Food additives: tartaric acid and tartrates

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EU reviews authorisations of tartaric acid and tartrates (E 334–337 and E 354), and sets maximum use levels

Commission Regulation (EU) 2024/1451 of 24 May 2024 amending Annex II and Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the food additives tartaric acid (L(+)-) (E 334), sodium tartrates (E 335), potassium tartrates (E 336), sodium potassium tartrate (E 337) and calcium tartrate (E 354)

Update

The EU has revised conditions of use for the food additives tartaric acid (E 334), sodium tartrates (E 335), potassium tartrates (E 336), sodium potassium tartrate (E 337), and calcium tartrate (E 354) in several food categories. For certain food categories where the food industry did not express interest in the use of tartaric acid or tartrates, authorisation has been withdrawn and their use will no longer be permitted.

Impacted products

Processed foods including baked goods, beverages, confectionery, desserts and jellies, heat-treated meat products, processed fruits, vegetables, and dairy products, processed fish and fishery products (including molluscs and crustaceans), table-top sweeteners, seasonings, condiments

What is changing?

Before this Regulation, tartaric acid and tartrates (E 334–337 and E 354) were included in Group I of Regulation 1333/2008 “food additives other than colours and sweeteners without a specified acceptable daily intake (ADI)”. Following a re-evaluation of these additives, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) established a group ADI for these additives (E 334–337 and E 354) of 240 mg/kg body weight per day, expressed as tartaric acid (EFSA 2020). They are removed from Group I and placed in a new group (tartaric acid – tartrates).

This Regulation establishes conditions of use for these food additives and withdraws their authorisations in certain food categories (see Table 1 for details).

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The Regulation also establishes conditions of use of tartaric acid and tartrates in food additives, food enzymes, and food flavourings. These conditions are set out in Annex II.

Why?

Food additives used in processed foods are reassessed regularly to ensure their safe use in food products.

Following EFSA's review of tartaric acid and tartrates and establishment of a group ADI (EFSA 2020), the European Commission launched a public call for technical data on the use of these food additives. Where no data were provided in relation to a specific food category or use, the Commission considered that there was no interest in reauthorisation, and the authorisation has been withdrawn.

Timeline

Date of application: **16 December 2024**.

Foods containing these additives may remain on the market until their date of minimum durability or use-by date, even if they do not comply with the new rules, provided they have been lawfully placed on the market before 16 December 2024.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Exporting countries must ensure that their food products meet the latest EU standards for food additives. This means adhering to the specific additives listed in Annexes II and III of Regulation 1333/2008, and their allowed quantities. Failure to comply could result in entry into the EU market being refused.

Recommended Actions

Suppliers of foods containing tartaric acid and tartrates must comply with the new maximum levels for each food category, and ensure that these additives are not used in food categories for which their use is no longer authorised.

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Background

Regulation 1333/2008 outlines the rules for assessment and approval of food additives within the European Union.

- List of Approved Food Additives (Annex II) specifies which food additives are allowed to be used in various categories of food products. Only the additives listed here are permitted for use, and they must be used according to the specified conditions.
- List for Specific Applications (Annex III) details which food additives can be used in the manufacturing of other food additives, enzymes, and flavourings. Additives must be used as outlined in this list to comply with the Regulation.

This Regulation also specifies the maximum amounts that can be used in food products. These limits are based on two main principles:

- minimal necessary quantity: additives should be used in the smallest quantity needed to achieve their intended function, such as food preservation or flavour enhancement
- safety considerations: the quantities used must ensure safety for all consumer groups and reflect the ADI levels, particularly for populations with potentially higher consumption.

For the most recently updated list of approved food additives and conditions of use, see Regulation 1333/2008: click on the date that follows “Current consolidated version”.

Resources

EFSA (2020) Re-evaluation of l(+)-tartaric acid (E 334), sodium tartrates (E 335), potassium tartrates (E 336), potassium sodium tartrate (E 337) and calcium tartrate (E 354) as food additives. EFSA Journal, 18(3): 6030.

Online resources from the European Commission:

- Food Additives Database
- Food Flavourings Database

Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 on food additives

Sources

Commission Regulation (EU) 2024/1451 as regards the food additives tartaric acid (L(+)-) (E 334), sodium tartrates (E 335), potassium tartrates (E 336), sodium potassium tartrate (E 337) and calcium tartrate (E 354)

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Tables & Figures

Table 1
Changes to maximum levels for certain food additives

Food additive	Category (category number)	Previous level[1]	New level (mg/kg)
E 334–337, E 354	Unflavoured fermented milk products (01.3)	Not specified	750
E 334–337, E 354	Dairy analogues (01.8), protein products, processed potato products (04.2.6), soups and broths (12.5)	Not specified	240
E 334–337, E 354	Fat and oil emulsions (02.2.2)	Not specified	1,300
E 334 -337	Canned or bottled fruit and vegetables (04.2.3)	Not specified	9,000[2]
E 334–337, E 354	Fruit and vegetable preparations (excluding compote) (04.2.4.1)	Not specified	3,000
E 334, E 335	Extra jam and extra jelly (04.2.5.1), jam, jellies and marmalades (0.4.2.5.2), other similar fruit or vegetable spreads (0.4.2.5.3)	Allowed	Deleted
E 334–337, E 354	Other confectionery (05.2), chewing gum (05.3)	Not specified	25,000
E 334–337, E 354	Decorations, coatings, and fillings (05.4)	Not specified	11,000
E 334	Fresh pasta (06.4.1), fresh pre-cooked pasta (06.4.3), potato gnocchi (06.4.4)	Allowed	Deleted
E 334–337, E 354	Pre-cooked or processed cereals (06.7)	Not specified	740
E 334–337, E 354	Bread and rolls (07.1)	Not specified	15,000[3]
E 334–337, E 354	Fine bakery wares (07.2)	Not specified	18,000
E 334–337, E 354	Heat-treated meat products (08.3.2)	Not specified	3,000[4]
E 334–337, E 354	Processed fish and fishery products (09.2)	Not specified	2,300
E 336	Table-top sweeteners in powder form (11.4.2)	Allowed	Deleted
E 334, E 336	Table-top sweeteners in tablets (11.4.3)	Not specified	270,000[2]
E 334–337, E 354	Seasonings and condiments (12.2.2)	Not specified	17,000
E 334–337, E 354	Mustard (12.4)	Not specified	12,000
E 334–337, E 354	Sauces (12.6), flavoured drinks (14.1.4)	Not specified	4,000
E 334–337, E 354	Salads and savoury-based sandwich spreads (12.7)	Not specified	1,800
E 334, E 335, E 336	Processed cereal-based foods, baby foods (13.1.3)	5,000	5,000[2]
E 354	Processed cereal-based foods, baby foods (13.1.3)	5,000	Deleted
E 336	Fruit juices, vegetable juices	Allowed	Deleted
E 334–337, E 354	Spirit drinks (14.2.6)	Not specified	1,000[2]
E 334–337, E 354	Aromatised wines (14.2.7.1), wine-based drinks (14.2.7.2), wine-product cocktails (14.2.7.3), other alcoholic beverages including mixtures with non-alcoholic beverages, alcoholic beverages <15% strength (14.2.8)	Not specified	8,000
E 334–337, E 354	Potato-, cereal-, flour-, starch-based snacks (15.1)	Not specified	60,000
E 334–337, E 354	Desserts (16)	Not specified	3,000[3]
E 334–337, E 354	Food supplements (solid, non-chewable) (17.1)	Not specified	100,000[5]
E 334–337, E 354	Food supplements (solid, chewable) (17.1)	Not specified	130,000[5]
E 334–337, E 354	Food supplements (liquid) (17.2)	Not specified	6,000[5]

This simplified overview does not cover all the details in the Annexes.
1. Not specified: previous levels were not provided; Deleted: additive no longer permitted in that category.
2. Applies individually or combined.
3. Except specified subcategories.
4. Except *foie gras*, *libamáj*.
5. Except for infants, young children.

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Source: Regulation 2024/1451, Annex I

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