POSITION PAPER

FoodDrinkEurope position on the risk management of furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran

8 December 2025

FoodDrinkEurope would like to reiterate its concerns with the path being taken for the risk management of furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran in baby foods and processed cereal-based foods for infants and young children.
Despite the broad input provided and the existing knowledge gaps illustrated as part of the targeted consultation, we believe that our feedback has not been appropriately taken into consideration to reach proportionate risk management measures for furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran for all Food Business Operators (FBOs).

As with other contaminants in food, to mitigate the concentration levels of furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran, we ask the Commission to embrace the "Think Small First" principle. SMEs make up 99% of the sector (equal to over 300,000 companies) and should not be overlooked when setting new maximum or benchmark levels. New regulations, while emphasizing consumer protection, should also be proportionate, workable and achievable for all FBOs across the EU.

For the current and future management of furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran in foods, we would like to emphasise the following:

- When considering setting maximum concentration levels (**MLs**) for substances in food, based on the ALARA approach, the availability of proven mitigation tools and accurate and validated analytical methods should be the pre-requisite.
- Given the different formation pathways of furan from various precursors in the raw materials (Becalski & Seaman, 2005; Limacher et al., 2007; Van Lancker et al., 2009; Fan, 2015; Palmers et al., 2016), and lack of further mitigation tools, it would not be appropriate to establish MLs at this stage.
- Furthermore, given that harmonised analytical methods are not available at this time for all foods, MLs would be difficult to enforce with the appropriate measurement certainty. This would leave FBOs in a difficult position to be able to make decisions on the release of products on the market from a legal point of view.

For these reasons, the setting of Benchmark levels **(BMLs),** based on 95th percentile of occurrence data, would be a more logical approach for the risk management of furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran. BMLs would provide the needed time to implement reliable measurement methods, and for FBOs to understand occurrence, investigate correlations, and explore possible mitigation measures using new technologies.

- The generic approach of mitigating the concentration of furan, 2-methylfuran and 3-methylfuran in foods coupled to a fixed ML could have consequences on the microbiological safety and overall quality of food.

- When setting levels, we ask the Commission to carefully take into account the different levels achievable across food categories/subcategories, the required processing phases and the available mitigation measures. For instance, for some foods, thermal treatment is required to guarantee their microbiological safety (van Boekel et al., 2010). Modifying thermal treatments may help to mitigate the formation of furan but could compromise the microbiological safety of the final product. The presence of ingredients that mostly contribute to the formation of furan, 2-methylfuran, and 3-methylfuran should also be considered (Schöpf et al., 2025).

- Obtaining sufficient, reliable, and comparable data is indispensable to understanding correlations between ingredients, production processes and occurrences of furans in food categories most prone to its formation. For the latter**, analytical challenges need to be addressed before considering setting maximum levels**. Indeed, it can be observed that the lack of harmonized methods, both for sampling and analysis, causes big variability in the analytical results on the concentration of furans in the final food as consumed (Frank et al., 2024). This is augmented by the volatile nature of furan (www.chemspider.com), and natural variability on the content of furan precursors in the raw materials (Schöpf et al.,2025).

  Without addressing these challenges first, any risk management measure set would not take into account the achievability by FBOs of all sizes nor enforceability by authorities across the European Union.

- We would also like to raise attention on the recently published article '[Furan and alkylfurans in food: recent scientific developments, new occurrence data across product categories and practical risk management measures]**'** (Delatour et al., 2025). This paper presents the latest industry data (>24,000 entries) on the occurrence of furans in several foods. We consider it a valuable contribution to increasing knowledge and understanding of the formation and mitigation of furan to support better science-based decision making.

Considering all the above, we encourage the Commission and Member States to address furan as a process contaminant in all its complexity, including formation, feasible mitigation options and the current technological limitations. **With currently available technologies, further mitigation of furan (and therefore methyl-furans) would not be possible without compromising also the microbiological safety of food**. For this reason, FoodDrinkEurope calls for a more comprehensive approach to furan and methylfuran risk mitigation.

We recall our commitment to ensure food safety and quality. In this context and in line with the Commission initiative on Simplification, we believe that simplification must be addressed in all regulations to actively enhance resilience and competitiveness, enabling Europe's food and drink manufacturers to continue operating, innovating, and delivering safe, sustainably produced, and affordable food for current and future generations. See also FoodDrinkEurope Feedback to DG SANTE's **Food and Feed Safety Simplification Omnibus — Call for Evidence of 14 October 2025** (Link)

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About us

The EU food and drink manufacturing industry is made up of 300,000+ businesses employing 4.7 million people. It generates €260 billion in value added every year and is the largest manufacturing industry in Europe. As an industry comprised of 99% SMEs our enterprises are intimately linked with their local communities. FoodDrinkEurope is the organisation of the European food and drink manufacturing sector.