



Research in service of society

From the packet to the pan: keeping harmful chemicals out of your food

Ensuring what we eat is safe doesn't stop at testing the food itself. Everything that comes into contact with food as it is produced, packaged, transported, stored, prepared or consumed also needs to be safe! EU legislation ensures that no materials that come into contact with our food contaminate it. Scientists at the Joint Research Centre are examining these materials to develop Europe-wide standards and reliable test methods that ensure safe food remains safe. Products imported into the EU are subject to the same strict controls.



DID YOU KNOW:

- That there are an estimated ten thousand different materials used for packaging food.
- That every day, 76 million cans of food are opened in households across the EU.

Safe jars for baby food

When researchers at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) looked into the safety of the packaging of baby food, they discovered that the lids of glass jars containing baby food released unacceptable amounts of plasticisers into the food inside. This discovery led to new EU-rules on the maximum amount of plastic additives in lids of cans containing baby food. The JRC is now assisting national laboratories in measuring the amount of plasticisers in lids and their seals so that the new rules can be implemented effectively. With the new rules in place and with strong control mechanisms to enforce them, baby food is safer. Researchers are also looking into the safety of containers for other types of food.

Safe recycled food packaging

Many plastic bottles are being recycled to reduce waste. But can we be sure that no traces of chemicals used for their cleaning are left in the bottles once they are recycled? The JRC participated in a Europe-wide project in which recycled plastic bottles were tested for traces of chemicals and other substances. The results of these tests led to new EU-guidelines for the safe recycling of materials.

Analysing everything that touches your food

The JRC has more than ten years' experience of analysing materials that come into contact with food. It has established a database with the chemical and physical characteristics of more than 400 substances used in the production of food contact materials, as well as 350 methods for their analysis. The JRC has also set up a Community Reference Laboratory for Food Contact Materials that helps other laboratories within the EU to ensure the highest quality standards when testing food contact materials.



Want to know more: www.jrc.ec.europa.eu/research4u