

PRESS RELEASE – WEDNESDAY, 19 JULY

For immediate release

EU to require food businesses to reduce the presence of carcinogenic chemical, acrylamide, in food.

Changing Markets Foundation and corporate watchdog SumOfUs welcomed today's vote at the PAFF [1] Committee that adopted legislation for European food businesses to reduce the presence of acrylamide in food. However, both organisations emphasised that more should be done in the future and urged the Commission to start working on maximum limits.

Acrylamide is considered a public health concern by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) as its presence in food increases the risk of developing cancer, with young children being the most vulnerable [2].

Under the agreed approach, businesses involved in the production of typically acrylamide-rich foods such as bread, breakfast cereals, biscuits, fried potato products and coffee would be required to apply acrylamide mitigating measures across their production chain from spring 2018. The legislation also sets acrylamide reduction benchmarks for each food group that businesses are expected to comply with. The European Parliament has now three months to consider these measures.

"Today's vote is a positive first step towards reducing acrylamide levels in our food, as it marks the end of the voluntary approach, which has failed to deliver reductions over the last decade [3]", said Nusa Urbancic from the Changing Markets Foundation. "However, the approach still falls short from protecting the most vulnerable consumers, as it presents a number of shortcomings."

Most notable shortcoming of the regulation is that the reduction benchmarks are not legally binding and the review clause contained in its proposal, aiming to set these limits, does not include a time-frame [4]. As such, the approved text does not protect consumers from food products with high levels of acrylamide as their sale continues to be permitted and it gives the discretion to act to Member states. The Commission committed in the European Parliament that they will introduce maximum limits on certain food groups as soon as the current proposal is adopted [5].

"Almost 250,000 Europeans have called on Commissioner Andriukaitis to put in place maximum levels for acrylamide in foods," said Eoin Dubsy from SumOfUs. "We call on the Commission to stick to its promise in the European Parliament and start working on these measures as soon as possible. Parents should not be worried about the presence of completely avoidable carcinogens in their children's food".

Notes to editors:

[1] Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed. EC Press release on the outcome: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-2028_en.htm

[2] EFSA's scientific opinion acrylamide <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4104>

[3] https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/PASSING_THE_HOT_POTATO.pdf

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2017-2895100/feedback/F1838_ga

[5] <http://www.foodnavigator.com/Policy/Commission-to-set-maximum-acrylamide-levels-in-ready-to-eat-foods>

About SumOfUs:

SumOfUs is a global consumer watchdog: an online community of ten million people who campaign to hold big corporations accountable. We use our power as consumers, workers and investors to hold the biggest companies in the world to account. For more information about SumOfUs please visit sumofus.org

About Changing Markets:

The Changing Markets Foundation partners with NGOs on market focused campaigns. Our mission is to expose irresponsible corporate practices and drive change towards a more sustainable economy.

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