

Fact bite #58



Novel food contact materials

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Food
Packaging
Forum

“Novel” food contact materials use new substances, structures, or technologies not yet covered by existing authorizations or long-established practices. According to EU regulations, food contact materials (FCMs) must prevent harmful transfer of chemicals or particles to food – this goes for novel materials, too.

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Today's approach to assessing material safety focuses on intentionally added substances, but it often overlooks non-intentionally added substances (NIAS) that can be harmful and transfer into food, such as byproducts, impurities, or degradation compounds.

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While many novel materials are marketed as “plastic free” or “100% natural”, this does not mean they are free of potentially harmful chemicals that migrate into the food, such as additives, NIAS, or pesticides in the case of bio-based materials.

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While climate change from greenhouse gas emissions is an important impact area to consider when calculating a product's sustainability, it is not the only one. Other impacts such as water use, sourcing, plastic pollution, recoverability, and chemicals of concern are important as well. To be both novel and sustainable, new materials need to be properly assessed for the wide range of impacts the evidence shows they can have on the environment and health.

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