

Communication 054/2025

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Dioxins: draft report by the European Food Safety Authority now available

Updated risk assessment open for public comment

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has updated its opinion on dioxins and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls (dl-PCBs). Among other things, the tolerable weekly intake (TWI) for dioxins and dl-PCBs has been reduced from 2 picograms (2×10^{-12} grams) to 0.6 picograms per kilogram of body weight. The TWI value refers to the amount of a substance that is not expected to cause adverse health impairments in humans when consumed as a weekly intake over a lifetime.

The authority published the draft of its updated opinion on dioxins for public consultation on 27 November 2025. The comment period ends on 26 January 2026. The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) will also review and comment on the draft.

Dioxins are formed under certain conditions during combustion processes, while PCBs were manufactured for various applications, as plastics, plasticisers and hydraulic fluids, for example. PCBs have not been produced since the 1980s, but they are still present in the environment due to their longevity. Both the dioxin and PCB substance groups include substances with harmful health effects and long biological half-lives. In general, exposure to dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs among the German population has declined substantially over the last 30 years.

Due to their prevalence in the environment, their transfer into the food chain cannot be avoided. The substances accumulate in the fat of animals and are taken up by humans mainly through the consumption of animal food products such as meat, fish, eggs, milk and dairy products. Whether weekly intake in the dosage range of a few picograms per kilogram of body weight can cause health impairments is a subject of scientific debate.

The BfR will examine the EFSA draft and provide scientific commentary on it.

Further information on dioxins on the BfR website

Topic page on dioxins and PCBs in food

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/food-safety/assessment-of-substance-risks-in-foods/bewertung-von-kontaminanten-in-lebensmitteln/environmental-contaminants/dioxin-und-pcb-in-lebensmitteln/>

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