Press release: SAFE welcomes MEPs' decision to object new EC specifications for E171 (Titanium Dioxide)

Good news for EU consumers

SAFE – Safe Food Advocacy Europe welcomes the positive outcome of the vote which occurred yesterday evening and hope that this democratic decision will encourage the Commission to promote a complete removal of titanium dioxide nanoparticles from our food products.

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). This objection was tabled by MEPs Michèle Rivasi (Greens/EFA), Eric Andrieu (S&D), Eleonora EVI (NA), Joelle Mélin (ID), Ljudmila Novak (EPP), and Mick Wallace (GUE/NGL).

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.

Floriana Cimmarusti, Secretary General of SAFE, commented: *"We are delighted about the vote of the ENVI Committee that is showing how the European Parliament have 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 thank the Members of the European Parliament for their brave decision and we look forward to the upcoming EFSA opinion on E171 that we trust will be adopted with consumers' health at the centre of their decision."*

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Background

Titanium dioxide (TiO2), 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 TiO2 particles, most 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**.

Scientific uncertainties still surround this substance, preventing its complete risk assessment. The latest opinion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) indeed highlighted uncertainties and data gaps, calling for more data from the industry. Another opinion from EFSA is expected in March 2021.

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**.

About SAFE

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.

Press

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