

Chemical Contaminants Interested Parties Letter March 2007

This interested parties letter contains information on on-going and forthcoming issues relating to environmental contaminants in food.

This letter aims to **INFORM YOU** of current contaminant issues and **SEEKS YOUR VIEWS** on these matters.

If you wish to comment on these issues, submit data, or comment on the style and format of this letter, please contact:

Environmental Contaminants (Inorganic Contaminants):

ignacio.vazquez@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Environmental Contaminants (General Issues):

John.t.bates@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

If you are based in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, you can also contact our colleagues in the devolved administrations directly:

Scotland: fiona.bruce@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Wales: helen.george@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Northern Ireland: anne-marie.chambers@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

This March 2007 edition contains updates following the meeting of:

02 March 2007: Environmental Contaminants - Commission Working Group (WG 02 March)

Summary of Contents

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS (INORGANIC CONTAMINANTS):

1. Heavy metals in food supplements - Request for data

The Commission raised the possibility of setting maximum limits for arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury in food supplements. The Agency is seeking information on the impact setting maximum limits for heavy metals in food supplements would have on the food supplements industry.

[Click here for further information.](#)

2. Cadmium in tree nuts and oilseeds - Request for data

Following requests for clarification the Commission confirmed that the definition for fruit included in Commission Regulation 1881/2006 does not include tree nuts and therefore maximum permitted limits for lead and cadmium are not applicable to these foods. Discussions also continued on setting maximum limits for cadmium in oilseeds. The Agency is seeking information on the levels of cadmium found in oilseeds to facilitate further discussions.

[Click here for further information.](#)

3. Cadmium in mushrooms - Request for data

This issue has been ongoing and was last discussed at the Working Group meeting on 27 November 2006. At the recent Working Group meeting on 02 March the Commission has suggested setting a maximum limit of 0.2 mg/kg for all cup mushrooms (*Agaricus bisporus*), with a higher limit of 0.5 mg/kg for all other species. The Agency is seeking further detailed data on cadmium levels in Mushrooms and the species that are commonly traded to facilitate further discussions on this issue.

[Click here for further information.](#)

4. Cadmium in Chocolate - Request for data

This issue has been ongoing and was last discussed at the Working Group meeting on 25 September 2006. Discussions continued at the Working Group Meeting on 02 March 2007 following Germany's proposal to set a maximum limit of 0.3mg/kg for cadmium in chocolate. The Agency is seeking further detailed data on cadmium levels in chocolate for a future review of this issue.

[Click here for further information.](#)

5. Cadmium in bullet tuna and mackerel

The Commission put forward a proposal to raise current cadmium limits for bullet tuna and mackerel from 0.05 mg/kg to 0.2 mg/kg and 0.1 mg/kg respectively.

[Click here for further information.](#)

6. Iodine in seaweed

Following recommendations made in a Scientific Committee of Food (SCF) statement issued on iodine in seaweed the Commission informed Member States that discussions on this item will be discontinued at European level.

[Click here for further information.](#)

INORGANIC CONTAMINANTS

For further information or to submit comments or data on Inorganic Contaminants, please contact Ignacio Vazquez at: ignacio.vazquez@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Heavy metals in food supplements - Request for data

Discussed at WG 02 March

Following a request from Belgium, the Commission suggested setting maximum limits for arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury in food. Most Member States, including the UK, supported the proposal and some mentioned that they already had national limits. The Commission were requested to look at the definition of food supplements at EU level, as some products labelled as medicinal supplements are considered food supplements in other Member States. The Commission requested that Member States submit information on existing national definitions for Food Supplements and confirmed that it would also seek views from supplements experts within the Commission. **Comments are invited on the above discussions; in particular the viability of setting maximum limits for food supplements.**

▲ Contents Summary

Cadmium in tree nuts and oilseeds - Request for data

Discussed at WG 02 March

Following a request for clarification from the European Snack Association, the Commission informed Member States that the definition of fruit included in Commission Regulation 1881/2006 does not include tree nuts. Therefore maximum levels for lead and cadmium set under this legislation are not applicable to tree nuts. Proposals to set maximum limits for cadmium in oilseeds were also discussed although the Commission decided to postpone making a decision until more data becomes available. Any data on cadmium in oilseeds should be sent to the contact listed above.

▲ Contents Summary

Cadmium in mushrooms - Request for data

Discussed at WG 02 March

The Commission put forward a suggestion to set a maximum limit of 0.2 mg/kg for all cup mushrooms (*Agaricus bisporus*), with a higher limit of 0.5 mg/kg for all other species. The proposal was supported by a number of Member States, including the UK, who felt that these limits would help to avoid mislabelling practices. However, the vast majority of Member States supported setting a limit of 0.2 mg/kg for all mushrooms, regardless of whether they are wild or cultivated. Some Member States strongly opposed setting maximum limits for wild mushrooms and defended the current distinction between cultivated and wild. Other suggestions included setting a maximum limit for all mushrooms of 0.5 mg/kg or setting a maximum limit of 0.2 mg/kg for *Agaricus bisporus*. However, Member States failed to reach an agreement and the Commission requested more information regarding the different species of mushrooms that are normally cultivated. **Comments are invited on the above discussions and we would be grateful for any data available on the following:**

- a) species that show naturally higher levels of cadmium and cannot meet the current limit.
- b) which species of mushroom are commonly cultivated and which ones are wild.

c) cadmium levels in the soil/compost used and the corresponding uptake values by various species of mushrooms, both cultivated and if possible wild.

[▲ Contents Summary](#)

Cadmium in chocolate - Request for data

Discussed at WG 02 March

The Commission introduced a proposal from Germany on setting a maximum limit of 0.3 mg/kg for cadmium in chocolate. Most Member States including the UK were unsure whether a limit was necessary and requested more time to collect data. The Commission requested that Member States submit data on levels of cadmium found in chocolate and chocolate products for a future review. **In order to facilitate further discussions on this issue we would be grateful for any data available on the levels of cadmium in chocolate and chocolate products.**

[▲ Contents Summary](#)

Cadmium in bullet tuna and mackerel

Discussed at WG 02 March

Spain put forward a request that cadmium limits for bullet tuna and mackerel be raised from 0.05 to 0.2 and 0.1 mg/kg respectively. The request was submitted after data collected showed that only 5% of bullet tuna and 30% of mackerel met the current limit of 0.05 mg/kg. As there was no opposition from Member States the proposal will be put forward by the Commission to the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health.

[▲ Contents Summary](#)

Iodine in seaweed

Discussed at WG 02 March

The Commission informed Member States of the statement issued by the Scientific Committee of Food (SCF) on iodine in seaweed. This highlighted that possible consumption recommendations and iodine exposure assessments of seaweed have to be carried out at national or regional level due to the different iodine exposure scenarios at European level. Therefore, discussions on this item will be discontinued at European level.

[▲ Contents Summary](#)