

## Statement by foodwatch

### regarding EFSA's draft scientific opinion on the update of the risk assessment of mineral oil hydrocarbons in food, Public Consultation Number PC-0400

(<https://connect.efsa.europa.eu/RM/s/publicconsultation2/a0109000006qqHf/pc0400>)

**summary:** In principle, foodwatch welcomes the fact that EFSA has undertaken a reassessment of the dangers of mineral oil. The draft EFSA opinion clearly shows: There is still a lack of data on MOH so that a full risk assessment is not possible at the present time. For that reason, the precautionary principle must be applied and a zero-tolerance policy for MOAH in food products established. MOAH should not be detectable and MOSH presence in food should be as low as reasonably achievable. This is necessary for the overdue, best possible protection of 450 million consumers.

## General

Based on the information provided in the EFSA opinion, the potential risks to human health associated with the presence of MOSH and MOAH in food products are concerning, especially when they accumulate in the body. Therefore, the exposure to these substances with potential risks to human health must be limited as much as possible. The tests that foodwatch has carried out demonstrated that a zero-tolerance decision for MOAH is necessary (and overdue) for all food categories to protect consumers. They have proven that it is possible to produce products without any detectable MOAH.<sup>1</sup>

The precautionary principle must be applied. As a fundamental principle of the European Union, it states that when an activity or substance presents potential risks to human health or the environment, in the absence of absolute scientific certainty, measures should be taken to prevent harm to public health. In this context, everything must be done to limit exposure to MOSH and MOAH and set strict MRLs. The precautionary principle must apply to MOAH, no matter what ring system. A differentiation is not feasible. According to the EFSA opinion there is a lack of data on the influence of ring alkylation as well as on the genotoxicity of MOAH with one and two rings.

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<sup>1</sup> further information can be found here: <https://www.foodwatch.org/en/news/2021/toxic-mineral-oil-found-in-food-products/>; tests of 2021 public report: [https://www.foodwatch.org/fileadmin/-INT/mineral\\_oil/documents/Foodwatch\\_Mineralo\\_I\\_Report\\_2021\\_ENGLISH\\_03A.pdf](https://www.foodwatch.org/fileadmin/-INT/mineral_oil/documents/Foodwatch_Mineralo_I_Report_2021_ENGLISH_03A.pdf), tests of 2021 technical report: [https://www.foodwatch.org/fileadmin/-INT/mineral\\_oil/documents/2021-12-03\\_technical\\_minoil\\_project\\_report.pdf](https://www.foodwatch.org/fileadmin/-INT/mineral_oil/documents/2021-12-03_technical_minoil_project_report.pdf); tests of 2019 project report: [https://www.foodwatch.org/fileadmin/-INT/mineral\\_oil/documents/2019-10-24\\_Projectreport\\_babymilk\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.foodwatch.org/fileadmin/-INT/mineral_oil/documents/2019-10-24_Projectreport_babymilk_FINAL.pdf); tests of 2015: [https://www.foodwatch.org/fileadmin/foodwatch\\_international/reports/2015-Mineral\\_oils\\_in\\_food.pdf](https://www.foodwatch.org/fileadmin/foodwatch_international/reports/2015-Mineral_oils_in_food.pdf)

## **On MOSH**

While EFSA did not make a definitive conclusion on whether MOSH is dangerous for human consumption or not, the opinion raises concerns about the potential health risks associated with the consumption of MOSH, particularly in terms of their potential to accumulate in the body over time. Further investigations are therefore required, e.g., long-term studies on how these accumulations affect human health as well as into the toxicity of MOSH, particularly with respect to their effects on the liver, spleen, immune and nervous systems. The opinion also says that additional data on human MOSH tissue concentrations or biomarkers of exposure are needed.

Consequently, in the interest of preventative consumer protection, the strictest requirements should be imposed by law. Presence of MOSH in food products must be as low as reasonably achievable.

## **On MOAH**

The fact that only 8 PAHs were selected as markers is a shortcoming of the EFSA opinion. It is questionable that from 8 PAHs the totality of all aromatic hydrocarbons in a MOAH fraction can be concluded. Better test methods i.e., more detailed markers are needed to get a realistic picture.

Nevertheless, the EFSA opinion concludes that MOAH may be carcinogenic and genotoxic, which means it has the potential to damage DNA and lead to cancer. There is also concern about the potential for MOAH to accumulate in the body. The opinion concludes that further studies are needed to fully assess the risks associated with MOAH. This includes studies on the toxicity of different MOAH compounds and their biotransformation products. Based on this it is necessary to minimize MOAH in food products and impose a zero-tolerance policy. MOAH must be non-detectable. The testing method that foodwatch used has proven that it is possible to detect MOAH in small amounts. The decrease of MOAH detected in food products shows that companies can ensure that mineral oil in products remains below the limit of quantification.

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