[Pesticide residues in food: risk to consumers remains low]

Food consumed in the European Union continues to be largely free of pesticide residues or to contain residues that fall within legal limits, new figures show. The latest monitoring report published by EFSA reveals that more than 97% of food samples collected across the EU in 2015 were within legal limits, with just over 53% free of quantifiable residues. The figures are in line with those recorded in 2014.

- In 2015, the reporting countries analysed 84,341 samples for 774 pesticides.
- The majority of the samples (69.3%) originated from EU Member States, Iceland and Norway; 25.8% concerned products imported from third countries. The origin of the remaining samples was not reported.
- 97.2% of the samples analysed fell within the limits permitted in EU legislation. 53.3% of the samples tested were free of quantifiable residues while 43.9% contained residues not exceeding legal limits.
- Legal limits were exceeded in 5.6% of the samples from non-EU countries, down from 6.5% in 2014.
- For products from EU and EEA countries, legal limits were exceeded in 1.7% of samples, a slight year-on-year increase (from 1.6%).
- Of the samples of foods intended for infants and young children, 96.5% were free of residues or residues fell within legal limits.
- For organic foods, 99.3% were residue-free or within legal limits.
- The majority of samples of animal products (84.4%) were free of quantifiable residues.

Use our [interactive report] to go beyond the headline figures and find out more about the findings from 2015.

As part of its annual report, EFSA analyses the results of the EU-coordinated control programme (EUCP), under which reporting countries analyse samples from the same “basket” of food items. For 2015 the products were aubergines, bananas, broccoli, virgin olive oil, orange juice, peas, sweet peppers, table grapes, wheat, butter and eggs.

The highest exceedance rate recorded was for broccoli (3.4% of samples), followed by table grapes (1.7%). Rare exceedances were found for olive oil, orange juice and chicken eggs. No exceedances were recorded for butter.

EFSA also performed a dietary risk assessment based on the EUCP. For both short-term (acute) and long-term (chronic) exposure the Authority concluded that the risk to consumers was low.

The same products were also analysed in 2012, since when the overall exceedance rate has fallen slightly from 0.9% to 0.8% in 2015.

In its report EFSA makes a number of recommendations for increasing the efficiency of the EU-coordinated and national control programmes.

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Estonian-President-visits-euLISA

The President of the Republic of Estonia Kersti Kaljulaid met with the Executive Director of eu-LISA Krum Garkov today in the headquarters of the Agency in Tallinn, Estonia. The principle purpose of the meeting was to discuss the evolving role of the large-scale IT systems in contributing to safety and security in Europe.

Mr Garkov welcomed President Kaljulaid and thanked her on behalf of the Agency for the interest and support demonstrated by the high-level visit. According to the Executive Director it gives a clear sign that the issues of an open, yet safe and secure European Union are high up on the European agenda. Likewise are matters related to innovation, digital transformation and information technology, which increasingly affect the way we manage EU justice and home affairs. Since eu-LISA is the Agency that has a role in both EU values and modern technologies, the importance of eu-LISA for Member States and for the EU as a whole will continue to grow.

President Kaljulaid and the Mr Garkov discussed the impact of transformations in the area of EU freedom, security and justice, which has become increasingly reliant on modern technologies and information sharing. The Executive Director elaborated on the eu-LISA 2017 priorities related to the evolution of the existing IT systems and the integration of new ones in line with their respective legal basis. Both of these major task areas are linked to the revision of the Agency’s mandate and with legal proposals that are currently being negotiated at institutional level.

During a brief tour of the Agency's current headquarters, located in the EU House in Tallinn, the President and Mr Garkov spoke about progress on the new headquarters building that will house eu-LISA in Tallinn. The expanded tasks of the Agency related to the current as well as the new systems have made the need for a larger working space increasingly evident.

President Kaljulaid also met and spoke to the staff of eu-LISA, with the offices in Strasbourg and Brussels connected via video conference.

Links:

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[Press release – Migration: MEPs to debate EU return policies – Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs]()

Recent proposals to expedite the return of migrants who are not entitled to refugee status will be debated in the Civil Liberties Committee on Tuesday morning.

The [proposals](), which include concrete recommendations to member states, such as on detaining people who have received a return decision as a measure to prevent them from absconding, were presented by the European Commission on 7 March. The EU Action Plan on Return and accompanying recommendations follow the Malta summit in February where member states highlighted the need for a review of the EU return policy.

MEPs will discuss the proposals with the European Commission.

You can follow the committee meeting on [EP LIVE]().

When: Tuesday, 11 April, 10.00 – 11.10

Where: József Antall room 2Q2, European Parliament (Brussels)

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Hamburg Süd by Maersk Line, subject to conditions

Both Maersk Line and HSDG are active worldwide in **container liner shipping**. The clearance is conditional upon the withdrawal of HSDG from **five consortia on trade routes** connecting (i) Northern Europe and Central America/Caribbean, (ii) Northern Europe and West Coast South America, (iii) Northern Europe and Middle East, (iv) the Mediterranean and West Coast South America and (v) the Mediterranean and East Coast South America. On these routes, the merged entity would have faced insufficient competition after the transaction.

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Competitive shipping services are essential for European companies and for the EU's economy as a whole. The commitments offered by Maersk Line and HSDG will maintain a healthy level of competition to the benefit of the very many EU companies that depend on these container shipping services*."

The Commission's competition concerns

The proposed transaction would lead to the combination of two leading container liner shipping companies. Maersk Line is the largest container shipping company, while HSDG is number nine worldwide. Like several other carriers, Maersk Line and HSDG offer their services on trade routes through cooperation agreements with other shipping companies. These are known as *"consortia"* or *"alliances"* and are based on vessel sharing agreements where members decide jointly on capacity setting, scheduling and ports of call, which are all important parameters of competition.

The Commission examined the effects of the merger on competition in this specific market for container liner shipping on seventeen trade routes connecting Europe with the Americas, Asia, the Middle-East, Africa and Australia/New Zealand.

The Commission found that the merger, as initially notified, would have created new links between the previously unconnected entities Maersk Line and five of the consortia HSDG belongs to (Eurosal 1/SAWC, Eurosal 2/SAWC, EPIC 2, CCWM/MEDANDES and MESA).

According to the Commission's analysis, this **would have resulted in anti-competitive effects** on the corresponding five trade routes (Northern Europe and Central America/Caribbean; Northern Europe and West Coast South America; Northern Europe and Middle East; Mediterranean and West Coast South America;

Mediterranean and East Coast South America). In particular, these links could have enabled the merged entity to influence key parameters of competition, such as capacity, for a very large proportion of those markets, to the detriment of their commercial customers and, ultimately, of consumers.

The proposed transaction would also create (a) limited links between Maersk Line and HSDG in the markets for short-sea shipping and “tramp services” (unscheduled, on demand shipping), as well as (b) limited links between the two companies’ activities in container liner shipping and the container terminals, harbour towage, freight forwarding, container manufacturing and inland transportation sectors where Maersk Line or other companies belonging to the Maersk Group are active.

However, in both areas, the Commission found no competition concerns, in particular because several other service providers are active in these markets.

The proposed commitments

In order to address the Commission’s competition concerns, Maersk offered to terminate the participation of HSDG in the five consortia (Eurosal 1/SAWC, Eurosal 2/SAWC, EPIC 2, CCWM/MEDANDES and MESA). This will entirely remove the problematic links between Maersk Line and HSDG’s consortia that would have been created by the transaction.

HSDG will continue to operate as part of the five consortia during the notice period to guarantee an orderly exit. However, a monitoring trustee will ensure that no anti-competitive information is shared between these five consortia and the merged entity during that notice period.

In view of the proposed remedies, the Commission concluded that the proposed transaction, as modified, would no longer raise competition concerns. The decision is conditional upon full compliance with the commitments.

Companies and products

HSDG operates 130 container vessels. HSDG markets its services through its global Hamburg Süd brand and its CCNI (Chile) and Aliança (Brazil) brands. HSDG is a member of several consortia and in particular:

Trade route	**Consortium**
Northern Europe to Central America / Caribbean	Eurosal 1/SAWC
Northern Europe to West Coast South America	Eurosal 2/SAWC
Northern Europe to Middle East	EPIC 2
Mediterranean to West Coast South America	CCWM/MEDANDES
Mediterranean-East Coast South America	MESA

Maersk Line operates 611 container vessels, 324 of which are chartered, and sells its container liner shipping services worldwide. It markets its services through the Maersk Line, Safmarine, SeaLand (Intra-Americas), MCC Transport (Intra-Asia) and SeaGo Line (Intra-Europe) brands. In addition, the Maersk Group also provides container terminal services, freight forwarding services, inland transportation, container manufacturing, and harbour towage services.

Merger control rules and procedures

The transaction was notified to the Commission on 20 February 2017.

The Commission has the duty to assess mergers and acquisitions involving companies with a turnover above certain thresholds (see Article 1 of the Merger Regulation) and to prevent concentrations that would significantly impede competition in the EEA or any substantial part of it.

The vast majority of notified mergers do not pose competition problems and are cleared after a routine review. From the moment a transaction is notified, the Commission generally has a total of 25 working days to decide whether to grant approval (Phase I) or to start an in-depth investigation (Phase II).

More information will be available on the competition website, in the Commission’s public case register under the case number M.8330.