

Europe bans baby bottles with Bisphenol-A

November 25 2010

Europe on Thursday banned baby bottles containing the chemical Bisphenol-A as of early next year over fears it may harm the health of children throughout the EU's half a billion population.

Parents across the European Union, the world's biggest open market, "can be sure that as of mid-2011 plastic infant feeding bottles will not include BPA", said John Dalli, commissioner in charge of health and consumer policy. "This is good news for European consumers."

The ban will see the "manufacture of polycarbonate infant feeding bottles with BPA" outlawed from March 1, 2011, and from June 1, 2011, "the placing on the market and the importation into the union of these bottles will be prohibited", the commission underlined in a statement.

Dalli's spokesman Frederic Vincent told AFP that the commission successfully "tried its luck" by bringing forward a proposal originally intended for presentation in early 2011 and seek backing for a ban before a committee of national government experts already scheduled to meet Thursday.

The decision does not require the approval of the European Parliament, which in any case called in June for such a ban.

"This is the result of months of discussion and exchange of views between the commission's services, the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA), the member states and the industry," a delighted commission

added.

Canada became in October the first country in the world to classify Bisphenol-A as a toxic substance despite industry opposition.

Only two EU countries, France and Denmark, had unilaterally imposed bans on baby bottles with the controversial substance. Danish authorities went a step further by extending the prohibition to all food products for children up to three years old.

Bans are also in place in Australia, Canada and a few US states.

EFSA issued in September an opinion by experts on the chemical, which said that Bisphenol-A was safe in very small quantities, but also pointed to areas of uncertainty.

"It cannot be excluded that there might be an effect on the development, immune response or tumour promotion," Dalli said in a statement on October 7.

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Citation: Europe bans baby bottles with Bisphenol-A (2010, November 25) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-11-europe-baby-bottles-bisphenol-a.html>

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