

RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2022/553

of 5 April 2022

on monitoring the presence of *Alternaria* toxins in food

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM) adopted a scientific opinion in 2011 on the risks that the presence of *Alternaria* in food poses to animal and public health ⁽¹⁾.
- (2) EFSA also published more recently a scientific report on the dietary exposure assessment of *Alternaria* toxins in the European population ⁽²⁾. It concluded that the estimated chronic dietary exposure to the *Alternaria* toxins alternariol, alternariol monomethyl ether and tenuazonic acid exceeds the relevant threshold of toxicological concern, indicating a need for additional compound-specific toxicity data.
- (3) EFSA recommended that more occurrence data should be gathered on the presence of *Alternaria* toxins in relevant foodstuffs (fruit and fruit products, tomatoes and tomato-based products, and cereal-based food for infants and young children, among others). EFSA also recommended that more sensitive analytical methods be used in order to reduce the uncertainty about the exposure to the various *Alternaria* toxins due to the high proportion of data reported as 'below the limit of quantification (LOQ)' in the currently available dataset as the analytical methods used were not always sufficiently sensitive.
- (4) Good agricultural practices, good storage and transport conditions and good manufacturing practices can reduce or prevent the presence of *Alternaria* toxins in food. More information must however be gathered on the factors that lead to relatively high levels of *Alternaria* toxins in certain foodstuffs in order to be able to identify the measures to be taken to avoid or reduce the presence of these *Alternaria* toxins in these foodstuffs.
- (5) To provide orientation on when it would be appropriate to identify the factors that lead to relatively high levels or even significant levels of *Alternaria* toxins in foodstuffs, it is necessary to establish indicative values for foods based on the data available in EFSA's database. Indicative levels have only been set for the foodstuffs for which sufficient occurrence data are available.
- (6) It is therefore appropriate to recommend the monitoring of *Alternaria* toxins in food and the identification of the factors resulting in their high levels in certain food,

⁽¹⁾ EFSA on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM); Scientific Opinion on the risks for animal and public health related to the presence of *Alternaria* toxins in feed and food. EFSA Journal 2011;9(10):2407. [97 pp.] doi:10.2903/j.efsa.2011.2407. Available at: www.efsa.europa.eu/efsajournal

⁽²⁾ EFSA, Arcella D, Eskola M and Gómez Ruiz JA. 2016. Scientific report on the dietary exposure assessment to *Alternaria* toxins in the European population. EFSA Journal 2016;14(12):4654, 32 pp. doi:10.2903/j.efsa.2016.4654.

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION:

- (1) Member States, in close cooperation with the food business operators should monitor the *Alternaria* toxins alternariol, alternariol monomethyl ether and tenuazonic acid in food, in particular in processed tomato products, paprika powder, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, sunflower oil, tree nuts, dried figs and cereal-based foods for infants and young children. If possible, other *Alternaria* toxins should also be analysed and the results reported to the European Food Safety Authority.
- (2) To ensure that the samples are representative, Member States should follow the relevant sampling procedures laid down in Commission Regulation (EC) No 401/2006 of 23 February 2006 ⁽³⁾. For processed tomato products, the sampling procedure should be performed in accordance with the rules set out in Part H (liquid products) or Part I (solid products) of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 401/2006. Where the sampling procedure applied by the food business operator deviates from the procedure set out in Regulation (EC) No 401/2006, it should remain representative for the lot.
- (3) For the determination of alternariol and alternariol monomethyl ether, the LOQ should not be higher than 2 µg/kg in cereal-based foods for infants and young children and 4 µg/kg in other foods, and for the determination of tenuazonic acid, the LOQ should not be higher than 20 µg/kg in all foods.
- (4) Member States, with the active involvement of the food business operators, should carry out investigations to identify the factors resulting in these levels above the indicative levels and on the effects of processing on the level of these *Alternaria* toxins, provided in Annex to this Recommendation.
- (5) Member States and food business operators should provide to EFSA, by 30 June of each year, the data for the previous year for compilation into one database in line with the requirements of EFSA's Guidance on Standard Sample Description (SSD) for Food and Feed and EFSA's additional specific reporting requirements ⁽⁴⁾.

Done at Brussels, 5 April 2022.

For the Commission
Stella KYRIAKIDES
Member of the Commission

⁽³⁾ Commission Regulation (EC) No 401/2006 of 23 February 2006 laying down methods of sampling and analysis for the official control of mycotoxins in foodstuffs (OJ L 70, 9.3.2006, p. 12).

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call-continuous-collection-chemical-contaminants-occurrence-data-0>

ANNEX

Indicative level for alternariol, alternariol monomethyl ether and tenuazonic acid in certain foods, based on the available data in the EFSA database, above which investigations should be performed, on the factors leading to the presence of *Alternaria* toxins or on the effect of food processing. The indicative levels are not food safety levels.

Food	Alternariol (AOH) (µg/kg)	Alternariol monomethyl ether (AME) (µg/kg)	Tenuazonic acid (TeA) (µg/kg)
Processed tomato products	10	5	500
Paprika powder	-	-	10 000
Sesame seeds	30	30	100
Sunflower seeds	30	30	1 000
Sunflower oil	10	10	100
Tree nuts	-	-	100
Dried figs	-	-	1 000
Cereal based foods for infants and young children	2	2	500