Resolution on the draft Commission regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 as regards maximum levels of acrylamide in certain foodstuffs for infants and young children

2020/2735(RPS) - 08/10/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 439 votes to 137, with 90 abstentions, a resolution objecting to the Commission regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 as regards maximum levels of acrylamide in certain foodstuffs for infants and young children.

Parliament opposed the adoption of the draft Commission Regulation on the grounds that it was not compatible with the aim and content of Regulation (EEC) No 315/93 laying down Community procedures for contaminants in food.

Acrylamide is a chemical compound that is present in industrially produced foods such as crisps, bread, biscuits and coffee, but also from home cooking, for example when toasting bread or cooking fries. According to the harmonised classification and labelling (CLP00) approved by the EU, acrylamide is toxic if ingested, with the possibility of toxicity being increased in infants and young children.

Acrylamide has been classified as a ‘probable human carcinogen’ by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and as a probable human carcinogen by the US National Toxicology Program (NTP) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Draft Commission Regulation

The draft Commission Regulation proposes to set maximum levels for only two very specific categories of foodstuffs, namely:

- biscuits and rusks for infants and young children (150 µg/kg, which corresponds to the current benchmark level) and;

- baby foods, processed cereal-based foods for infants and young children, excluding biscuits and rusks (50 µg/kg, even 10 µg/kg more than the current benchmark level of 40 µg/kg).

Lower acrylamide contents

Members stated that continuing to allow high levels of acrylamide in food may have adverse health effects on European consumers. They consider it extremely important to lower acrylamide levels in foodstuffs and called on the Commission to:

- set the proposed maximum level for acrylamide in the category ‘Baby foods, processed cereal-based foods for infants and young children, excluding biscuits and rusks’ below, and certainly not above, the current benchmark level of 40 µg/kg;

- set the proposed maximum level for acrylamide in the category ‘Biscuits and rusks for infants and young children’ below, and certainly not above, the current reference level of 150 µg/kg;

- set strict maximum levels not only for the two categories of products proposed in the draft Commission Regulation, but also for other categories of products, such as biscuits and rusks, which are often consumed by children under three years of age.

Parliament called on the Commission to withdraw its draft regulation and submit a new one to the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee. It looks forward to the revision of the benchmark levels by April 2021, with a view to lowering them.

Encouraging research, strengthening monitoring and informing the public

The Commission and the Member States were also invited to:

- intensify research on the formation of acrylamide in foods with a view to identifying strategies aiming at minimising the formation of acrylamide;

- stimulate research on possible endocrine disrupting properties of acrylamide and glycidamide;

- step up their food control capacities with a view to monitoring the effectiveness of the rules regarding acrylamide and collect, publish and pass data on acrylamide occurrence to EFSA;

- inform the public about product categories with potentially higher acrylamide contents and about strategies on how to limit acrylamide exposure when cooking.