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Ban on Bisphenol A in all Food contact materials

A strong call for better EU food safety rules

Food contact materials (FCMs) are largely used in everyday life such as food packaging, kitchen utensils, tableware, etc. When put in contact with food, the different materials may behave differently, transferring their components to the food. In such cases, chemicals emanating from FCMs may endanger human health and/or adversely change the composition of the foodstuffs.

FCMs are subject to legally binding rules at EU level. The regulation sets out general safety requirements that are applicable to all possible food contact materials and articles. It also foresees the possibility of adopting specific measures for additional materials. So far, specific EU measures have only been adopted for four FCMs. For the other FCMs, Member States may adopt specific measures at national level.

The draft implementation report voted in the European Parliament today recommended the adoption of specific EU measures for non-harmonised materials, giving priority to those materials that constitute a particular risk to human health and in bigger demand on the EU market. Bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical compound used to make certain plastics and epoxy resins constitute such risks.

BPA is found in a variety of food contact materials, such as plastic water bottles or cans. It is an endocrine disruptor that raises concern about its suitability in some consumer goods and food containers. Exposure to BPA occurs also when a pregnant woman is exposed, thereby exposing the foetus.

The amendment introduced by the Greens and signed by 69 MEPs from different political groups to ban Bisphenol A (BPA), in all food contact materials, was voted by a majority of Parliament's members today. This sends a strong signal to the European Commission, asking to stop the use of this harmful product at EU level.

In 2015, the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) re-evaluation of BPA exposure and toxicity states that BPA poses no health risk to consumers of any age group at current exposure levels. However in its assessment on the health effects of BPA, EFSA focused on liver, kidney, and mammary glands and says there is no risk for people at current levels of exposure. EFSA did not explore BPA's effects on reproductive, brain, immune, metabolic and cardiovascular systems or on development of cancers, but only conclude they are unlikely!

The past years, several Member States have debated over the potential risk of BPA (Sweden, Denmark and France). Since 1 January 2010, France has banned the use of BPA in products that come into direct

contact with food for babies and young children, like feeding bottles. An EU-wide ban on the use for infant feeding bottles followed in January 2011. From 1 January 2015, France has introduced a new law, banning the use of BPA in all food packaging.

Greens welcome this vote and the introduction of this specific amendment on BPA, which is a strong call to urgently tackle shortcomings in the implementation and enforcement of the existing legislation on Food contact materials. Now, it's time for the Commission to act. Greater focus on risk assessment, traceability and enforcement would ensure more safety on what ends up on citizens' plates.

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