Chemical Watch is delighted to provide the food contact materials sector homepage – a lens through which you can view our latest coverage about, and relevant to this specific sector. This exciting feature pulls together news stories written about the food contact materials sector, along with coverage of interest to anyone working within this sector. In other words, we’re putting everything relevant to you and your organisation within easy reach.

www.chemicalwatch.com/foodcontactmaterials

US Senator Dianne Feinstein (D–California) has signalled her intention to introduce legislation removing phthalates from food packaging materials.

In a press release, she announced plans to introduce a bill that would phase out the plasticisers from food contact materials over the next five years. It came in the wake of a study showing increased phthalate levels in individuals who regularly eat meals out.

Ms Feinstein noted risks to pregnant women and lower testosterone levels for men, as well as learning and behaviour problems in children, from the substances. But she said despite those concerns, “it’s nearly impossible for families to avoid some level of exposure. These chemicals can be found throughout the food supply chain, from the plastic gloves worn to handle food to the containers used for packaging."

“Families have the right to know that their food wasn’t packaged using plastic that contains harmful chemicals,” she added.

Phthalates were among substances recommended not to be used intentionally, where suitable alternatives exist, in a recent guidance document from the industry group Food Safety Alliance for Packaging (FSAP).

See: www.chemicalwatch.com/65738 (Published April 2018)

UK-based NGO CHEM Trust has called on EU regulators to “phase out" the use of groups of similar chemicals to prevent substitution of one hazardous substance with a related one that has similar properties.

In separate letters addressed to Echa, the European Food Safety Authority (Efsa), and the European Commission’s Health Commissioner, the NGO says “the only exception to this should be if industry has good data showing the chemical they wish to use does not have the same properties as those of the chemical being restricted”.

The letters coincide with the publication of a report which highlights the common industry practice of substituting bisphenol A (BPA) with bisphenol S (BPS), both of which, Echa’s risk assessment committee has said, may have similar toxicological profiles.

BPA is already on the REACH candidate list of SVHCs on three counts. Not only is it toxic to reproduction, but it also has endocrine-disrupting properties which cause probable serious effects to human health and the environment.

It is used in thermal paper till receipts – although that is facing a restriction from 2020 – as well as polycarbonate water bottles and food can linings.

Echa has started investigating BPS by asking industry for more safety data rather than regulating its use, CHEM Trust says.

Additionally, “as far as CHEM Trust is aware Efsa – responsible for assessing chemicals in food packaging – has not reexamined the toxicity of BPS or other bisphenols” the NGO says.

According to the report – From BPA to BPZ: a toxic soup? How companies switch from a known hazardous chemical to one with similar properties, and how regulators could stop them – most companies selling BPS are “claiming that it has no hazards”.

See: www.chemicalwatch.com/65558 (Published March 2018)

The Food Safety Alliance for Packaging (FSAP) says its proposal goes beyond...
regulatory requirements and suppliers could use it as a best practice to formulate food packaging products for consumers.

The document lists 15 different packaging parts and components, with the names of chemicals or groups of chemicals contained in them. For each one, there is a description, details of existing international controls and a recommendation to either replace with an alternative or minimise use.

The substances it recommends not using intentionally, where suitable alternatives exist, include:

- phthalates – used in any packaging component;
- REACH substances of very high concern (SVHCs) – used in any packaging component;
- bisphenol A (BPA) – used in can coatings and plastic resins;
- perfluoroalkyl and perfluoroalkyl compounds (PFASs), such as PFOA and related substances – used in grease-proof coated paper and board; and
- styrene – used in polystyrene films and rigid structures.

On others, such as polystyrene and residual printing solvents, the guideline recommends packagers minimise use.

FSAP selected the substances using criteria based on national and international regulations. There were other considerations, such as consumer safety, environmental protection as well as “negative impact on product quality and consumer and retailer interest”.

Several major food and packaging brands also contributed to the list, which it will review and update “periodically”, it says.

FSAP is the technical committee of the US Institute of Packaging Professionals (IOPP). It includes representatives from food companies and the food packaging supply chain.

See: www.chemicalwatch.com/65317 (Published March 2018)

**Australia and New Zealand will not regulate food packaging**

The authority that develops standards for food in Australia and New Zealand has decided not to regulate food packaging materials.

The decision comes after Food Standards Australia New Zealand (Fsanz) concluded they pose no health risk at current exposure levels.

However, the agency is working with an industry group to publish nonregulatory guidelines on food packaging. Leise Berven, a senior scientist at Fsanz, told Chemical Watch’s recent Food Contact Regulations US conference.

And, she said, it is continuing to study issues related to “active and intelligent packaging”, and nanomaterials.

**Input**

Fsanz began seeking input on food contact regulation in 2014. In January 2016, it published results from the 24th Australian Total Diet Study (ATDS). This investigated the levels of 30 food packaging chemicals and printing inks in 81 foods and beverages.

It found that most products do not contain detectable levels of the substances, which thus present a low risk to the population. However, Fsanz decided more data was needed on the phthalates DEHP and DINP.

Dr Berven said follow-up surveys conducted last year found that exposure estimates for those substances in products analysed was “well below” levels of concern. A survey on mineral oil hydrocarbons in paper packaging also raised no concern.

She noted that many businesses marketing packaged food in Australia also do business in the US and the EU, which do regulate food contact materials (FCMs).

“We are probably seeing compliance with international regulations. That may be why we got such low survey results,” Dr Berven said.

Fsanz decided that “any kind of prescriptive approach or any kind of positive/negative list was not warranted by our risk assessment,” she said.

The agency completed an “abandonment report” last year, which is the formal document published when a decision is made not to finalise a regulation after proposals are floated.

However, Dr Berven said, industry stakeholders did want guidance.

Fsanz is therefore working with the Australia and New Zealand Food and Grocery Council to publish a packaging information guide on that organisation’s website. It cannot appear under its own aegis, she said, because the agency is “not allowed to interpret the code” outside formal regulatory action.

See: www.chemicalwatch.com/64928 (Published March 2018)

**Food contact materials best-of page**

To showcase some of our best coverage from this sector, Chemical Watch has pulled together a sample of our best food contact materials articles from recent months, which are available to view right away, or via a quick and simple one-time registration (free of charge).