

# Perfluorinated Compounds (PFCs)



## Background:

There is a family of chemicals called perfluorinated compounds (PFCs), which include specific variants such as PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctane sulphonate). PFCs have been used in a variety of industrial applications including liquid resistance in packaging.

### **The vast majority (99%+) of paper packaging manufactured in the UK, including by CPI Member Companies, does not use PFCs.**

This majority comprises mostly rigid cardboard boxes, with small amounts (less than 5%) of other forms of packaging (sacks, Tetrapak).

There are speciality applications, such as greaseproof papers, which do use PFCs. However, UK manufacturers have long since moved away from PFOA and PFOS, which are considered of greatest concern.

### **In the small number of specialist applications where PFCs are used, UK manufacturers have ceased using PFOA and PFOS.**

### **Recent media coverage of PFCs**

A recent study from Denmark (1) has suggested that there is a health risk arising from the presence of fluorinated substances in the blood. It is suggested that this is linked to the presence of PFCs in the paper based packaging.

We understand the concerns that this raises but it is important to understand two points:

- The author stresses that she cannot tell whether the fluorinated substances have actually migrated from the packaging into food
- The study recognises that the levels of fluorinated substances in the packaging were within legal limits

So it is not clear that there is any causal link to the packaging, nor is there any suggestion of illegal action by the packaging manufacturers in the study.

### **Actions to reduce PFCs**

Since 2009, PFOS has been restricted through the Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants and major suppliers have phased out its use.

PFOA production in the US and Europe has also fallen dramatically since eight companies signed up to a programme to eliminate the substance. By 2010, signatories were reported to have met the goal of a 95% reduction in product content (2). As indicated above, UK manufacturers of greaseproof papers have acted as part of this initiative.

### **UK Food Standards Agency (FSA) position**

We are in discussion with the FSA and we recognise that it is aware of the situation regarding PFCs. We understand that its previous evaluations have not identified a risk to consumers, but that it will review new research and consider whether exposures are increasing.

The UK Paper and Board Industry will do whatever we can to assist the FSA as it reviews the situation.

### **CPI Position:**

The vast majority (99%+) of paper packaging manufactured in the UK, including by CPI Member Companies, does not use PFCs. In the small number of specialist applications where PFCs are used, UK manufacturers have ceased using PFOA and PFOS.

We support global moves to cease the use of PFCs where possible and, for the specific applications where they are required, to move away from PFOA and PFOS.

The UK Paper and Board sector has a long and successful history in the manufacture and supply of safe materials for use in the food industry in a wide range of applications.

We support the Industry Guideline for the Compliance of Paper & Board Materials and Articles for Food Contact (3) which provides a methodology for establishing the suitability of Paper and Board for specific food contact applications.

The UK Paper and Board Industry continues to work closely with government, both at national and European levels, and with other regulators, particularly the UK Food Standards Agency, to ensure the necessary levels of consumer protection.

- (1) <http://kemi.taenk.dk/bliv-groennere/fluorinated-substances-paper-packaging-passed-cake-table>
- (2) <https://chemicalwatch.com/11013/perfluorinated-chemicals-a-persistent-problem>
- (3) [www.paper.org.uk/current\\_issues/food\\_contact.html](http://www.paper.org.uk/current_issues/food_contact.html)

### Further Information

Further information is available from Andy Barnetson, Director of Packaging Affairs, on 01793 889602 or email [abarnetson@paper.org.uk](mailto:abarnetson@paper.org.uk).

### Confederation of Paper Industries

- The Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI) is the leading trade association representing the UK's Paper-based Industries, comprising paper and board manufacturers and converters, corrugated packaging producers, makers of soft tissue papers, and collectors of paper for recycling.
- CPI represents an industry with an aggregate annual turnover of £6.5 billion, 25,000 direct and more than 100,000 indirect employees.
- For facts on the UK's Paper-based Industries please visit: [www.paper.org.uk](http://www.paper.org.uk).

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