



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Director-General

Brussels,
SANTE/E7/FS/md
Ares(2015) 4845308

Dear Petitioner,

The Commission is pleased to reply to the petition launched in Germany and the Netherlands against an increased limit value for mercury in fish.

I have taken due note of your remarks and concerns, in relation to which I would like to make the following observations:

The only major contributors to dietary exposure of mercury are fish and fishery products.

In the light of this, the Commission has requested the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to carry out an analysis of the risks and benefits to human health of fish/seafood consumption related to methylmercury. EFSA stated that 1–4 fish servings per week should be consumed to achieve the benefits linked to the presence of n-3 (long-chain) polyunsaturated fatty acids, on functional outcomes of children's neurodevelopment during pregnancy and on cardiovascular diseases in adults. On the other hand, the tolerable weekly intake for mercury is already reached after consuming fewer servings (<1–2 per week) of high-mercury fish.

Data on mercury in fish collected since 2002 show – as you know - high levels of mercury in some top predator fish species. As of today however, no manufacturing practices are available to reduce the uptake of mercury by the fish or to remove the mercury from the fish.

Nowadays, three maximum levels for mercury in food are laid down in EU law:

- a maximum level of 0,5 mg/kg is applicable to most species ;
- a higher maximum level of 1,0 mg/kg is applicable for a list of named predatory fish species ;
- a maximum level of 3,0 mg/kg is applicable for food supplements.

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Technical discussions on the review of these maximum levels are currently on-going between the Commission and the Member States.

May I ask you to publish this reply on the website where you launched this petition in order to correctly inform all petitioners ? From our side, we will publish this reply on the Transparency Portal of the European Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Xavier Prats Monné