

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002897/25
to the Commission
Jutta Paulus (Verts/ALE), Tilly Metz (Verts/ALE)
(15 July 2025)**

Subject: Consideration of the IARC classification in the EU's re-evaluation of aspartame

In June 2023, the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified the sweetener aspartame (E 951) as a possibly carcinogenic agent (Category cB) on the basis of an extensive review of all the scientific evidence available on the substance. The monograph summarising the opinion highlights the fact that experts were divided on the strength of the evidence in animal tests and that a minority supported an even stronger classification as a potential carcinogen (Category cA).

The Commission has indicated that it does not currently plan to re-evaluate the safety of aspartame on the basis of those findings, although the last evaluation dates back to 2013, thus obviously not taking into account newer studies. The Commission plans to take this opinion into account only in the context of the re-evaluation of salt of aspartame-acesulfame (E962) and neotame (E961).

1. Will the Commission extend the findings of the re-evaluation of aspartame-acesulfame and neotame to aspartame? If not, why does the Commission believe that aspartame reacts differently from its salt?
2. How does the Commission justify considering a risk assessment conducted over a decade ago as still scientifically valid and up to date?
3. Does the Commission deem the assessments of the WHO IARC valid? If not, why not?

Submitted: 15.7.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(5 September 2025)**

The salt of aspartame-acesulfame (E 962) is a mixture of the two sweeteners aspartame (E 951) and acesulfame K (E 950). The re-evaluation of the salt (E 962) is therefore relevant and will also include an update of the safety assessment of aspartame (E 951).

In particular, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will carefully consider all relevant new studies that have become available since the last risk assessment of aspartame conducted in 2013 ⁽¹⁾.

This will also include Volume 134 of the United Nations' International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). Monographs comprising aspartame published in September 2024 ⁽²⁾ and the Monographs from the 96th Joint Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)/ World Health Organisation (WHO) Expert Committee on Food Additives meeting (JECFA) meeting re-evaluating the safety of aspartame as a food additive published in June 2023 ⁽³⁾.

Until the updated assessment becomes available ⁽⁴⁾, the EFSA 2013 opinion, confirmed by the outcomes of the latest JECFA assessment, remains valid.

The IARC assessments are distinct from the EFSA (or JECFA) assessments as regards their purpose and methodology. The IARC hazard assessments evaluate if a substance has the potential to cause harm regardless of the type and level of exposure ⁽⁵⁾.

Therefore, those assessments cannot replace the risk assessments of EFSA, as the latter, in principle, considers the route and levels of exposure to determine the actual risk to humans through diet.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/3496>.

⁽²⁾ <https://publications.iarc.who.int/627>.

⁽³⁾ [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/ninety-sixth-meeting-joint-fao-who-expert-committee-on-food-additives-\(jecfa\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/ninety-sixth-meeting-joint-fao-who-expert-committee-on-food-additives-(jecfa)).

⁽⁴⁾ It is expected that EFSA will complete the re-evaluation of the salt of aspartame-acesulfame (E 962) by mid-year 2026.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.iarc.who.int/infographics/the-iarc-monographs-programme-hazard-identification-versus-risk-assessment/>.