

# Food irradiation explained

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Directive [1999/2/EC](#) on the approximation of the laws of the Member States concerning foods and food ingredients treated with ionising radiation

## What is changing and why?

### Summary of the rules and practices of food irradiation in the EU

- Only dried aromatic herbs, spices, and vegetable seasonings are permitted to be irradiated and sold across the whole EU market.
- Only facilities approved by the EU may irradiate foods for the EU market.
- Ten non-EU countries have approved facilities: South Africa (3 facilities), India (3), Thailand (2), Switzerland (1), and Turkey (1).
- Any irradiated food ingredient, or food products containing an irradiated ingredient, must be labelled with the words “irradiated” or “treated with ionising radiation”.
- In 2021, irradiation of food products totalled around 5,000 tons, around half the amount that was irradiated in 2010.
- There is little consumer awareness of food irradiation in the EU. Only certain specific sectors, such as shrimp, frog legs, crayfish, and blood products, are seeking a change in the rules.

## Timeline

There are currently no plans to increase the number of food categories in the EU that may be irradiated.

For more information see the [full record](#) on the AGRINFO website – where you can also view the latest [AGRINFO Update](#) newsletters and [search](#) the database.

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