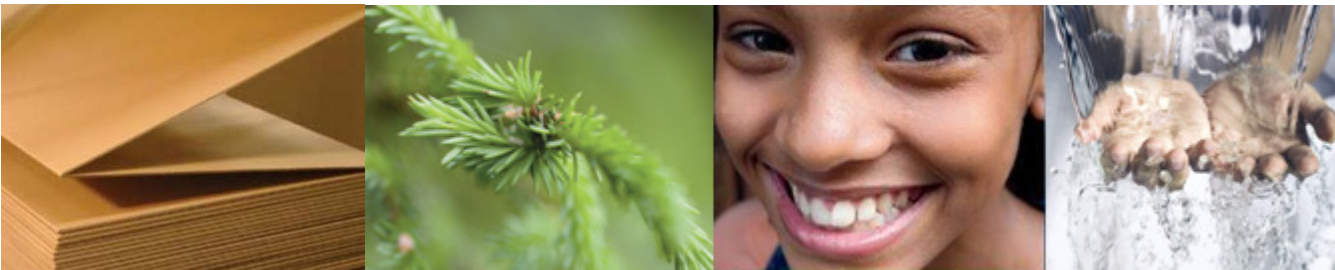


Mineral oils in food contact packaging



Recent studies on mineral oil hydrocarbons found in foodstuffs have raised questions about consumer safety. Mineral oils come in many types and are commonly present in food. According to the recent studies, the traces of mineral oil in the food are thought to arise by their migration from the inks present both on the printed surface of the packaging and in recycled fibre, principally newspapers, used in the production of packaging.

Although no toxicological studies on the effects of human exposure to traces of mineral oil hydrocarbons exist currently, the paper and packaging industry takes this matter very seriously.

The German Federal Risk Assessment Authority (BfR), the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and many food packaging companies are currently investigating the situation, and looking for solutions throughout the value chain. The opinion from EFSA is expected in September 2011.

In the absence of clear regulatory guidance, the paper and board sector is being proactive, in particular by investigating the possibilities of phasing out materials containing mineral oil in their production processes. Eliminating the root cause is the most sustainable option. This can be done by phasing out the use of mineral oil based printing inks and chemicals in both packaging and printed papers. Such technology changes will take time. As a start, packaging companies are making commitments to use only mineral oil free inks for printing their packaging and, wherever possible, using recovered paper types with minimal mineral oil content.

The European paper-based packaging industry has been a pioneer in developing and setting the standards for food contact paper-based packaging together with measures to ensure that the standards are met. These standards form a quality management system to minimise any incidents and to take corrective measures as science develops. This approach is considered to be best practice by the authorities and will continue to be applied when designing packaging in its entirety.

The paper packaging value chain is very committed to play its part in bringing solutions to this issue. Its members are in active dialogue with national and European food safety authorities as well as with other key actors in the chain such as ink producers and publishers. The cooperation and commitment from all those parties involved is indispensable to the solutions that eliminate unwanted substances from the recycling system.

Treating consumer protection as the highest priority, while at the same time respecting sustainability and the goal of a recycling economy, is essential in pursuing the objective of providing safe food packaging.

Industry Guideline for the Compliance of Paper and Board Materials and Articles for Food Contact by CEPI and CITPA, 2010, and Good Manufacturing Practice for the Manufacture of Paper and Board for Food Contact by CEPI, 2010.