

Harmful chemicals in German Food Contact Materials

From farms to storage, to processing and grocery shops, our food comes into contact with lots of different materials. Unfortunately, **those materials are allowed to contain harmful chemicals that can leach into the food we eat and the beverages we drink (1), putting our health at risk.**



What have studies shown?

Harmful chemicals, such as phthalates, bisphenols and fluorinated substances (PFAS) can be present in food contact materials and food packaging.

- A European-wide study **found PFAS in several disposable paper food packaging items bought from fast-food chains in Germany (2).**
- A report on toxic mineral oils (MOAH) in food found **four food products from Germany had been contaminated with MOAH (3).** Contamination of food with MOAH can occur via food contact materials.

Chemicals in our bodies

We are constantly exposed to a cocktail of known and suspected harmful chemicals through air, water, food, consumer products and other routes. Food contact materials can contribute to our exposure to harmful chemicals.

- **18% of German teenagers** tested have a combined level of exposure to **PFOA, PFOS, PFNA and PFHxS** exceeding the EU Food Safety Authority's health-based guidance value (4).
- **12% of German teenagers** tested exceeded the human biomonitoring guidance value for **Bisphenol F** (4).

What are Food Contact Materials (FCMs)?

Materials and products that come into contact with our food, such as storage containers, factory equipment, kitchen utensils, tableware, and food packaging.

87% of German citizens are worried about the impact of chemicals present in everyday products **on the environment (5).**

80% of German citizens are worried about the impact of chemicals present in everyday products **on their health (5).**

Some action has been taken... but not nearly enough

- Germany has amended their Consumer Goods Ordinance to **regulate the use of printing inks and varnishes that may come into contact with food**, with a phase in period until end of 2026 (6).
- In 2021, German authorities notified the World Trade Organisation of their **intention to restrict MOAH in recycled paper and board food contact materials**, and set migration limits into food (7).

However, there is much more to be done in order to properly protect German and EU citizens from harmful chemicals in food contact materials.

Looking forwards

A revision of EU food contact material legislation is underway, presenting a key opportunity to act. We do not merely want to patch the loopholes that allow harmful chemicals in food contact materials. **We are calling for the legislation to be properly updated to ensure the protection of citizen's health, help support a circular economy free from harmful chemicals, and ensure harmful chemicals do not enter the environment. Visit toxicfreefoodpackaging.com for information on actions to take.**

1. Zimmerman et al, 2022. Implementing the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability: The case of food contact chemicals of concern.
2. Straková, J., Schneider, J., Cingotti, N. et al., 2021. Throwaway Packaging, Forever Chemicals: European wide survey of PFAS.
3. Food Watch, 2021. Toxic mineral oil found in food products.
4. HBM4EU, 2022. Final conference exhibition 'We live in a chemical world' – Exposure levels and exceedance values

5. European Union, 2020. Attitudes of Europeans towards the environment - Germany.
6. Food Packaging Forum, 2021. German printing ink ordinance comes into force.
7. Food Packaging Forum, 2021. Germany notifies WTO of MOAH restrictions.