

## Press release

### SAFE welcomes EFSA's new safety assessment of titanium dioxide (E171) as a food additive

#### E171 no longer considered safe for use as a food additive

On 6 May 2021, The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published its long-awaited safety assessment of titanium dioxide (TiO<sub>2</sub>) used as a food additive (E171)<sup>1</sup>.

The assessment clearly underlines that TiO<sub>2</sub> (nano)particles have the potential to induce DNA strand breaks and chromosomal damage – thus, the agency stated that a concern for genotoxicity could not be ruled out. Overall, based on current existing evidence, it was concluded by the expert panel of EFSA that E171 “*can no longer be considered safe when used as a food additive*”. Moreover, EFSA also considered that it was uncertain “*whether a threshold mode of action could be assumed*”.

**SAFE – Safe Food Advocacy Europe welcomes the conclusions of this new safety assessment.**

NGOs and consumers alike have been calling for an EU-wide ban of this potentially harmful substance for several years. The new EFSA opinion applies to E171 as described in EC Reg. (EU) No 2031/2021 and paves the way for a revision of the second Annex of the [Regulation \(EC\) No 1333/2008](#) listing authorized food additives – meaning **that an EU-wide ban of the substance could finally come true.**

#### Great news for consumers!

Floriana Cimmarusti, Secretary General of SAFE, commented: “*We are delighted about the conclusions of this safety assessment. Alerts have been raised by consumers, NGOs and MEPs for years with the welfare of European consumers at heart and, in particular, the health of our children who eat toxic additives in their food on a daily basis. We welcome that EFSA is finally acknowledging potential hazards linked with the consumption*

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/6585>

*of E171. We now trust that the European Commission will take actions accordingly, with consumers' health at the centre of their decisions."*

In a [petition](#) organised by SAFE, Agir pour l'Environnement and European Environmental Citizens' Organisation for Standardisation (ECOS) gathering over **85,000 signatures**, consumers already firmly expressed their will to uphold the recent ban on E171 imposed by the French government with regards to the many uncertainties surrounding this food additive which serves no nutritional purpose and may present health risks.

## Background

Titanium Dioxide (TiO<sub>2</sub>), also known as E171 in food, is commonly used as a white colourant in food, but also in coatings or medicine. E171 is a mix of TiO<sub>2</sub> particles, some of which can be defined as nanoparticles (being smaller than 100 nm). Due to their extremely small size, nanoparticles can penetrate through natural protective barriers of the human body and pass into the liver, lungs or the whole digestive system. For this reason, a significant number of recent scientific publications have questioned the safety of this food colourant and highlighted its **potential carcinogenic risks** and **genotoxicity**.

Since the last EFSA safety assessment (in 2016), scientific uncertainties still surrounded this substance, preventing its complete risk assessment. In light of the potential carcinogenic effects of this food additive and considering the fact that E171 serves no technological purpose as it is only used for aesthetic reasons, the French Food Safety Agency (ANSES) carried out a full risk assessment on EFSA data and expressed numerous concerns regarding the toxicity of E171. The French government consequently decided to ban products containing E171 from 1st January 2020 on based on the **precautionary principle**.

On Monday 7 September 2020, a majority of MEPs of the ENVI Committee voted **in favour** of an objection against the draft Commission Regulation amending the Annex to Regulation (EU) No 231/2012 laying down specifications for food additives as regards specifications for **titanium dioxide in food products** (E 171), calling for an EU-wide ban of E171 rather than a modification

of its authorized composition. This vote was later confirmed in the plenary session the European Parliament in October 2020.

### About Safe Food Advocacy Europe

**SAFE – Safe Food Advocacy Europe** is a non-profit independent organisation based in Brussels. Our main objective is to ensure that consumers' health and concerns remain at the core of the EU food legislation. To date, our membership collectively represents the voice of more than 2,500,000 European consumers.

<https://www.safefoodadvocacy.eu/>

### Press

Antoine D'haese – Office and Communication Manager at SAFE

[communications@safefoodadvocacy.eu](mailto:communications@safefoodadvocacy.eu)