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Preparing the way for accurate calculations of dietary exposure to chemicals

Subject area

📍 Exposure assessment, chemical substances, food consumption, food description

 DATA



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> Abstract

Important tasks of the European Food Safety Authority include compiling central repositories for European data on the presence of beneficial or harmful chemical substances in food and feed, and data on food consumption, to facilitate European dietary exposure assessment as well as harmonising data collection activities. The past ten years have seen considerable progress in harmonising European data collection activities. Initial shortcomings in contaminant data descriptions, data submission procedures and coverage of European food consumption data, as well as the problem of matching foods analysed for chemical substances with foods as consumed, were addressed by EFSA in close cooperation with EU Member States. A standardised occurrence data structure and automated data submission methods were developed to improve results transfer and validation. Detailed food consumption information was collected covering, at least partially, all age groups. Currently, the data structure hosts almost 2.5 million records on contaminants, it receives every year around 15 million records on pesticide residue monitoring and includes

over 6.3 million food consumption records. EFSA also published uniform terminology for identifying and characterising food, thus providing the essential link between analytical data and food consumption information. Consequently, exposure assessments within EFSA's Risk Assessment framework have greatly improved. EFSA can now provide more robust data to risk managers for setting maximum levels in foods or performing trend analyses to measure the impact of legislative activities, as demonstrated in the number of contributions to scientific opinions and stand-alone reports produced by the Dietary and Chemical Monitoring (DCM) Unit. Further ongoing improvements include a common methodology for food consumption surveys, better predictions of usual intake from short term consumption data, and a coordinated approach for assessing the presence and levels of chemical substances in food as actually consumed.

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> Panel members at the time of adoption

Fabiansson S, Vernazza F

Contact: dcm@efsa.europa.eu

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