

Food contact additives Working across industries on regulation and research affecting thousands of food contact additive substances Food contact additives cover thousands of substances and affect dozens of sectors, from the chemicals industry to plastics, packaging, paper and board, coatings, inks, ceramics, adhesives - and the food industry, of course.

As a key stakeholder in regulatory developments affecting food contact additives, Cefic FCA (Food Contact Additives) has been working horizontally across sectors with many stakeholders, both within the chemical industry and with other industry sectors. At Cefic, the advocacy, monitoring, networking and awareness-raising activities are centralised by the Food Contact Additives group (FCA), which has a membership of about 40 companies and 18 trade associations and enjoys close cooperation with PlasticsEurope.

Food contact additives, which are anything that may come into contact with food during processing, storage and cooking, are a sensitive subject of obvious concern to regulators and consumers. As food contact additives cover more than 4,000 different substances, they are of interest to many sectors within the chemical industry as well.

Current activities of the FCA cover the following main topics:

EU regulatory consolidation for plastic food-contact materials

The EU Commission is currently consolidating and recasting the various existing legislations related to plastic food-contact materials. The expected result is a EU regulation covering food contact plastics measures in 2010.

The new EU regulation, however, is likely to be more than just a dusting-off exercise. The plastics legislative re-cast exercise is considering new grounds, such as multilayer materials or a new testing regime, and will affect stakeholders more widely and from new angles. Cefic is joining forces with other stakeholders to ensure the outcome is an acceptable and realistic regulation.

EU 7th framework programme and FACET project

Cefic FCA is also actively involved in the FACET project, which stands for "Flavours, Additives and food Contact material Exposure Task" and was launched by the Commission in September 2008.

FACET aims at developing a software tool to assess dietary exposure to food additives, flavouring and substances that migrate from food contact materials and articles. The model, scheduled to be completed in 2012, is intended to be made available free of charge to authorities and industry.

The Commission is investing € 6 million in FACET and industry has pledged an equivalent amount, mostly in the form of "sweat equity." Research involves 20 research institutes and partners across Europe and is coordinated by University College in Dublin.

Inventory of printing inks

Swiss authorities have introduced in their legislation a recommendation from the Council of Europe on printing inks for food contact. The current Council of Europe inventory of authorised substances, however, needs updating.

Cefic FCA has offered to be involved in the elaboration of this new inventory via its DOL (database on line) IT tool. About 4,000 substances used in printing inks have been registered on this inventory. A complete and reliable inventory is of major importance to the industry as it is likely to become a new international reference inventory.