

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000380/25
to the Commission
Liesbet Sommen (PPE)
(28 January 2025)

Subject: Food safety — lead and cadmium in ceramics, glass and enamelled tableware and kitchenware

Potentially toxic metals, such as lead, barium and cadmium, are used in ceramic and glass materials (also food contact materials, or FCMs), as well as for technical applications and in decorative pigments. Directive 84/500/EEC stipulates limit values for lead and cadmium in ceramic materials, but there is no harmonised legislation for glass materials.

Official checks show that about 20% of the ceramic and glass samples tested release heavy metals into food in harmful quantities. The European Food Safety Authority has published opinions on the adverse health effects of those metals, which occur at levels much lower than the limits currently set.

The Commission (DG Health and Food Safety) is drafting legislation to address this problem. Publication was scheduled for the second quarter of 2023, but has not yet taken place. In this connection:

1. What is the Commission's position on harmonised legislation for glass materials?
2. When will this initiative and the accompanying impact assessment be published?

Submitted: 28.1.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(29 April 2025)

The Commission is committed to further harmonising EU legislation on food contact materials (FCMs), as indicated in its announcement to revise the legislation ⁽¹⁾. The Commission has recognised the need to significantly reduce the current EU limits for lead and cadmium allowed to transfer into food from ceramic materials, to widen the scope to other types of materials including glass and enamels, and to consider limits for other metals to safeguard public health.

The Commission has already carried out a significant body of work on this initiative, including the development of adequate methodologies for testing ⁽²⁾, an inception impact assessment ⁽³⁾ and direct stakeholder dialogue as well as technical discussions with Member States.

Further preparatory work for the initiative is ongoing, which is highly complex and requires further consultations with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the coherence of requirements across different types of FCMs, in particular the approach to regulating particularly hazardous substances but considering also the potential impacts on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and producers using traditional production techniques.

⁽¹⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety/chemical-safety/food-contact-materials/revision-eu-rules_en

⁽²⁾ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC102075>

⁽³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/2074-Food-safety-heavy-metals-in-ceramic-glass-and-enameled-table-and-kitchenware_en