

PRESS RELEASE

E171 ban decision confirmed in the SCoPAFF

Brussels, 8 October 2021,

On 8 October 2021, the Standing Committee on Plant, Animal, Food and Feed voted in favour of a proposal submitted by the European Commission to ban food additive E 171 (Titanium dioxide in food) from all applications in food products. The EC proposal followed a [scientific assessment](#) published in May by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

According to EFSA, TiO₂ (nano)particles have the potential to induce DNA strand breaks and chromosomal damage for this reason genotoxicity concerns 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”*.

NGOs and consumers alike welcome the decision of the SCoPAFF and the conclusions of the safety assessment. An EU-wide ban of this potentially harmful substance has been called for at EU level for years by NGOs and MEPs.

After a three-month scrutiny period from the European Parliament and Council, the European Commission will remove E171 from the list of permitted food additives (the second Annex of the [Regulation \(EC\) No 1333/2008](#)) – meaning **that an EU-wide ban of the substance will finally come true.**

Great news for consumers!

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.

The French initiative has now been followed by the EU, for the higher benefit of European consumers’ health. SAFE welcomes this decision, following EFSA’s clear scientific assessment on the matter.

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, 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 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 of the European Parliament in October 2020.

On 6 May 2021, The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published its long-awaited safety assessment of titanium dioxide (TiO₂) used as a food additive.

Press contact:

SAFE - Safe Food Advocacy Europe - Floriana Cimmarusti , Secretary General
(floriana.cimmarusti@safefoodadvocacy.eu)