

Call for mandatory acrylamide limits after “alarming” levels found in Italian crisps

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Safe Food Advocacy Europe (SAFE) is calling for mandatory EU acrylamide limits after “Laboratory tests on 18 brands of potato crisps commercialised in Italy show that EU food products contain alarming levels of the confirmed carcinogenic substance.”



In an 11 January statement SAFE points to the new [acrylamide regulation](#) (2017/2158), which makes mitigation measures mandatory from 11 April and says that “the food industry is still a long way off the new benchmark levels referred to in the legislation.” It flags up recent laboratory tests conducted by its Italian member, the consumer magazine “Il Savagente,” which it says, “triggered a red flag: seven out of the eighteen analysed samples of potato crisps showed the presence of acrylamide clearly above the new benchmark level set by the European Union’s legislation.”

SAFE notes that the regulation “establishes new benchmark levels for the presence of acrylamide in food products and mitigation measures to reduce its concentration, although it does not introduce a legal limit to actively protect consumers against non-complying products.”

“Potato fried products present one of the highest concentration of acrylamide and are one of the most appealing snacks for children,” says SAFE, adding that the Italian tests showed that acrylamide found in seven samples “raises health concerns.” The new benchmark level for crisps set by the regulation is 750 micrograms per kilogram ($\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$) of product, yet acrylamide presence in seven out of the 18 samples tested was at least above 800 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$.

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The highest concentration was of 1600 µg/kg (Auchan), “a value that is more than double the benchmark level, but other concerning results included 1300 µg/kg (Lidl), 1200 µg/kg (Amica Chips), 1000 µg/kg (Pam), 950 µg/kg (San Carlo Classica), 990 µg/kg (Coop) and 800 µg/kg (Amica Chips Eldorada),” says SAFE.

The organisation says that “it is concerning to see that, three months before the regulation becomes applicable in the European Union, the food industry is so far from keeping acrylamide below the benchmark levels set out by EU law. Indeed, without a maximum legal limit, products containing acrylamide above the thresholds set in the regulation are exempt from serious consequences and their products cannot be withdrawn from the market.”

Now SAFE is calling on the Commission to follow up on its pledge reflected in the regulation’s recital 15, to “consider setting maximum levels for acrylamide in certain foods” once the legislation enters into force. “The EU needs to introduce maximum levels of contaminants in food because relying on benchmarks does not protect the health of consumers,” argued SAFE Secretary General Floriana Cimmarusti.

Cimmarusti added: “Therefore, as the legislation will be applicable from April 11, we look forward to seeing the Commission working on this and hope that the introduction of maximum levels will firstly apply to baby foods.”

SAFE’s Secretary General concluded: “The Regulation is a step forward, as it goes beyond the voluntary approach that prevailed until now and has proven to be completely ineffective. Yet, faced with the current exposure levels, we could have benefited from more determination: setting a maximum level to reduce acrylamide in some products, starting with baby foods, would have been a change of pace in dealing with a food contaminant which continues to threaten consumer health.”

Commenting on the findings, the editor of *Il Salvagente* explained that: “After several years of negotiations, the goal of effectively reducing the presence of acrylamide in food products has not been achieved. This creates an alibi for companies – which consumers struggle to understand – and an obstacle to food safety, since in the absence of a legal limit these products cannot be recalled from the market.”