

Harmful chemicals in Italian 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 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.

89% of Italian citizens are worried about the impact of chemicals present in everyday products **on the environment (6).**

89% of Italian citizens are worried about the impact of chemicals present in everyday products **on their health (6).**

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 study on single-use tableware intended to be alternatives to plastic found that **products bought on the Italian market, including plates and a straw, contained PFAS (2).**
- Analysis of 13 fast-food packaging products bought in Italy found that **over half were contaminated with fluorinated substances (3).**

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.

- A human biomonitoring study found Italian children have some of the highest levels of **phthalates** in Europe (4).

- A study on exposure to endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) in Italian women of childbearing age **detected chemicals - including BPA and certain phthalates - in 100% of samples (5).** The study found an association between consumption of sauces/dressings in plastic containers and exposure to a specific phthalate.

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

Some action has been taken in some countries to address harmful chemicals in food contact materials. However, there is much more to be done in order to properly protect Italian 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. BEUC, 2021. Towards Safe and Sustainable Food Packaging.
3. BEUC, 2017. New test by European consumer organisations finds toxic substances in fast food packaging.
4. HBM4EU, 2022. HBM4EU Newspaper, European Human Biomonitoring Initiative
5. Napoli et al, 2021. Lifestyle Habits and Exposure to BPA and Phthalates in Women of Childbearing Age from Northern Italy: A Pilot Study.

6. European Union, 2020. Attitudes of Europeans towards the environment - Italy.

