

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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POLICY

Voluntary Public

Date: 1/15/2013

GAIN Report Number: BE3002

Belgium-Luxembourg

Post: The Hague

Belgium bans use of Bisphenol A

Report Categories:

Trade Policy Monitoring

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and
Standards - Narrative

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Report Highlights:

In September 2012, Belgium passed a ban on the use of Bisphenol-A, or BPA in the packaging of food products for children less than three years old and also in plastic articles like spoons and plates for the same age group. The ban went into force on January 1st of this year.

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BPA is a compound that is used to make polycarbonate polymers and epoxy resins, along with other materials used to make plastics. For many decades, it has been widely used, especially in food packaging. It notably strengthens polycarbonate plastics which otherwise would be more prone to cracks when impacted. Used in resins as a liner, it protects metal food containers from corrosion from aqueous and/or acid content, notably in canned food and canned drinks. It is also widely used to protect metal lids on glass jars (including baby food).

Uncertainty in some of the findings of the 2010 European Food Safety Authority EFSA research triggered the Belgians to take measures and formulate this new law. The Belgian Government GOBE indicated that there is no reason to expand the ban at this point as they want to wait for the outcome of the EFSA assessment of the safety of BPA in food packaging which is expected later this year.

The Belgian food retailers and industry have not reacted against the ban. Since it concerns food for children younger than three years, the ban targets in practice baby food. This market seems to be dominated by Belgian producers. U.S. exports of baby food to Belgium are negligible.

The Belgian food processing industry and producers of plastic articles do not use BPA. Imported plastic articles for children less than three years old will be checked on BPA and this will be performed by the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain FAVV. Control checks on BPA in the packaging of food products for children less than three years old will start later this year, most likely as of July 2013.

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