

17 APR 2015

Ref. BU/RH/sg (2015) –
out- 14094234

Dr Michael Warhurst
Executive Director
CHEM Trust
michael.warhurst@chemtrust.org.uk

Re: Letter outlining our concerns regarding EFSA's reporting of the bisphenol A risk assessment

Ref.: Your letter dated 31st March

Dear Dr Warhurst,

Thank you for your letter regarding the communication material that accompanied EFSA's scientific opinion on the safety of bisphenol A (BPA) in foodstuffs published in January 2015. We welcome the opportunity to engage with you to address your concerns on this important public health issue and assure you we take your views seriously.

Following receipt of your letter, I asked my communications and scientific staff, along with experts from the CEF Panel to review the communication material we produced to support the BPA opinion.

In communicating to a general audience on the key message of the opinion, EFSA analysed the significance of the findings for both dietary exposure and aggregated exposure (through dietary and non-dietary sources). This included the assessment of all uncertainties regarding the scientific information available for the estimation of exposure from multiple sources, including diet, as well as uncertainties related to the identification and characterisation of the toxicological hazards. CEF Panel experts examined estimated non-dietary exposure to BPA and the uncertainty analysis regarding this exposure estimate, which they characterise as highly conservative. Non-dietary exposure is a major part of aggregated exposure to BPA. These were the considerations factored into the key message of the communication materials on BPA. Upon our request the CEF Panel experts reviewed this rationale and have assured us that the press release and other communication materials are in line with the opinion on BPA and do not need to be amended.

I think it is important to stress that EFSA's communication materials should be seen as an explanation rather than a substitute for our scientific outputs. Their purpose is to raise awareness and provide an entry point for non-specialist audiences about EFSA's scientific work. This requires the use of accessible language and often simplification of complex scientific concepts.

While communication plays an important role, it is the quality of our scientific work that ultimately defines the relevance and usefulness of EFSA to the European food safety system. EFSA's opinion on the safety of BPA is built on the strongest science and the opinion fully meets the standards of scientific excellence that EFSA and decision makers demand.

EFSA did make an editorial change to the abstract of the opinion and was transparent in making this amendment public. This involved re-aligning the wording in the abstract with that of the summary and body of the opinion. It does not affect the content or conclusions of our communication material. We apologise if this has created any confusion.

In your letter you also ask whether EFSA plans to carry out further research on non-dietary exposure to BPA. EFSA's remit pertains to food and therefore commissioning research on non-dietary exposure is seen as outside the scope of our work. However, we will remain attentive to any new research carried out by third parties and data collected by Member States in this key area. For example, in future the safety assessment of BPA may need to be updated following the outcome of research by the US National Toxicology Program (NTP) that could address many of the remaining uncertainties about the potential health effects of BPA.

We value the role that organisations such as CHEM Trust can play in contributing to our work; in clarifying our science to their audiences and, as EFSA does, seeking to safeguard the public interest. We would like to explore ways in which we can cooperate more closely with you to gain a greater mutual understanding of our respective scientific viewpoints.

Thank you once again for your interest in our work. I look forward to an ongoing dialogue between EFSA and CHEM Trust. As a tangible next step, our stakeholder services will contact you soon to discuss how we can further develop our working relationship.

Yours sincerely,



Bernhard Url