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safe
Safe Food Advocacy Europe
STRIVING FOR SAFER FOOD FOR EUROPEAN CONSUMERS

MEMBER NEWSLETTER

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Dear Members,

*We are very glad to present you our Member Newsletter from May 2019. In this new issue of our newsletter, we inform to you important updates on the **EU consultation on Food Contact Materials**.*

*We also had a look at the recent **Commission Regulation on trans-fat**, the important **French ban on titanium dioxide in food** (E171) and the latest **World Health Organization (WHO) report on child obesity**.*

*Finally, we bring you news and updates of our **'TAO' (tackling adolescent obesity) project** and the transnational meeting that gathered all partners in Brussels last month..*

*As usual, you may find interesting and useful information in our section about **EU projects and events**, including SAFE's future activities.*

We look forward to hearing your comments on this newsletter and invite you to follow SAFE's activities on Twitter @SafeFoodEurope, on our Linkedin page and on our Facebook page.

Enjoy reading. Best wishes,

Floriana Cimmarusti
Secretary General of SAFE

NEW EU CONSULTATION ON FOOD CONTACT MATERIALS (FCMs)

In May 2019, SAFE submitted a position paper to provide its comments on the European Commission's Evaluation on Food Contact Materials. The initiative was launched by DG SANTE with the aim of assessing whether the current EU legislative framework for FCMs, namely Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004, is fit for purpose and delivers as expected. This initiative was also designed to identify any unexpected impacts or issues as a consequence of the current legislation. In its feedback to the Commission, SAFE highlighted its concerns on the issue and the need for a new binding legislation which will include all FCMs to ensure a high level of protection among EU consumers.

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CONTEXT

Food Contact Materials (FCMs) are regulated at EU level by Regulation (EC) 1935/2004 on materials and articles intended to come into contact with food, which lays down general food safety requirements for all FCMs. According to the definition provided by the Regulation, food contact materials are all materials and articles intended or which can be expected to be brought into contact with food or to transfer their constituents into food. This includes packaging and containers, kitchen equipment and tableware, as well as machinery used in professional food manufacturing, preparation, storage or distribution. All these items can be made from a variety of materials including plastics, rubber, paper and metal.

According to the Regulation, FCMs shall not transfer their components into food in quantities that could

endanger human health or change the composition of the food. For a FCM to be considered safe, it must be “manufactured in compliance with good manufacturing practices”, so that any potential transfer to foods does not raise safety safety concerns or change food’s composition in unacceptable ways. Since these materials behave differently depending on their composition and properties, the issue at bay is how constituents and chemicals emanating from FCMs are transferred into food and beverages and if they constitute a danger for human health or change the composition of the foodstuffs in a way that significantly alters the products that consumers eat or drink.

On February 2019, the European Commission launched public consultation with the aim of assessing whether the current EU legislative framework for FCMs is fit for purpose and delivers as expected. This consultation targets all stakeholders’ groups with an interest in the food contact materials legislation including the general public, businesses, NGOs, consumers organisations and public authorities. In addition, the evaluation will show whether the objectives and tools of the FCMs legislation are still relevant and coherent.

SAFE SHARED ITS CONCERNS WITH THE EU COMMISSION ON THE CURRENT FCM LEGISLATION
SAFE congratulates the Commission for launching a public consultation aiming at gathering views and evidence from a wide range of stakeholders on the appropriateness of the FCMs legislation. However, even though we welcome the Commissions’ initiative, we would like to express our concerns regarding the following issues:

a. Need for a new FCM legislation
As highlighted by the European Commission itself, since the inception of basic provisions set out over 40 years ago with Directive 76/893/EEC, the EU legislation on Food Contact Materials has never been systematically assessed. Considering the evolution of scientific knowledge, changes in practices, the emergence of new materials, the experience acquired in the last decades and the raising awareness of consumers, SAFE believes in the necessity of a new FCMs legislation designed to address the impairments of the current one and to face future challenges.

The Framework Regulation requires FCMs to be manufactured in a way that “they do not transfer their constituents to food in quantities which could endanger human health” with the aim to secure a high level of protection for human health and consumers’ interests. However, the current legislation on FCMs does not effectively achieve these objectives given that legally binding provisions have only been adopted for four materials (namely, plastics, ceramics, regenerated cellulose and active and intelligent materials) out of a list of seventeen. Therefore, the rules regulating the manufacturing of most FCMs remained at the discretion of Member States which resulted in a plurality of legislations across the EU as well as in different standards for product safety. Those differences hamper the consumers’ interest to have a uniform and effective legislation on materials which can potentially affect the composition of foodstuffs and therefore jeopardize the right of European consumers to benefit the same level of protection across the EU.

Moreover, many materials largely used as FCMs (such as paper, ink, adhesive or glues) are not controlled by harmonised EU-level laws. Even though those materials are commonly used in Europe, they are unregulated and their safety has not been evaluated by any national authority. Therefore, SAFE recommends the adoption of specific rules for those non-harmonizingly regulated materials and encourages the Commission to adopt a legally binding legislation which includes all FMCs to ensure a higher level of protection for EU consumers.

b. Migration of FCM into food
The current legislation requires that FCMs must not transfer their chemical components into food in quantities that might endanger human health. The European Parliament reported that there are currently no less than 15.000 materials used in packaging, the majority of which has not been sufficiently studied. Although these materials may have a significant impact on human health, the EU lacks scientific studies and a comprehensive legislation on the matter. For this reason, it is crucial to raise awareness on the hazards posed by these materials and to regulate the chemicals within them.

Among the FCMs, plastic packaging is associated with more than 4.000 different chemicals, including at least 148 substances which represent a high risk for human health and the environment. In addition, plastic packaging may contain non-intentionally added substances (NIAS) arising from impurities, products’ degradation and from various contaminants, most of which are simply not known.

Therefore, SAFE stresses the need for a new and independent research on the issue in order to obtain

comprehensive and detailed evidence of all the substances which migrate into food. Especially with regard to recycled plastics, the variety of recycling methods and the current lack of scientific research on the matter make it impossible to ensure consumers' safety in the occurrence of migration of chemical substances into food. Moreover, given the large variety of chemicals contained in FCMs, research on migration should also take into account the simultaneous exposure to different substances leading to the so called "cocktail effect".

c. Concerns on recycled plastics

Nowadays, consumers tend to prefer food that is in contact with recycled materials, whether for its preservation, preparation, transportation, distribution or use. While this ecological shift has positive consequences, especially regarding environmental sustainability, there are still not enough studies investigating the impact of those materials on human health.

Even though plastic recycling used for FCMs is regulated rather strictly, it is considerably more difficult to control recycled plastic's safety than it is for virgin plastic. The use of recycled food packaging not only increases the possible sources of contamination, but also the number and level of chemicals which can migrate from the packaging into food (Gueke *et al.*, 2018). The chemicals absorbed during the recycling process are difficult to remove during the recycling process. Consequently, better risk assessment and testing should be put in place to reduce safety risks brought on by non-intentionally added chemicals (NIAS) leakage from FCMs into food.

SAFE believes European consumers shall be given access to more information on the topic and more studies should be conducted on materials that are allowed for use in FCMs, especially as regards to recycled plastics. Plastic recycling is undoubtedly necessary in order to achieve a more circular economy and environmental sustainability. However, there should be no trade-off between safety and resource efficiency.

d. Endocrine disruptors

Endocrine disruptors (EDs) are inherent to food contamination as they are present in every day substances, from packaging to pesticides. The list of EDs that were found in FCMs includes a variety of chemicals such as phthalates, adipates and Bisphenol A. In particular, the latter was identified by the European Chemical Agency as a substance of very high concern due to its adverse effects on human and animal reproductive system.

As highlighted by the 7th Environment Action Programme, by 2020 all relevant substances of very high concern, "including substances with endocrine-disrupting properties", must be placed on the Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) candidate list. Therefore, the Commission should ensure better coordination between REACH and FCMs legislations to guarantee that harmful substances phased out under REACH are phased out in FCMs as well.

CONCLUSIONS

SAFE congratulates the Commission for launching public consultations on FCMs with the aim of gathering views and evidence from a wide range of stakeholders on the functioning of the food contact material legislation.

We take this opportunity to point out that the current legislation is insufficient for addressing chemical exposure from FCM. SAFE calls for a new binding legislation which would include all FCMs that are currently not properly covered in order to ensure a high level of protection among EU consumers. Moreover, new independent research is needed with a view to gather updated data on the migration of certain substances from FCMs into food, with special regard to recycled plastics.

Eventually, SAFE underlines the importance of including clear and general legal criteria defining endocrine disruptors in the future FCMs legislation and the need for a better coordination and a more coherent approach between the REACH Regulation and the FCMs Regulation.

Reference: Gueke et al. (2018), *Food packaging in the circular economy: overview of chemical safety aspects for commonly used materials*, Journal of Cleaner Production, 193: 491-505.

SAFE's ACTION TO TACKLE ADOLESCENT OBESITY: UPDATES

On May 8th, SAFE held a 2nd Transnational meeting gathering all ten partner organisations involved in the "Tackling Adolescent Obesity and promoting inclusion through nutrition trainings for disadvantaged youth" project (TAO Project). This meeting was intended to provide all partners with guidelines related to management and reporting, as well as to give them the opportunity to voice their concerns and discuss important aspects of the project.

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CONTEXT

In 2018, SAFE was selected to be part of the European Commission's Erasmus+ Programme which provides financial support for the implementation of European actions in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Social inclusion.

As part of this Programme, SAFE is coordinating the above-mentioned "TAO Project", which aims to create a nutrition training to be taught in as many schools as possible within the EU and which will be supported by 3 educational materials specifically addressing obesity-related issues such as nutrition fundamentals, health issues, discrimination and bullying.

THE STATE OF THE PROJECT

The first phase dedicated to the creation of the educational materials supporting the training will last until beginning of 2020. As part of the key activities of the project, the creation of the 3 educational materials was discussed during our 2nd Transnational Meeting.

Until now, partners have focused their work on the 1st educational material: the student handbook. All partners were assigned to draft some of the content in English for the handbook. Once written, the University of Rzeszow (Poland) was in charge of homogenising this content. Now the handbook needs to be proof read, formatted and assessed, as well as translated into French, Greek and Italian.

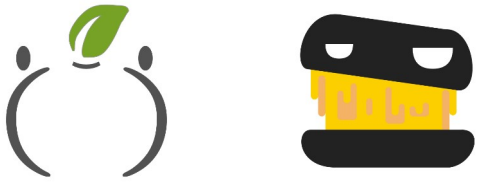
During the Transnational Meeting, the partners have had the opportunity to express their concerns and opinion on the remaining tasks regarding the Handbook. They also agreed on a title: "*Towards a healthier body & mind: a guide for teenagers*".

While the content of the handbook was being homogenised, SAFE started working on the 2nd educational material: the online platform. For that purpose, we met with several web designers and chose to collaborate with Amaury Lesplingart from "56k" with which we already worked in the past.

Mr. Lesplingart was invited to speak during our Transnational meeting to discuss his ideas for the platform's appearance but also for the project's Communication Strategy. Mr. Lesplingart suggested that the platform's appearance and all project-related communications should be consistent to ensure some coherence and attractiveness. As for a brand, any of the project's deliverables should be recognisable and coherent with other deliverables in order to create a virtual community and retain our audience. Therefore, it was agreed that the platform's domain name should be the same as for social media: *meet TAO*.

In addition to his advices, Mr. Lesplingart presented a new logo for the project, which seems more adequate for adolescents than the first one which was more targeting young children than adolescents. All partners agreed to use this new logo instead of the previous one.

Based on this new logo, the web-developers offered us some content to create attractive and playful communication materials. Indeed, as the new logo is an emoji and any successful Instagram account tells stories, the 56k Team created TAO and Lamy emojis, which will allow us to provide teenagers with important information in an attractive and funny way.



SAFE already created communication materials (leaflets and roll-up banner) including those emojis and we distributed them during a Policy Conference organised by EASO on May 16th for which SAFE was offered to hold a stand about the TAO Project. Participants to this Conference were very interested in our project and some agreed to be involved pro bono as associate partners. They will be contacted in the coming weeks and provided with further information about the project.

During the Transnational Meeting, the content of the platform was also discussed as it should include videos and interactive tools. For that purpose, Ms. Emanuela Paone from Amici Obesi, was invited to present several short movies from the “Filmdipeso” Short film Festival, and Mr. Emanuel Mian from Emotifood presented some of his videos that are available on his YouTube channel. In this context, the partners agreed on a deadline to send their assigned content for the platform.

Several aspects of management and implementation were also discussed during the meeting such as cooperation, reporting, budget repartition and assessment.

NEXT STEPS
Until August 2019, the partners will be focused on the creation of content for the platform while SAFE will collaborate with 56k to design the most attractive and user-friendly platform possible. To help the partners coordinate, a videoconference will be organised end of June or beginning of July.
Soon, the potential new associate partners will be contacted and further informed about the project.
The next Transnational meeting will be held in Poland by the University of Rzeszow end of September and will be mostly dedicated to discussions on the creation of the last educational material: the teacher handbook.

Click here to read the description of the TAO project
Follow us on Instagram: meet.tao

E171: FRENCH BAN AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

In our Member Newsletter from September 2018, we informed you about titanium dioxide (TiO2), a substance also known as the white food colourant E171. It has been authorised as a food additive in the EU since 1969, but has also raised many concerns for its potential toxicity in recent years. Following several updates in the EU debates and the publication of important new studies, France has notified the European Commission of a decree suspending the placing of foodstuffs containing E171 on the French market as of January 2020.

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WHAT IS TiO_2 / E171?

Titanium dioxide (TiO_2), also known as **E171** in the EU food safety framework, is very commonly used as a white pigment in food, but also in paints, coatings, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and even in toothpaste. E171 is a mix of TiO_2 particles in a dispersed, agglomerated or aggregated state, many of which can be defined as nanoparticles according to the Commission Recommendation (2011/696/EU) of 18 October 2011 on the definition of nanomaterial. Because of their extremely small size, nanoparticles can squeeze through natural protective barriers of the human body and pass into the liver, lungs or the whole digestive system.

Studies from recent years have indeed shown that TiO_2 nanoparticles can have concrete toxic effects on human health. Similar to the particles that enter the human body via the respiratory tract, nanoparticles in food penetrate faster in the organism because of their size, which is the source of many hazards. Amongst those that have been noted, TiO_2 nanoparticles may be responsible for oxidative stress, genotoxic and carcinogenic effects, inflammatory responses, and DNA damage.

EU OVERALL CLASSIFICATION OF TiO_2

In 2006, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) had already classified TiO_2 amongst the group of substances "possibly carcinogenic to humans (2B)" if inhaled. Moreover, the Risk Assessment Committee (RAC) of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) described TiO_2 as a substance that can potentially provoke cancer (Category 2 of carcinogens, hazard statement H351) on 14 September 2017. However, there is no harmonized EU classification of titanium dioxide to this day.

In a joint letter sent on 9 April 2019 to the members of the REACH Committee responsible for the classification of TiO_2, SAFE, together with the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL), the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) supported the opinion of the RAC of the ECHA and urged the REACH Committee to fully classify TiO_2 as a Category 2 carcinogen. The letter also urged the REACH Committee to reject a proposal made by the European Commission to only classify certain forms (powder form) and sizes (respirable size) of titanium dioxide as a category 2 carcinogen by inhalation. This proposal would introduce huge limitations in the classification of TiO_2 to merely accommodate with the industry's needs and without any scientific justification.

CLASSIFICATION OF TiO_2 AS A FOOD ADDITIVE AND THE FRENCH BAN

In June 2016, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) re-evaluated and approved E171 for use as a food additive. EFSA argued that the absorption of orally administered TiO_2 is extremely low, thus raising no concern for genotoxicity or carcinogenicity. However, the French government sent a warning to the European Commission in February 2018, following a study from the French institute INRA which

highlighted serious concerns over E171 and its potential risks to human health.

In March 2018, the European Commission asked EFSA to provide an opinion on four separate studies provided by France that underlined the toxicity of TiO_2 nanoparticles. EFSA closed the door on E171 re-evaluation through its June 2018 opinion, arguing that "*the outcome of the four studies did not merit re-opening the existing opinion of EFSA related to the safety of TiO_2 (E171) as a food additive*".

Nonetheless, the campaign against E171 continued at Member State level. At the end of June 2018, the French Senate confirmed their will to suspend of E171 on the French market. Finally, on 17 April 2019, France declared to have adopted a decree suspending the placing on the market of products containing E171 as of 1st January 2020. This decision was published on 25 April and subsequently notified to the European Commission.

The French ban on E171 follows the publication of several studies highlighting the many potential hazards caused by titanium dioxide in food. On 15 April 2019, the French Agency for food, environmental and occupational health (ANSES) indeed published a report which listed and analysed 25 new studies on the toxicity of titanium dioxide. The agency concluded that significant scientific uncertainties around the health effects of TiO_2 in food persist, as insufficient data made it impossible to set an Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) for E171.

SAFE's POSITION
According to article 6 of the EU Regulation (EC) 1333/2008 on food additives, a food additive may be authorised if it does not pose a safety concern to the health of consumers, if it is technologically needed and if it does not mislead consumers. However, aside from its aforementioned potential risks to consumers' health, titanium dioxide as a food additive serves no technological purpose and is only use for aesthetic reasons.

Member States now have to vote on whether to extend, modify or cancel the French decision at the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCPAFF). This vote will probably take place after the European elections. Ahead of a first meeting of the SCPAFF on this issue, we supported the French ban decision in an open letter to Vice-President Jyrki Kaitanen (who was taking up the role of Commissioner Andriukaitis in April 2019) that was sent on 3rd May 2019 and co-signed by SAFE, BEUC, EEB, foodwatch international, HEAL, CIEL, WECF, the European Environmental Citizens Organisation for Standardisation (ECOS), Health and Environment Support (HEJ Support) and 30 national NGOs.

Scientific uncertainties and data gaps surrounding E171 prevent its complete risk assessment. The signing NGOs (including SAFE) believe that the precautionary principle should apply and that the substance should be removed from the EU list of permitted food additives.

SAFE WELCOMES THE RECENT COMMISSION REGULATION ON TRANS-FAT

On the 24th of April 2019, the European Commission adopted a Commission Regulation amending Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 1925/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards trans fat, other than trans fat naturally occurring in fat of animal origin. Furthermore, on the 7th of May 2019 the World Health Organisation ("WHO") welcomed the International Food and Beverage Alliance ("IFBA") initiative to align with the WHO target to eliminate industrially produced trans fat from global food supply by 2023.

NEW WHO REPORT FINDS CHILD OBESITY LARGELY AFFECTS SOUTHERN COUNTRIES

According to a new report issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), Southern European countries register high obesity and overweight levels among children. The study also highlights the link between breastfeeding and obesity.

On April 2019, during the European Congress on Obesity in Glasgow, the European section of the WHO presented two studies on severe child obesity across Europe. Both researches are part of the WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI), which is a unique system measuring trends in overweight and obesity among primary school aged children.

The first study shows that Greece, Italy, San Marino, Malta and Spain register severe obesity levels above 4% among children between 6 and 9 years of age, which is generally higher among boys compared to girls. Southern countries (namely Greece, Italy and Spain) also display high rates of pre-obesity, obesity and severe obesity levels greater than 40%. According to the authors of the studies, this increase of obesity levels may be linked to a decline of the traditional Mediterranean diet.

Ultimately, the report highlights the association between breastfeeding and obesity among children. In particular, the study shows a higher prevalence of obesity levels among children who had never been breastfed (16.8%) or had been breastfed for less than six months in comparison to those who were breastfed for more than six months (13.2%).

For more information please find below links to facts and figures illustrating these studies: s

- Severe Obesity among children
- Breastfeeding & Obesity

EU PROJECTS

There are currently a number of open calls in the fields of food safety, agriculture, sustainable development, education and the environment.

Horizon 2020: remains the most significant EU Research and Innovation programme, with nearly €80 billion of funding to be allocated over 7 years (2014-2020). Calls for proposals cover a variety of sectors, including food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research, and the bioeconomy.
Forthcoming and open calls for Horizon 2020 can be found here.

Erasmus+ Programme 2019: The 2019 Erasmus + Call for proposals has been published and applications to new calls are open. The European Commission has issued a Programme Guide providing participating organisations and individuals with a comprehensive list of opportunities supported by the Erasmus + programme, particularly in the fields of education and training, youth, and sport.
The 2019 Call for proposals can be found here.

European Commission - Directorate General for Health and Food Safety: The European Commission makes direct financial contributions in the form of grants in support of projects or organisations which further the interests of the EU or contribute to the implementation of an EU programme or policy.
Forthcoming and open calls can be found here.

METADIS "Impact of Diet, Food Components and Food Processing on Body Weight Regulation and Overweight Related Metabolic Diseases": The Joint Programming Initiative "A Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life" has launched a new joint transnational call. The aim of this call is to support transnational, collaborative research projects that address important research questions regarding the effects of food or diets and/or food processing on overweight and related metabolic diseases. An additional objective is to support Early Career Scientists in the area of food, nutrition and health.
Further informations about the call procedure and deadlines can be found here.

EU EVENTS

European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN): "Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy"
Date & Time: 04/06/2019, from 9am to 17:00pm
Venue: Universidad Rey Juan Carlos and Universidad de Alcalá Brussels Representation Office, Rue du Trône 62 - 1060 Brussels

This conference offers to facilitate presentations and exchanges of project ideas related to SC2-H2020 topics. It aims at putting together the right partners to create successful partnerships.
Further information about the event can be found here.

AU-EU agricultural ministerial conference: "Agriculture, our future: promoting sustainable regional agricultural value chains"
Date & Time: 21/06/2019, from 9:00am to 17:45pm
Venue: FAO Headquarters, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Roma, Italy

This conference will involve African and European stakeholders to debate on how to unlock the potential for a rural transformation and sustainable agriculture in Africa.
Further information about the event can be found here.

European Organic Congress: "Innovation and technology: how organic improves, inspires and delivers"
Date & Time: 20-21/06/2019,
Venue: Bucharest, Romania

This conference will discuss the CPA reform with reference to the development of a new organic

action plan.
Further information about the event can be found here.

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