

Threshold of Toxicological Concern *or: The De Minimis Concept*

This is a concept that if you use *only a little bit* of a chemical of unknown toxicity it is okay. According to Dr. R. Kroes of the Utrecht University faculty of veterinary medicine in The Netherlands, this has been the policy of the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) since 1982, when it was called the Threshold of Regulation. In his 2005 paper, he describes the history of this policy, its use, and future applications.

Using a "decision tree," the FDA scientists are able to decide just how dangerous certain unknown chemicals probably are, and thus they decide how much of them to allow in your food. Of course, if the chemical in question belongs to certain already-recognized high-risk groups of compounds (like aflatoxins) then it is removed from the "decision tree." If the chemical is still in the running, they then decide how much is probably "acceptable exposure" based on its general chemical composition. This saves the government, and the flavoring and manufacturing companies, lots of time and money because they don't have to actually test the compound to find out if it is safe. It also saves the lives of uncounted numbers of mice and rats. Of course, what it will do to you and your family is just guesswork, based on the "decision tree."

Here's how it works, and how they decide if you should eat it:

