Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium
Information Sharing Exchange on Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) can no longer be considered an "emerging" issue – the growing body of data clearly illustrates their widespread presence in the global environment. In response, Federal Agencies are investing resources to define the scope of the problem, assess the risks to animals, humans, and the environment, and develop appropriate risk management strategies. Given that efforts are underway at numerous Federal Agencies, the Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium conducted a series of information sharing sessions for the Agencies to not only share their work on PFAS but also to generate in depth discussions (both scientific and regulatory in nature), support better coordination of efforts across Agencies, and create new "connections" between researchers at different Agencies.

A total of 17 presentations were made across three separate sessions that were held across three consecutive weeks in April 2021. The sessions were planned and facilitated by FDA (Sherri Dennis, Barry Hooberman, and Karlyn Middleton) and only open to federal government employees. The speakers were from FDA, EPA, and USDA; attendees were from those three agencies plus representatives from several other Federal Agencies impacted by PFAS contamination issues.

The first session provided a general introduction and overview of PFAS activities across FDA, EPA, and USDA. In addition to highlighting each Agency's specific focus on PFAS contamination, the speakers touched on topics that would be further explored in the subsequent sessions: analytical methods, food safety assessments, the pharmacokinetics of PFAS in food-producing animals, and work with States that are at the forefront of PFAS contamination events.

The second session presented a more detailed view of Agency's approaches to food safety. Topics included: the current status of analytical methods for PFAS in foods, current approaches to assessing the safety of animal food, and the use of pharmacokinetic models in assessing human and animal food safety. The final presentation on a systematic review of data on human exposures from indoor media provided a different view of PFAS exposures and generated a valuable discussion on the role of PFAS background exposures in regulatory strategies for risk assessment and management.

The third session focused on several toxicological issues associated with PFAS contaminants. The first talk described an approach to use electronic health records to examine the impacts of PFAS on clinical outcomes. The attendees then heard about the use of developmental rodent models to study PFAS adverse outcome pathways. The last two presentations addressed the biopersistence and toxicity of PFAS used in food packaging applications. A recurrent theme throughout the presentations in this session, and in all three sessions, was that we are still in the early stages of developing the knowledge and data needed to fully understand the issues associated with PFAS contamination, but we are moving forward in addressing those data gaps and in producing the data needed to support science-based decision-making to manage and mitigate the risks associated with PFAS contaminants.

A post-meeting feedback survey revealed that the information sessions were well-received and very informative, provided useful information that impacted participants' work, and generated new connections that will benefit PFAS projects. The sessions were viewed as well-organized and encouraged discussion of important issues. Participants were favorable towards organizing additional PFAS informational sessions in the future, as our knowledgebase on PFAS risks is rapidly evolving.

We will update the website with additional information, as it becomes available.