

FSA issues call for evidence on safety of plastics recovered from the open environment

The Food Standards Agency is calling for retailers, manufacturers and suppliers to submit evidence on the safety of plastics which are recovered from the open environment and recycled for use as food contact material.

The call for evidence covers 'ocean-bound' plastics, as well as those sourced from the ocean or land. Plastic acquired from established municipal waste and recycling collection systems are considered to be out of scope.

An [initial evaluation](#) on ocean-bound plastic by the Joint Expert Group on Food Contact Materials (FCMJEG), which provides independent advice to the FSA, found that on the available evidence, it has not been possible to guarantee that the use of this material in food contact products is without risk – either in direct contact with food, or as a middle layer. Further evidence to inform a full comprehensive risk assessment is required.

The FCMJEG's initial evaluation noted that current knowledge on potential contamination is limited, meaning the presence of substances which are carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction (CMR) is unknown.

Timothy Chandler, Food Contact Materials Senior Policy Advisor at the Food Standards Agency, said:

“We fully support the sustainability principles behind recycling and reusing waste plastic from environmental sources, but we must ensure that these efforts are done in way which doesn't compromise food safety.

“This call for evidence will form part of the appropriate scientific committee's comprehensive risk assessment on the safety of these materials in food contact packaging and products later this year.”

The FSA is also keen to know how manufacturers and suppliers take into account material which is sourced from countries with different waste management infrastructures to the UK and EU, and where information on the previous use or misuse of the plastics is less certain.

More details on the information the FSA is seeking can be found [here](#). Responses should be submitted to environmentalplastic@food.gov.uk by 6pm on Tuesday, 20 September 2022.