Maximum levels of dioxins and PCBs

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New dioxin maximum levels on certain animal products, including eggs, crustaceans, and milk and dairy products, from 1 January

Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/2002 of 21 October 2022 amending Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 as regards maximum levels of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in certain foodstuffs

Update

The European Commission has published Regulation 2022/2002 that introduces new maximum levels of dioxins and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) on certain foodstuffs. It extends the current maximum level for hen eggs to all poultry eggs and lowers the maximum levels in milk and dairy products.

Impacted products

poultry eggs, egg products (except goose eggs), meat and edible offal of cattle, pigs, poultry, sheep, goats, horses, rabbits, wild boar, venison, wild game birds, raw milk and dairy products

What is changing?

The EU amends Section 5 "Dioxins and PCBs" of the Annex to Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 (subsequently replaced by Regulation (EU) 2023/915) establishing maximum levels for dioxins, and for the sum of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs, for foodstuffs not yet covered by EU legislation, and for which occurrence data have been recently made available. New products and amendments include:

- meat and meat products from goats, horses, rabbits, wild boar, game birds and venison; and liver of goats, horses and game birds
- the existing maximum level for hen eggs is extended to all poultry eggs, with the exception of goose eggs.

The maximum levels for these products are listed in Table 1.

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Why?

Estimates of chronic human dietary exposure to dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs, based on the available occurrence data, indicate a significant exceedance of the tolerable weekly intake for populations of all age groups.

Timeline

Date of entry into force: 1 January 2023.

Foodstuffs placed on the market before 1 January 2023 may remain on the market until their date of minimum durability or use-by date, even if new maximum levels are exceeded.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Dioxins, formed unintentionally in a number of industrial and thermal processes, have no technological use. The production of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) had widespread use up to the end of the 1970s, but has since been abandoned in most countries (EFSA CONTAM Panel 2018). However, due to their poor degradation, dioxins and PCBs have accumulated in the food chain.

Third countries where industrial and thermal processes involving the use of PCBs or unintentional formation of dioxins have been absent or less concentrated, are less likely to be directly concerned by this Regulation. This could present a competitive advantage for such countries to export foodstuffs that have low levels of these contaminants.

Recommended Actions

AGRINFO stakeholders should monitor the presence of dioxins, and specifically PCBs, in the products impacted by this Regulation. Where levels of dioxins and/or PCBs in excess of the levels recommended in food are found, partners must initiate investigations to identify the source of contamination and take measures to reduce or eliminate the source of contamination.

Commission Regulation 2017/644 specifies the sampling procedure and the methods of analysis for the official control of levels of dioxins and PCBs.

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Background

Council Regulation (EEC) No 315/93 of 8 February 1993 lays down Community procedures for contaminants in food.

Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/915 of 25 April 2023 on maximum levels for certain contaminants in food and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006

In 2018 EFSA adopted a Scientific Opinion on the risks for animal and public health related to the presence of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in feed and food (EFSA CONTAM Panel 2018). EFSA established a tolerable weekly intake of 2 pg TEQ (toxic equivalence) per kg body weight per week for the sum of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs. Estimates of chronic human dietary exposure to dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs based on the available occurrence data indicate a significant exceedance of the tolerable weekly intake for populations of all age groups.

Resources

EFSA CONTAM Panel (2018) Risk for animal and human health related to the presence of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in feed and food. EFSA Journal, 16(11): e05333.

European Commission (2013) Commission Recommendation of 3 December 2013 on the reduction of the presence of dioxins, furans and PCBs in feed and food.

Sources

Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/915

Commission Regulation (EU) 2017/644

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Tables & Figures

Table 1
Maximum levels of dioxins and PCBs

Foodstuffs	Maximum levels		
	Sum of dioxins	Sum of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs	Sum of PCB28, PCB52, PCB101, PCB138, PCB153 and PCB180
	(pg/g fat)	(pg/g fat)	(ng/g fat)
Meat and meat products (excluding edible offal) of the following animals:			
• bovine, ovine and caprine animals	2.5	4.0	40
• poultry	1.75	3.0	40
• pigs	1.0	1.25	40
• horse	5.0	10.0	
• rabbit	1.0	1.5	
• wild boar (*Sus scrofa*)	5.0	10.0	
• wild game birds	2.0	4.0	
• venison	3.0	7.5	
Raw milk and dairy products, including butter fat	**2.0**	**4.0**	**40**
Poultry eggs and egg products, except goose eggs	2.5	5.0	40
	(pg/g wet weight)	(pg/g wet weight)	(ng/g wet weight)
Liver of bovine and caprine animals, poultry, pigs and horse, and derived products	**0.30**	**0.5**	**3.0**
Liver of ovine animals and derived products	1.25	2.0	3.0
Liver of wild game birds	**2.5**	**5.0**	

Source: based on Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/2002

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