelines for COT members on lobbying and political activity. Members receive these when they are inducted into the COT.

Diversity and Inclusion is a topic of particular interest for the FSA within the SACs currently the FSA should continue its focus on encouraging diversity of applicants to all FSA SAC memberships.

Accountability

The COT Chair meeting biannually with the FSA's CSA. The COT Chair does not regularly meet with the FSA Board, which is suggested in the CoPSAC. A letter produced by the Chair is included in the COT's annual report. However, there is not an annual letter sent to the COT Chair from the FSA.

Results

Table 1: The major indicators for concern for the COT.

Conclusion Sub-Areas Majors

Efficacy 2/8

Efficiency 0/2

Governance 2/26

Accountability 1/14

Total 5/50

This provides a summary of the binary and data questions only, and is not fully representative of all answers given in the SAM.

The Self-Assessment Model has shown very few areas of concern for the COT.

Recommendations

1. The COT should consider publishing a complaints procedure on its website.
2. The COT and FSA could consider publishing performance data to show transparency around SAC performance.
3. The COT should consider publishing rules on lobbying and guidelines for political activity for COT members to ensure compliance with any restrictions.
4. The COT Chair should be given opportunities to meet with the FSA Board, as is stated in the CoPSAC.
5. The FSA Board should send an annual 'Chair's Letter' to the COT Chair setting out the FSA's shorter-term priorities and expectations.
6. The COT should review and update its terms of reference before the end of 2023.