Acrylamide in Food
Guidance for Caterers

Food businesses will be required to put in place specific measures to minimise acrylamide levels in certain foods under new EU legislation that came into force on 11 April 2018.

What is acrylamide and why is it a problem?
Consumption of acrylamide in food increases the risk of developing cancer.

Acrylamide is formed from naturally-occurring asparagine and sugars in certain foods cooked to higher than 120ºC in low moisture conditions. It forms mainly in baked or fried carbohydrate-rich foods such as cereals and potatoes.

More acrylamide is produced in carbohydrate rich foods that are:
- dry
- sugary
- cooked at high temperatures

Does this legislation apply to my business?
It applies to all food businesses that produce and/or serve these foods:
- Bread
- Fine bakery wares i.e. cookies, biscuits, rusks, cereal bars, scones, cornets, wafers, crumpets, gingerbread, crisp breads and bread substitutes
- Cut and deep fried products from fresh potatoes e.g. chips and French fries
- Products from potato dough e.g. potato crisps, snacks and crackers
- Breakfast cereals (excluding porridge)

What do I need to do to comply?
The legislation requires you to:
- Be aware of acrylamide as a food safety hazard and have a general understanding of how it is formed in the foods that you produce and/or serve.
- Take legally-specified measures (in Annex II Part A of the legislation) to minimise acrylamide formation and keep records to prove this

What are these mitigation measures?
The mitigation measures only apply to bread, fine bakery wares and cut and deep-fried potato products.

Bread and fine bakery wares
1. When possible and if compatible with food safety and the production process:
   - Increase the moisture content of dough
   - Extend yeast fermentation times
   - Lower oven temperatures and extend cooking times if necessary
   - Avoid dark roasting the crust
2. Display and follow available industry colour guides when baking or toasting bread and bakery products.
3. Follow manufacturers’ cooking instructions carefully when finishing par-baked products.
Cut and deep fried potato products

1. Use potato varieties with lower sugar content when they are available and compatible with the product.

2. Do not store potatoes that will be deep fried in the fridge.

3. Before deep frying potato products:
   • Wash and soak in cold water (30 mins to 2 hours) then rinse in clean water; or
   • Soak for 5 minutes in warm water then rinse in clean water; or
   • Blanch the potatoes.

4. When deep frying potato products:
   • Use oils and fats which allow them to fry quicker and/or at lower temperatures
   • Fry as low below 175° as practical
   • Skim oils and fats frequently to remove fines and crumbs

5. Display and follow available industry colour guides when deep frying potato products.

6. Follow manufacturers’ cooking instructions when deep frying frozen potato products.

Are there any other mitigation measures?

There are additional measures for caterers if they are part of a larger organisation (or franchise) and are centrally supplied with relevant foods. These measures can be found in Annex II Part B of the acrylamide legislation.

Central supply

Only accept foods from suppliers that have implemented all the mitigation measures in the acrylamide legislation (not the reduced measures in this guidance note).

Bread and fine bakery wares

Monitor the acrylamide levels in finished products to verify they are below the benchmark levels.

Cut and deep fried potato products.

1. Follow the supplier’s storage instructions.

2. Work with standard operating procedures and calibrated fryers equipped with computerised timers and programmed to standard settings (time-temperature).

3. Monitor the acrylamide levels in finished products to verify they are below the benchmark levels.

Coffee

1. Ensure the acrylamide levels in supplied coffee is below the benchmark levels.

2. Provide a justification from the supplier if this is not possible due to the blend and roast characteristics of the product.

This Management Guide was created by Melissa Thompson MIH of Safer Food Scores

food hygiene, health and safety training, consultancy

T +44 (0)1442 877322
W www.saferfoodscores.co.uk

Further resources

European Union Law – establishing mitigation measures and benchmark levels for the reduction of the presence of acrylamide in food

eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017R2158&from=EN

Food Standards Agency – legislation on acrylamide mitigation in food

www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/regulation/europelegislation-on-acrylamide-mitigation-in-food#overlay-context=user

DISCLAIMER

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