Maximum residue levels for copper

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EU raises MRLs for copper on certain foods

Commission Regulation (EU) 2026/840 of 15 April 2026 amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards maximum residue levels for copper compounds in or on certain products

Update

The European Union (EU) has raised the maximum residue levels (MRLs) for copper on a wide range of products. The EU previously defined copper as “copper compounds”, but now defines it as “total copper”.

The European Commission initially proposed to reduce the MRLs on certain other products. However, this has been postponed to allow more opportunity to collect and review data for those products.

Impacted products

Almonds, Brazil nuts, chestnuts, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nut kernels, pistachios, walnuts, apples, pears, quinces, medlars, loquats/Japanese medlars, cherries, peaches, table grapes, wine grapes, strawberries, blueberries, cranberries, currants (black, red, white), gooseberries (green, red, yellow), rose hips, mulberries (black and white), azaroles/Mediterranean medlars, elderberries, kiwi fruits (green, red, yellow), potatoes, horseradishes, spring onions/green onions, Welsh onions, tomatoes, aubergines/eggplants, sweet peppers/bell peppers, melons, pumpkins, watermelons, Chinese cabbages/pe-tsai, kales, lamb’s lettuces, lettuces, escaroles, cresses and other sprouts and shoots, land cresses, Roman rocket/rucola, red mustards, baby leaf crops, spinaches, purslanes, chards/beet leaves, watercresses, chervil, chives, parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme, basil and edible flowers, laurel/bay leaves, tarragon, grape leaves and similar species, celery leaves, leeks, globe artichokes, buckwheat, sorghum, hops, liver (swine, cattle, sheep, goat, other farmed terrestrial animals), muscle (goat), honey and other apiculture products, amphibians and reptiles, terrestrial vertebrate animals, wild terrestrial invertebrate animals

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What is changing?

The EU has amended the MRLs for copper on certain products, as summarised in Table 1.

The European Commission initially proposed to lower the MRLs on certain other products, but this has been postponed to allow stakeholders to submit monitoring data to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for evaluation (European Commission 2025).

The residue definition has been changed from “copper compounds (copper)” to “total copper”.

Why?

The changes are based on updated scientific assessments by EFSA (2025), which reviewed all sources of exposure and considered both authorised uses of copper as a pesticide and the widespread natural presence of copper in soil and water.

Timeline

The new MRLs summarised in Table 1 apply from **6 May 2026**.

Recommended Actions

EFSA collects a wide range of chemical data on an annual basis. The process of MRL setting is influenced by the scope and representativity of the monitoring data available to EFSA to conduct their analysis. It is therefore in the interest of operators in non-EU countries to work with partners and counterparts in the EU to submit data as part of the annual monitoring of chemical data (European Commission 2025). Data must be submitted by European partners in the specific format required by EFSA. For further information on how to submit data, see EFSA (2020, 2026).

Background

MRLs are set in accordance with the rules set out in Regulation 396/2005. For information on current MRLs for other substances, please consult the EU Pesticide Residues database.

Resources

EFSA (2020) Sending data to EFSA – a short guide [video].

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EFSA (2025) Statement on the update of maximum residue levels (MRLs) for copper compounds in light of the EFSA scientific opinion on the re■evaluation of the health■based guidance values (HBGVs) and exposure assessment from all sources. EFSA Journal, 23(2): e9271.

EFSA (2026) Data collection: chemical monitoring.

European Commission (2025) Summary Report, Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed Section Phytopharmaceuticals – Pesticide Residues, 24–25 November 2025.

Sources

Commission Regulation 2026/840 as regards maximum residue levels for copper compounds in or on certain products

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Tables & Figures

Table 1
Changes to maximum residue levels related to copper

Food category	Products	Old MRL: for copper compounds (mg/kg)	New MRL: for total copper (mg/kg)
Tree nuts	Almonds, Brazil nuts, chestnuts, hazelnuts/cobnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nut kernels, pistachios, walnuts	30	40
Pome fruits	Apples, pears, quinces, medlars, loquats/Japanese medlars, other pome fruits	5	6
Stone fruits	Cherries	5	10
	Peaches	5	8
Berries and small fruits	Table grapes, wine grapes	50	100
	Strawberries, blueberries, cranberries, currants (black, red, white), gooseberries (green, red, yellow), rose hips, mulberries (black and white), azaroles/Mediterranean medlars, elderberries, other berries	5	15
Miscellaneous fruit	Kiwi fruits (green, red, yellow)	20	30
Root and tuber vegetables	Potatoes	5	7
	Horseradishes	5	6
Bulb vegetables	Spring onions/green onions and Welsh onions	5	70
Fruiting vegetables	Tomatoes, aubergines/eggplants, melons, pumpkins, watermelons, other curcurbits (inedible peel)	5	10
	Sweet peppers/bell peppers	5	20
Brassica vegetables	Chinese cabbages/pe-tsai, kales, other leafy brassicas	20	30
Leaf vegetables, herbs and edible flowers	Lamb's lettuces/corn salads, lettuces, escaroles/broad-leaved endives, cresses and other sprouts and shoots, land cresses, Roman rocket/rucola, red mustards, baby leaf crops (including brassica species), other lettuces	100	150
	Spinaches, purslanes, chards/beet leaves, other spinaches, watercresses, chervil, chives, parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme, basil and edible flowers, laurel/bay leaves, tarragon, other herbs and edible flowers	20	150
	Grape leaves and similar species	20	30
	Celery leaves	50	150
Stem vegetables	Leeks	20	70
	Globe artichokes	20	30
Cereals	Buckwheat and other pseudocereals, sorghum	10	20
Hops		1,000	1,500
Products of animal origin:			
Swine	Liver	30	60
Cattle, sheep, poultry, other farmed terrestrial animals	Liver	30	300
Goat	Liver	30	150
	Muscle	5	6
Honey and other apiculture products		–	1.5
Amphibians and reptiles		–	6
Terrestrial vertebrate animals		–	6
Wild terrestrial invertebrate animals		–	70

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Source: based on Regulation 2026/840

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