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# NDFTA Statement 29/05/2018

## EU strategy to reduce consumer exposure to chlorate, implications on dried fruit sector

In 2015, the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) scientific opinion found that prolonged exposure to chlorate in food, is a potential health concern for children as it could adversely impact iodine uptake. The opinion states that the most significant dietary exposure to chlorate is through drinking water, but that chlorate can be present in food, particularly in fruits and vegetables.

EFSA has set a Tolerable Daily Intake for chlorate at 3 µg/kg bw/day (micrograms per kilogram of body weight per day) for long term dietary exposure. The study's estimate of chronic exposure for infants, toddlers and children (up to age 10) suggests that this TDI is being exceeded.

Chlorate in foods originates predominantly from the use of chlorinated water in food processing and the use of hypochlorite based cleaners and chlorine disinfectants these are all widely and legally used in the food industry, including the processing of dried fruit.

To reduce dietary intake of chlorate from drinking water and food the Commission issued a multi-disciplinary action plan at the end of 2017 consisting of:

- Setting a chlorate maximum level in drinking water
- Recommending good food hygiene practices in order to reduce chlorate coming from chlorinated disinfectants
- Setting MRLs for chlorate in regular food at levels based on occurrence data
- Maintaining the MRLs for foods intended to infants and young children at 0.01 mg/kg.

As a result of this, the European Commission and EU Member States have re-started discussions on potential changes to current chlorate MRLs. Discussions were held at the EU Standing Committees in November 2017 and February 2018. At the moment, chlorate MRLs for all food commodities are set at LOD of 0.01mg/kg. It is expected that the MRLs will be increased considering the occurrence data. However, it is not known if the new MRLs will be sufficiently high.

A routine monitoring screening study in food of plant origin, based on 4300 products, by CVUA Stuttgart represented that 10.5% of the samples respectively showed higher levels than 0,01mg/kg. According to the study, highest levels were found in leafy and fruiting vegetables and the following product groups such as dried fruits, canned fruit and vegetables, frozen fruit and vegetables, tree nuts, and organic products are also concerned to be affected to the best knowledge of NDFTA.

In 2016 and 2017, NDFTA tested various dried fruits for the presence of chlorate as part of the Surveillance programme. In total, there were 21 (2016) and 10 (2017) samples tested. Residues of chlorate were found only in the last round of testing in seven samples. All the detected residues have exceeded the current default MRL. All the testing results can be accessed via the Concept Life Sciences (CLS) portal. NDFTA intends to continue testing for chlorate in the upcoming surveillance programmes. NDFTA will keep its members updated on progress of discussions regarding MRLs for chlorates, and also results of ongoing surveillance.

However, we recommend members review the controls in place at their own, and suppliers' facilities, taking particular attention to the following:

- Type of water treatment in place,
- If chlorine is used the levels of residual chlorine in the water,
- Which cleaners and sanitisers are used?
- Controls over residues where chlorine-based compounds are used.

Lastly, we would remind all members that when interpreting the results of residue testing for chlorate, that since the most likely route of contamination is post-harvest, the application of a drying factor is not appropriate.

NDFTA Technical Sub-Committee