EU to set maximum levels for furan and derivatives in baby and infant cereal-based foods

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EU to set maximum levels for furan, 2-methylfuran, and 3-methylfuran in processed cereal-based foods for infants/young children, and in baby food

Draft Commission Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2023/915 as regards maximum levels of the sum of furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran in processed cereal-based food for infants and young children and in baby food

Draft Annex

Update

Due to concerns that the presence of furan and methylfurans in food could lead to possible long-term liver damage, the European Union (EU) is proposing to set maximum limits for these substances in processed cereal-based food for infants and young children, as well as in baby food.

The EU has notified this proposal to the World Trade Organization Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS) Committee (G/SPS/N/EU/933).

Impacted products

Cereal-based food for infants and young children, baby food

What is changing?

The EU proposes to set maximum levels for the sum of furan, 2-methylfuran, and 3-methylfuran in processed cereal-based food for infants and young children, and baby food.

The proposed limits are set out in Table 1.

Why?

In 2017, the European Food Safety Authority expressed concern that the presence of furan and methylfurans in food could cause long-term liver damage. Babies and young children are particularly at risk due to their exposure to ready-to-eat canned food (EFSA 2017). In 2024, there were several notifications to the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) on the presence of furan, 2-methylfuran, and 3-methylfuran in baby food, underlining the need for regulatory action.

Timeline

The new maximum limits are expected to apply from **1 January 2028**.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Exporting countries will need to comply with stricter EU safety standards by ensuring that levels of furan, 2-methylfuran, and 3-methylfuran in infant and baby foods remain within the new limits. This may require adjustments in production processes, quality control systems, and testing capacity.

The new rules could lead to higher compliance costs due to the need for additional laboratory analysis, staff training, and quality assurance systems.

The delayed implementation date provides operators with time to adapt their processes, upgrade standards, and avoid trade disruptions or product rejections.

Recommended Actions

Exporters are encouraged to use the transitional period to gradually upgrade processes, facilities, and supply chains to ensure compliance without disrupting trade.

The World Trade Organization consultation on this proposal closed on 26 May 2026.

Background

Furan can be present in canned and jarred foods as a by-product of the heat treatment (sterilisation) process used to make food safe and shelf-stable.

Resources

Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/915 on maximum levels for certain contaminants in food

EFSA (2017) Scientific Opinion: Risks for public health related to the presence of furan and methylfurans in food. EFSA Journal, 15(10): e05005.

Sources

Draft Commission Regulation as regards maximum levels of the sum of furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran in processed cereal-based food for infants and young children and in baby food

Draft Annex

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Table & Figures

Table 1
New maximum levels of the sum of furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran, expressed as furan[1]

Product	Maximum levels (µg/kg)	Remarks
Processed cereal-based food for infants and young children	40	
Dairy-based and fruit-based baby food Baby food consisting of a mixture of dairy and fruit	30	The maximum level applies to baby food consisting of at least 80% dairy or fruit, or of a mixture of dairy and fruit
Other baby food	80	

[1] For the sum of furan, 2-methylfuran, and 3-methylfuran, expressed as furan, maximum levels refer to lower bound concentrations, which are calculated on the assumption that all the values below the limit of quantification are zero. A factor of 0.83 is applied to the level of 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran and the maximum level refers to the sum of furan + (0.83 × 2-methylfuran) + (0.83 × 3-methylfuran).

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Source: Draft Annex