

## EU On the Way to First Restrictions on Acrylamide in Food

### EU REACH, EUROPE, CHEMICALS OF INTEREST

By ROGER PEARSON, August 31, 2017

The European Union has taken the first step in eventually ordering the reduction of the presence of the chemical acrylamide in foods. According to the internet media platform **Euractive**<sup>1)</sup>, representatives of the EU's 28 member states voted on July 19 in favor of a European Commission proposal to reduce the presence of the carcinogen normally found in fried or roasted foods, such as French fries, potato chips, bread, biscuits, or coffee.

Acrylamide has long been known to be a carcinogen. Until 2002 it was known to be present primarily in industrial settings. However, in 2002 Swedish researchers found that the compound is formed when starchy foods are baked, fried, or roasted at temperatures above 120 degrees centigrade.

According to the **Euractive**<sup>2)</sup> article, the regulation approved by the EU Commission will now be sent to the European Parliament and Council for approval. The two EU institutions will have three months to examine the text of the regulation before it becomes final. That is expected to occur in the spring of next year. Once the regulation is final the Commission is expected to establish binding limits on acrylamide in certain foodstuffs.

In the U.S. acrylamide has achieved its greatest notoriety under California's Proposition 65. The chemical was listed as a carcinogen under the Proposition in 1990 and as a reproductive toxicant in 2010. Prop. 65 does not establish content limits. However, it requires anyone exposing an individual above a safe harbor level to place a warning on its products. The 2002 discovery that acrylamide is formed in foods cooked at high temperatures led to a number of lawsuits filed by Prop. 65 private enforcers. This led to an effort by affected food manufacturers to get the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) to establish new safe harbor levels for the chemical. That effort ultimately fizzled and food manufacturers remain at risk of Prop. 65 litigation [see **OEHHA Will Restart Acrylamide Regulatory Process**<sup>3)</sup>, April 21, 2006].

### Resources for this article

**1. Euractive**

<http://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/eu-adopts-first-restrictions-on-cancer-causing-acrylamide-in-food/>

**2. OEHHA Will Restart Acrylamide Regulatory Process**

<https://prop65clearinghouse.com/articles/593>