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NEW TRICYCLAZOLE MRL IN RICE

At its meeting on 16/17 February, the EU's standing committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed supported a Commission proposal to reduce the tricyclazole residue limit from 1mg/kg to 0.01mg/kg. The Regulation foresees that, in the absence of a consumer health risk, the EU shall "allow for the normal marketing, processing and consumption of rice" from the 2016 crop on which tricyclazole was used. For this rice, the existing limit of 1mg/kg will therefore continue to apply.

The estimated date for the publication of the proposal is July 2017 (the precise date is not yet known). The Regulation will enter into force 20 days after publication. The practical implications are as follows:

For rice other than Basmati:

The existing MRL of 1mg/kg applies to all rice "imported or placed on the market" before the entry into force of the Regulation (estimated July 2017). As explained by the Commission in an explanatory note to Member States on the proposal (January 13, 2017):

"Placed on the market" should be interpreted in line with Art. 3(8) of Reg. (EC) No 178/2002: "placing on the market" means the holding of food or feed for the purpose of sale, including offering for sale or any other form of transfer, whether free of charge or not, and the sale, distribution, and other forms of transfer themselves;

Therefore any consignment of rice already harvested and held for the purpose of sale (including the storage of paddy rice at farmers' warehouses) is considered as "placed on the market".

Rice sold to or present on the retail market after July 2017 containing residues in excess of 0.01mg/kg is therefore legally compliant provided it is from the 2016 European crop (the entirety of which is already 'placed on the market' as understood by EU law) or imported before July 2017.

For Basmati rice:

As Basmati rice is generally left to mature before being brought to the market, the Regulation allows an additional six months transitional period. As a result, the existing MRL of 1mg/kg will continue to apply to any Basmati rice sold to or present on the market (whether at retail, wholesale or rice mill stage) after January 2018 (estimated date) provided that it was imported prior to January 2018.

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