

# RECENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF EU POLICY ON CONTAMINANTS IN FOOD

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The EU legislation on contaminants in food fulfils two essential objectives: the protection of public health and removal of internal barriers to trade within the EU.

Council Regulation (EEC) No 315/93 of 8 February 1993 laying down community procedures for contaminants in food<sup>1</sup> is the framework for the Community action on contaminants.

This Framework Regulation provides that food containing a contaminant in an amount which is unacceptable from the public health viewpoint shall not be placed on the market (food can only be placed on the market when it is safe).

Furthermore it is foreseen that

- contaminant levels shall be kept as low as can reasonably be achieved by following good practices at all stages of the production chain
- in order to protect public health, maximum levels for specific contaminants shall be established where necessary;
- the consultation of a scientific body (EFSA) for all provisions which may have an effect upon public health is mandatory.

To reduce the presence of contamination in the food supply "prevention is better than cure". Therefore there it is important to encourage preventive actions such as good agricultural practice, good manufacturing practices, good storage conditions, use of improved sorting procedures etc... Prevention requires knowledge and acquiring knowledge requires research.

Legislation on contaminants needs continuously be updated to ensure a continuous high level of human protection and to address the challenges with which the risk managers are faced. However there are changing trends in the EU policy on contaminants in food.

The presentation will focus on the recent and expected future changes in EU-legislation on food contaminants. The following topics will be addressed while highlighting the challenges and the issues at stake:

- mycotoxins: Alternaria toxins, citrinin, phomopsins, ergot alkaloids, T-2/HT-2 toxin, sterigmatocystin, masked (hidden/bound) mycotoxins, metabolites of mycotoxins.
- plant toxins: pyrrolizidine alkaloids, tropane alkaloids, opium alkaloids, tetrahydrocannabinol,
- process contaminants: acrylamide, MCPD esters and glycidyl esters, PAH, ...
- environmental contaminants, including POPs: Brominated flame retardants (BFR) , perfluoroalkylated substances (PFAS), dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs, perchlorate, cadmium, inorganic arsenic, lead, (methyl) mercury
- the impact of changing weather conditions on the prevalence of certain contaminants in the food chain and the consequences for EU-policy on contaminants
- future issues.

**Keywords:** food contaminants, EU legislation

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L37, 13.2.1993, p. 1