

SAFEGUARDS

CONSUMER GOODS AND RETAIL

FOOD

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION ON REDUCTION OF THE PRESENCE OF CADMIUM IN FOOD STUFFS

On 4 April 2014, the European commission published a recommendation [2014/193/EU](#) on the reduction of the presence of cadmium in food stuffs, which involves the decrease of cadmium input during the growing of crops and vegetables for human consumption on land. To achieve the reduction of cadmium levels in food, the Member States have to implement the already available mitigation method to farmers and food business operators. The progress of the implementation should be regularly monitored and reported to the Commission. Meanwhile, the occurrence data of cadmium should be collected and reported to European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to reassess the situation by 31 December 2018.

Cadmium is a toxic element causing adverse health effects in humans. It is easily absorbed into foodstuffs including cereals and cereal products, vegetables, nuts and pulses, starchy roots or potatoes, meat and meat products. The highest cadmium concentrations are found in food commodities such as seaweed, seafood products, chocolate, fungi, oilseed, and edible offal. To protect the health of consumers, maximum levels of cadmium in a range of foodstuffs were established in Commission Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006¹. Since the exposure of cadmium in the environment and food supply chains may not be avoidable, the Scientific Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (Contam Panel) of the EFSA adopted the opinion on 30th January 2009 to establish a new Tolerable Weekly Intake (TWI) of this substance at 2.5 µg/kg bodyweight². The re-assessment of TWI was carried out in 2011 by the Joint FAO/WHO expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), the TWI was confirmed at the same level³.

In European countries, the level of cadmium exposure in diets is close to or slightly exceeding the TWI. Within certain subgroups of the population, the level of cadmium may be found to be two times over the TWI. Even though these levels are not severe enough to affect kidney function, the high level of cadmium exposure to the population should be reduced. To investigate the possibilities to reduce cadmium exposure, the decrease of the existing maximum level in foodstuffs was also considered by the Commission. However, it would be difficult to accomplish because cadmium contained in foodstuffs is not uniform and varies depending on the



¹ [\(EC\) No 1881/2006](#)

² [Cadmium in food](#)

³ [SCIENTIFIC OPINION](#)

geographical location of growing area, plant varieties, and anthropogenic factors such as agricultural use of sewage sludge, manure or phosphate fertilisers and other factors. The Commission is aware of these factors and needs to take action in accordance with its risk reduction strategy for cadmium and cadmium oxide. Some mitigation methods to reduce cadmium level in foods already exist but need some time to be fully implemented. To adopt this recommendation, the Member states should perform the following:

1. Available mitigation methods for reduction of cadmium levels in foods, particularly in cereal, vegetables and potatoes, should be promoted or communicated to farmers and food business operators and then continue to be implemented.
2. Where further knowledge is needed to identify the appropriate mitigation measures, e.g. for a certain crop or in a specific geographical area, investigation/research, it should be carried out to fill these gaps in knowledge.
3. The progress of the effects of the mitigation measures should be regularly monitored.
 - Analytical results are provided on a regular basis to EFSA for compilation into a single database
 - A report on the progress of the implementation of this recommendation is to be provided to the Commission in December 2015 and the final report at the latest in February 2018.
4. The sampling and analysis should be performed according to Commission Regulation (EC) No 333/2007 of 28 March 2007 laying down methods of sampling and analysis for the official control of the level of lead, cadmium, mercury, inorganic tin, 3-MCPD, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in foodstuffs.

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