

Breaking News on Food & Beverage Development - Europe

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No risk to consumers from Bisphenol A, says ECB

By Jane Byrne

13/06/2008- **The European Chemicals Bureau (ECB) said that there is no risk to consumers from using packaging containing Bisphenol A (BPA), which follows similar findings from TNO last month.**

BPA is a chemical used in certain packaging materials such as the rigid plastic polycarbonate. It is also used in epoxy resins for internal protective linings for cans and metal lids, as well as in coatings for storage tanks.

It is permitted for use in food contact materials in the EU, under Commission Directive 2002/72/EC.

There is concern over the chemical in its use in food packaging as some recent animal studies have indicated that exposure to high levels of BPA could be carcinogenic.

The bureau, one of the seven scientific institutes in the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), published its updated EU Risk Assessment Report on BPA this week.

"We found that the margin of safety is high enough in relation to consumer exposure of BPA in plastic packaging and, as a result, there is no need for further information, testing or risk reduction measures beyond those which are being applied already," ECB's Karin Aschberger told FoodProductionDaily.com.

According to the report, all studies into the chemical up to March 2007 were taken into account by the research team, including those that examined BPA's level of toxicity in reproduction and exposure through baby bottle consumption.

The ECB's conclusions reconfirm the findings of its previous report on BPA, which was published in 2003, and follow ten years of assessment of the chemical.

Dutch study

A research group based at the Netherlands research centre, TNO, recently concluded that the levels of migration of BPA into water from polycarbonate when exposed to microwave heating were well below the specific limit of 0.6 milligram/kg specified for Bisphenol A in the Commission Directive 2004/19/EC.

The TNO researchers said that their study, published in May in the journal *Food Additives and Contaminants*, showed that the migration of BPA into water ranged from 0.1 to 0.7 µg per litre.

US update

Meanwhile, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced this week that a subcommittee of its Science Board will hold a public meeting on the safety of BPA in plastics, review an Agency Task Force report on the topic, and deliver its findings to the Board's annual meeting in autumn.

The FDA formed an agency-wide BPA Task Force in April to facilitate review of current research and new information on BPA.

A recent report from the US National Toxicology Program (NTP) concluded that there was "some concern for neural and behavioural effects in fetuses, infants and children at current human exposures to BPA."

EFSA

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recently announced its decision to review its previous advice on safe levels of BPA in food packaging and provide updates on its deliberations, following assessments from Canada and the US. It said that it expects to provide further advice on the chemical next month.

In January 2007, the EFSA published its own risk assessment on BPA, in which it established a full tolerable daily intake of 0.05 milligram/kg body weight.

The Authority said that it is examining all relevant information relating to the reports from the other side of the Atlantic and, following its review, will decide whether or not it needs to reconsider its advice on the chemical.

Industry reaction

Can makers insist that there is insufficient evidence to show that the chemical is a health risk given the current exposure levels.

Robert R. Budway, president of the US Can Manufacturers Institute, told FoodProductionDaily.com previously that the levels of BPA in food found during a study conducted by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) in 2007 were well below the tolerable daily intake (TDI) level set in Europe.

"In fact, the single highest value they reported is approximately 10 times lower than the EU allows," said Budway at the time.

The EWG, a non-profit environmental research organisation, said that their study showed that the chemical could leach into canned food at levels reaching 200 times the 'acceptable' amount.

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