

Council of Europe releases Technical Guide on paper and board.

At many occasions ECMA has been reporting on the development at the Council of Europe of a Technical Guide on paper and board used in food contact materials.

Together with the general Resolution CM/res (2020)9 on the safety and quality of materials and articles for food contact, this publication is now available from the EDQM (European Directorate for Quality of Medicines & HealthCare) website : <https://freepub.edqm.eu/publications> (search filter food contact).

The scope of the Technical Guide includes materials and articles for all types of applications (plates, cups, straws, baking and filter papers, food packaging, kitchen towels, napkins etc.).

The requirements for other materials converters are using, such as adhesives, printing inks or plastics are not covered. The migration limits set in the Technical Guide for some constituents or contaminants apply however to the final article.

Those Council of Europe publications are strengthening the position of the downstream users in obtaining accurate food safety information. DOCs must be issued at all stages of the supply chain and suppliers introducing substances are also responsible for the NIAS substances which may appear further down in the converting process.

Challenging are the included requirements to protect against migrants originating from recycled paper and board.

The text makes reference to the tough Swiss method for testing the efficiency of functional barriers (Section Testing barrier efficiency p32) but leaves also possibilities to demonstrate compliance via other approaches. Different measures to avoid migration are mentioned and all foreseeable conditions of the intended use have to be taken into account (Section specific requirements p29). The protection against migration may also be provided by a combination of packaging layers (Section general requirements p28).

For the mineral oils the included table with contaminants stipulates the MOH are still under discussion. The producers or other operators responsible for placing on the market of food contact materials and articles are recommended to keep migration of MOH as low as reasonably feasible and to ensure that migration of genotoxic, carcinogenic MOAH's does not occur."

The last part of the comment allows for argumentation on the different classes of MOAH.

As well known the provided guidance by the Council of Europe is not legally binding, but can for instance be used by the authorities as a reference to assess compliance with Article 3 of the FCFR 1935/2004.

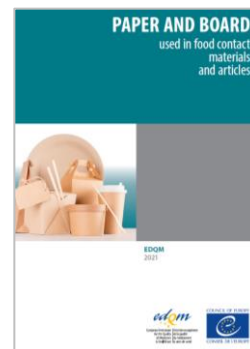
Titanium Dioxide

For some time now, this substance - used as a whitener in the surface layer of certain cardboards - is questioned for safety concerns related to the presence of nanoparticles and the inhalation of TiO₂. At the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) TiO₂ dust is classified as a Group 2B carcinogen, which means "possibly carcinogenic to humans" and in the CLP Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 on classification, labelling and packaging, the substance has been listed (February 2020) in category 2, as a suspected carcinogen when inhaled.

New is the raising concern related to the use of Titanium Dioxide as a food additive (E171).

France adopted in 2019 a ban on food containing E171 and now EFSA has issued a new assessment on the use of Titanium Dioxide as a food additive.

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/titanium-dioxide-e171-no-longer-considered-safe-when-used-food-additive>



Based on all the evidence available, a concern for genotoxicity could not be ruled out, and given the many uncertainties, EFSA concluded that E171 can no longer be considered as safe.

When questions are raised in relation the use of TiO₂ in cardboard, it needs to be stressed the new EFSA evaluation is only related to the risks of TiO₂ used as a food additive and not to the other uses.

In a recent presentation at the Fresenius conference “Residues of FCM in food” (24-25/06) it was even stated, EFSA has been assessing in its newest opinion - in the exposure part - the migration from food contact materials and how based on that evaluation no further work on TiO₂ in FCM is considered.

Zero Waste Europe

The non-governmental organization Zero Waste Europe published a toolkit to throw a spotlight on their assessment of the human health risks posed by plastics and other food packaging materials.

<https://zerowasteurope.eu/library/the-unwrapped-projects-toolkit-exposing-the-health-risk-of-food-packaging-chemicals/>

Many expressed concerns are well known such as the potential use of unassessed Food Contact Chemicals, contaminants which may be present in recycled materials, micro plastics and the typical priority chemicals of concern (Bisphenols, phthalates, ... PFAS).

Clearly questionable are a number of negative messages about the non-inert “single use” materials (plastic, paper and cardboard). Inert materials are presented as safer and more sustainable.

From the European Paper Packaging Alliance (EPPA) website there is in this context a report available on ‘Food hygiene challenges in replacing single use food service ware with reusable food service items’.

<https://www.eppa-eu.org/safety-and-hygiene/report-professor-david-mcdowell.html>

The report states “reuse systems are inherently more complex than single use systems due to multi-location cleaning, sanitation, storage and transport, they lead to greater risks of cross contamination.”

Brief notes on a selection of other food safety developments in the course of the second quarter.

New Co-Chair - ECMA Food Safety Committee

Jack Pieterse has stepped down as Chairman of the Food Safety Committee. As communicated in the general mail to members, the chairmanship will now be shared by Ute Stemmer Letnik (Mayr Melnhof Packaging) and Mike Turner (ECMA). This guarantees a solid ongoing monitoring by the Committee, of the developments in the field of food safety.

WTO notification German mineral oil Regulation

ECMA issued an additional position repeating once more all objections against the German mineral oils measure.

<https://www.ecma.org/news/messages/ecma-statement-wto-notification-german-mineral-oil-ordinance.html>

Consultation on UV lamps.

Mid May ECMA was alerted on the risk UV lamps containing mercury may be banned for environmental reasons. As experts from the Food Safety Committee confirmed that UV technology with this type of mercury-containing lamps is still widely used - providing safe operation - ECMA supported in the consultation process, the request submitted by the VDMA and Lightning Europe, aiming for an extended exemption of another 5 years. Such an exemption was previously granted in 2015 and 2020.

BfR Recommendation on PFAS

In view of recent findings, now also the German Federal Institute for Risk assessment, recommends measures to further minimise the PFAS intake via food.

<https://bfr.bund.de/cm/343/pfas-in-lebensmitteln-bfr-bestaetigt-kritische-exposition-gegenueber-industriechemikalien.pdf>

French ban on mineral oils in packaging as of 1/01/22.

So far, no further background has been obtained on the mineral oils is scope and whether the measure will only cover the printing inks or also the varnishes, coatings and adhesives. Further information will be provided via the detailed updates as soon as it becomes available.

