Maximum levels for T-2 and HT-2 toxins in foods

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EU establishes maximum levels for T-2 and HT-2 toxins in cereal-based foods

Commission Regulation (EU) 2024/1038 of 9 April 2024 amending Regulation (EU) 2023/915 as regards maximum levels of T-2 and HT-2 toxins in food

Update

The EU has established maximum levels for the sum of T-2 and HT-2 toxins in cereals and cereal products intended for human consumption.

Impacted products

Unprocessed cereal grains, barley, maize, oats, milling products of cereals, bran, maize products, bakery wares, pasta, cereal snacks, breakfast cereals, baby food, food for special medical purposes intended for infants and young children

What is changing?

The EU has introduced maximum levels for T-2 and HT-2 in various foods. The new maximum levels are highlighted in Table 1.

In addition, the EU proposes to monitor and report the presence of T-2 and HT-2 toxins in oats with a view to potentially reducing maximum levels further in the future.

Why?

An evaluation of T-2 and HT-2 toxins in food by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA 2011) identified potential health risks, especially to children. To ensure high public health protection levels, the EU concluded that maximum levels should be set for certain foods, based on the data submitted to EFSA.

Oat grains show particularly high levels of these toxins and require further monitoring.

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Timeline

The new maximum levels apply from **1 July 2024**.

Recommended Actions

Non-EU suppliers of cereal products should urgently evaluate current levels of T-2 and HT-2 toxins in these products to identify any potential non-compliance and strategies for reducing the presence of these toxins.

Agricultural practices to reduce the risk of contamination by T-2 and HT-2 toxins include crop rotation and selecting resistant crop varieties. EU recommendations on the presence of T-2 and HT-2 toxins in cereals and cereal products can be found in Commission Recommendation 2013/165/EU.

More generally, to mitigate the risks of potential non-compliance with maximum levels on contaminants, non-EU countries should:

- ensure sampling and testing capacity for those contaminants listed in EU Regulations; training is available, for example through the European Commission's Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) Academy
- ensure that, where feasible, established strategies for reducing contamination are systematically disseminated and implemented in relevant agricultural value chains
- contribute data to EFSA's annual data collection process to ensure that risk assessments undertaken by EFSA have a complete picture of the current prevalence of contaminants in non-EU countries.

Background

Mycotoxins are secondary metabolites produced by fungi that grow naturally in food and feedstuffs including grains, nuts, and fruits, particularly under warm and humid conditions. T-2 and HT-2 toxins are specific types of mycotoxin.

The European Union establishes maximum allowable limits for mycotoxins in food products to ensure that they remain within safe consumption levels. The legal framework for these maximum levels is established by Council Regulation (EEC) 315/93 (basic principles) and Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/915 (maximum levels). The EU aims to set maximum levels following the principle that they should be as low as reasonably achievable by applying good practices, and on the basis of scientific advice provided by EFSA, taking into account data on the occurrence of contaminants in foodstuffs from various origins. See EU legislation on contaminants – maximum levels explained.

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Resources

EFSA (2011) Scientific Opinion on the risks for animal and public health related to the presence of T-2 and HT-2 toxin in food and feed. EFSA Journal 9(12): 2481.

European Commission (2008) Factsheet: Food contaminants.

The EU has issued a series of Guidance Documents on the measurement and control of contaminants, including a Guidance document on identification of mycotoxins and plant toxins in food and feed.

Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/915

Council Regulation (EEC) No 315/93

Sources

Commission Regulation (EU) 2024/1038 of 9 April 2024 amending Regulation (EU) 2023/915 as regards maximum levels of T-2 and HT-2 toxins in food

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Tables & Figures

Table 1 New maximum levels of T-2 and HT-2 toxins		
Entry in Annex I of Regulation 2023/915	Products	New level (µg/kg)
1.9.1	Unprocessed cereal grains except products listed in 1.9.1.1, 1.9.1.2, 1.9.1.3, and 1.9.1.4	50
1.9.1.1	Unprocessed malting barley grains	200
1.9.1.2	Unprocessed barley grains other than malting barley grains	150
1.9.1.3	Unprocessed maize grains and unprocessed durum wheat grains	100
1.9.1.4	Unprocessed oat grains with inedible husk	1250
1.9.2	Cereals placed on the market for the final consumer except products listed in 1.9.2.1 and 1.9.2.2	20
1.9.2.1	Oats placed on the market for the final consumer	100
1.9.2.2	Barley, maize, and durum wheat placed on the market for the final consumer	50
1.9.3	Milling products of cereals except products listed in 1.9.3.1 and 1.9.3.2	20
1.9.3.1	Milling products of oats (including oat bran)	100
1.9.3.2	Bran from cereals other than oats and milling products of maize	50
1.9.4	Bakery wares, pasta, cereal snacks and breakfast cereals except products listed in 1.9.5, 1.9.6, 1.9.7, and 1.9.8	20
1.9.5	Bakery wares containing at least 90% milling products of oats	100
1.9.6	Oat flakes	100
1.9.7	Breakfast cereals with specific compositions (listed in 1.9.7)	50
1.9.8	Breakfast cereals with specific compositions (listed in 1.9.8)	75
1.9.9	Baby food and processed cereal-based food for infants and young children	10
1.9.10	Food for special medical purposes intended for infants and young children	10
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