Maximum levels of inorganic arsenic in fish and seafood

Published by AGRINFO on 18 Mar 2025

EU proposes maximum levels of inorganic arsenic in fish and seafood

Draft Commission Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2023/915 as regards maximum levels of inorganic arsenic in fish and other seafood

Annex

Update

The European Commission has informed the World Trade Organization Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS) Committee that it intends to introduce maximum levels for inorganic arsenic in fish and certain other seafood (G/SPS/N/EU/825).

Impacted products

Fish, seafood

What is changing?

The EU has proposed maximum levels for inorganic arsenic in certain fish, crustaceans, bivalves, and cephalopods. The proposed maximum levels are shown in Table 1.

This Regulation will amend Regulation 2023/915.

Why?

The European Food Safety Authority has updated its earlier risk assessment of chronic dietary exposure to inorganic arsenic in food (EFSA 2021, 2024). EFSA concludes that the current exposure to inorganic arsenic continues to raise health concerns for consumers. The consumption of fish and certain other seafoods contribute to that exposure. EFSA recommends maximum levels of inorganic arsenic for those products.

Timeline

The Regulation is expected to be adopted in approximately July 2025, with new maximum levels likely to apply from the fourth quarter of 2025.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Suppliers of fish and certain other seafood to the EU market will need to add arsenic to the list of contaminants subject to analysis, to ensure compliance with new maximum levels.

Recommended Actions

Exporters should review existing levels of arsenic in fish and seafood intended for the EU market and, if levels exceed the EU's proposed limits, seek to identify and isolate sources of contamination. Information on recommended methods and performance criteria for analysis of arsenic in foodstuffs can be found in Regulation 2016/582.

The WTO consultation on this draft Regulation closed on 6 May 2025.

Background

Arsenic is present at low concentrations in rocks, soil, and natural groundwater. Human activity, including mining and burning of fossil fuels, and the use of fertilisers and pesticides containing arsenic, has contributed to increasing levels of arsenic in the environment. Humans are mostly exposed to arsenic through food and drinking water.

Inorganic arsenic is associated with lung, bladder, and skin cancers. EFSA (2021) assessed the chronic dietary exposure of the European population to inorganic arsenic, and confirmed that terrestrial foods – particularly rice, rice-based products, grains and grain-based products, and drinking water – remain the main contributors to exposure (see Maximum levels of arsenic in certain foods). It also identified fish and other seafood as sources of exposure for the adult population in certain countries.

Resources

EFSA (2021) Chronic dietary exposure to inorganic arsenic. EFSA Journal, 19(1): 638.

EFSA (2024) Update of the risk assessment of inorganic arsenic in food. EFSA Journal, 22(1): e8488.

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

Sources

Draft Commission Regulation as regards maximum levels of inorganic arsenic in fish and other seafood

Annex

Visit the AGRINFO website to view the latest AGRINFO Update newsletters and search the database.

Table & Figures

Table 1 Maximum levels of arsenic (inorganic) in certain foods	
Foods	Maximum level (mg/kg wet weight)
Fish[1]	
Anglerfish, monkfish (*Lophius* spp.) Giant stargazer (*Kathetostoma giganteum*) Flatfishes (*Pleuronectiformes* spp.) Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) Herring (*Clupea* spp.) Rays (*Rajidae*) Shark (all species)	0.50
Crustaceans[2]	
Crabs and crab-like crustaceans (*Brachyura* and *Anomura*)[3] Prawns and shrimps (all species)	0.10
Langoustines (*Nephrops norvegicus*) Rock lobsters (*Jasus* spp.)	1.5
Other crustaceans	0.20
Molluscs	
Scallops[4]	0.10
Other bivalve molluscs	0.50
Cephalopods	0.050
1. Applies to muscle meat or whole fish, if intended to be eaten whole. 2. Muscle meat from appendages and abdomen (cephalothorax excluded). 3. Muscle meat from appendages only. 4. For *Pecten maximus*, adductor muscle and gonad only. AGRINFO www.agrinfo.eu	

Source: based on Annex to the draft Regulation