Maximum levels of nickel in certain foods

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EU sets maximum levels for nickel in certain foods

Commission Regulation (EU) 2024/1987 of 30 July 2024 amending Regulation (EU) 2023/915 as regards maximum levels of nickel in certain foodstuffs

Update

The EU has set maximum levels for nickel in tree nuts, vegetables, seaweed, pulses, oilseeds, cereals, cocoa and chocolate products, food for infants and young children, and fruit and vegetable juices (including juices for infants and young children).

Correction: Maximum levels for nickel have been set for *all* fruit and vegetable juices, not only those for infants and young children as originally stated in this record.

Impacted products

Tree nuts, vegetables, seaweed, pulses, oilseeds, cereals, cocoa and chocolate products, food for infants and young children, fruit and vegetable juices

What is changing?

The EU has set maximum allowable levels for nickel as detailed in Table 1.

Why?

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) evaluated nickel intake from food and drinking water and identified risks of chronic dietary exposure to nickel in infants, toddlers, and young children (up to 10 years old). Acute dietary exposure is a health concern for individuals (including adults) who are sensitive to nickel (EFSA 2020).

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Timeline

Maximum allowable levels for nickel in the foods listed in Table 1 will apply from **1 July 2025**, except for durum wheat, rice, husked rice, pseudo cereals, millet, and oats, for which the maximum levels will apply from **1 July 2026**.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

The levels of nickel in food are not widely regulated globally. Unlike other contaminants, producers and suppliers may not be routinely testing for the presence of nickel. The risks associated with nickel will therefore have to be assessed on a sector/country basis. On the basis of this analysis, nickel may need to be included into routine contaminant testing programmes.

Recommended Actions

Suppliers of the foods listed in Table 1 should immediately evaluate the presence of nickel in these products and identify potential sources of nickel, either naturally occurring within the product or from the environment. Information on recommended methods for sampling and analysis of the levels of nickel in foodstuffs can be found in Regulation 333/2007.

Data collected on nickel in these foods, including cases where nickel exceeds the maximum levels set by the EU, can be submitted to the EU.

Background

This Regulation amends Annex I of Regulation (EU) 2023/915 that sets maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs. For further information on the setting of contaminant maximum levels, see EU legislation on contaminants – maximum levels explained.

EFSA (2020) updated its risk assessment of 2015 on the presence of nickel in food and drinking water, and concluded that daily intake of nickel in food and drinking water above the tolerable daily intake (TDI) of 13 µg/kg body weight (bw) may cause critical health concerns, including loss of pregnancy. About 15% of the population suffers acute health concerns such as eczema of the skin at a daily intake as low as 4.3 µg nickel/kg bw.

The European Commission has recommended that EU Member States, in collaboration with the food industry, do further monitoring of nickel in 2025–2027 in the following products: food supplements, chocolate, chocolate spreads, nut spreads, cocoa beans, cereal-based products (in particular, breakfast cereals, cereal flakes, and oat milling products), ready-to-eat soups, coffee, tea, vegetables, seaweeds, oilseeds, soy-based products (such as tofu and soy-based

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drinks), pulses, nuts, fish, and other seafood (Commission Recommendation 2024/907).

Resources

EFSA (2015) Scientific Opinion on the risks to public health related to the presence of nickel in food and drinking water. EFSA Journal, 13(2): 4002.

EFSA (2020) Update of the risk assessment of nickel in food and drinking water. EFSA Journal, 18(11): 6268.

Recommendation (EU) 2016/1111 on the monitoring of nickel in food

Recommendation (EU) 2024/907 on the monitoring of nickel in food

Regulation 2023/915 on maximum levels for certain contaminants in food

Regulation 333/2007 on methods of sampling and analysis for the control of the levels of trace elements and processing contaminants in foodstuffs

Sources

Commission Regulation (EU) 2024/1987 as regards maximum levels of nickel in certain foodstuffs

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Tables & Figures

Table 1
Maximum levels for nickel

Food category	Products[1]	New max. level (mg/kg)[2]
Tree nuts	Chestnuts, pine nuts, walnuts, Brazil nuts, cashew nuts	10
	Tree nuts (other)	3.5
Root, tuber, bulb vegetables		0.90
Fruiting vegetables		0.40
Brassica vegetables		0.50
Leafy vegetables	Fresh herbs	1.2
	Leafy vegetables except fresh herbs	0.50
Legume vegetables	Soy beans/ edamame	6.0
	Legume vegetables except soy/ edamame	1.0
Stem vegetables		0.40
Seaweed	Wakame	40
	Seaweed except wakame	30
Pulses	Dry beans, dry lupins/ lupini beans	12
	Pulses except dry beans/ dry lupins	4.0
Oilseeds	Sunflower seed	8.0
	Peanuts	12
	Soy beans	15
Cereals	Durum wheat, rice (except husked rice)[3]	1.5
	Husked rice[3]	2.0
	Pseudo cereals, millet[3]	3.0
	Oats[3]	5.0
	Cereals (other)	0.80
Cocoa, chocolate products	Milk chocolate (<30% total dry cocoa)	2.5
	Milk chocolate (≥30% dry cocoa, chocolate)	7.0
	Cocoa powder (drinking chocolate)	15
Infant formulae, follow-on formulae, food for special medical purposes for infants and young children, young-child formulae	Powder from soy protein isolates (with/without cow's milk proteins)	0.40
	Powder except from soy protein isolates	0.25
	Liquid	0.10
Processed cereal-based food (for infants and young children)		3.0
Baby food except fruit, vegetables juices, nectars		0.50
Fruit juices, fruit nectars and vegetable juices including those for babyfood	From passion fruits, cocoa fruits, small fruits and berries, coconut water	1.0
	From fruit other than passion fruits, cocoa fruits, small fruits, berries, coconut water	0.25

[1] For further details on the reference product (e.g. dry, wet, processed) see Annex to Regulation (EU) 2024/1987.
[2] As from 1 July 2025 except cereals indicated under [3].
[3] As from 1 July 2026

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Source: Regulation 2024/1987

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