

NewsLetter



Pesticides in food EU Survey shows low risk to consumers

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) analysed the results of 13,246 random samples taken by EU Member States, Norway and Iceland from 12 of the most consumed food products in the EU as part of the EU-coordinated control programme (EU MACP).

The samples were taken in 2023 and the foods sampled were carrots, cauliflowers, kiwi fruits (green, red and yellow), onions, oranges, pears, potatoes, dried beans, brown rice, rye, bovine liver and poultry fat.

99% of the foods sampled were found to be compliant with EU legislation. This finding is consistent with the results obtained in 2020 (99.1%), when the same selection of products was sampled.

70% were free of quantifiable levels of residues, while 28% contained one or more residues within legal limits. Maximum residue levels (MRLs) were exceeded in 2% of samples, of which 1% were non-compliant after taking into account the measurement uncertainty.

Targeted sampling with high compliance rate

EFSA's annual report on pesticide residues also includes the results from the Multiannual National Control Programme (MANCP), which gathers data from targeted sampling, based on the level of risk.

These national control programmes provided 132,793 samples, 98% of which were compliant with EU legislation. Compliance rates for the MANCP in 2021 and 2022 were 97.5% and 97.8%, respectively.

Of the 2023 samples, 58% did not contain quantifiable residues, while 38.3% contained residues within legal limits and 3.7% exceeded the MRL, of which 2% were non-compliant.

Dietary risk assessment

The results from the monitoring programmes are a valuable source of information for estimating dietary exposure of EU consumers to pesticide residues.

EFSA carried out a dietary risk assessment as part of its analysis of the results. The assessment shows the probability that consumers will be exposed to a quantity of residues above a certain safety threshold.

Based on its assessment, EFSA concludes that there is a low risk to consumer health from the estimated exposure to pesticide residues in the foods tested.

The report also makes recommendations to increase the efficiency of European control systems for pesticide residues. For example, EFSA advises Member States to further investigate and monitor pesticide and crop combinations leading to non-compliances, and to continue monitoring pesticide residues in samples imported from outside the EU with a wide analytical scope.