

Mineral oil hydrocarbons in food

Published by AGRINFO on 30 Nov 2022; Revised 18 Jun 2025

Summary Report of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed: Section *Novel Food and Toxicological Safety of the Food Chain*, 21 April 2022

What is changing and why?

As mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons (MOAH) are dangerous to humans, the EU is discussing setting maximum permitted levels of MOAH in food.

The EU Member States agreed in April 2022 that they should withdraw or recall products from the market where levels of MOAH are higher than the following limits of quantification (LOQ):

- 0.5 mg/kg for dry foods with a low fat/oil content ($\leq 4\%$ fat/oil)
- 1 mg/kg for foods with a higher fat/oil content ($> 4\%$ fat/oil, $\leq 50\%$ fat/oil)
- 2 mg/kg for fats/oils or foods with $> 50\%$ fat/oil.

But these limits are not set in EU law. The EU now intends to reinforce these limits by putting maximum levels in law. This is expected to increase the food industry's monitoring of MOAH.

Mineral oil hydrocarbons fall into two main classes:

- mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons (MOAH)
- mineral oil saturated hydrocarbons (MOSH).

The regulatory focus is mainly on MOAH, for which health risks have been identified due to their genotoxicity and carcinogenicity. Currently there are no EU limits for MOSH in food.

AGRINFO has published the following resources:

- Guide with further information on MOH, their origins and effects, the EU's regulatory intentions, the sectors most affected, and actions required to prepare for compliance with new rules, available in English, French, and Spanish)
- Video recordings of MOH webinars in English, French, and Portuguese
- Questions and answers arising from the webinars in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Discussions are ongoing, so some aspects of what is reported in these resources may change.

Actions

There are many potential sources of mineral oil hydrocarbons, and testing for them is complex. Suppliers of food in all sectors should increase monitoring of MOAH to identify any presence in their products. When MOAH or MOSH are identified in food, suppliers should check all steps of the supply process, identify the sources, and develop measures to avoid further contamination. For further guidance on analysing MOAH and preventing their presence in foods, see the AGRINFO Guide.

Timeline

The European Commission aims to adopt maximum levels for MOAH in 2026 that will apply from 2027.

For more information see the [full record](#) on the AGRINFO website – where you can also view the latest [AGRINFO Update](#) newsletters and [search](#) the database.

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