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Nearly 200 potential mammary carcinogens found in food contact materials: new study highlights regulatory shortcomings

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Researchers from the [Food Packaging Forum](#) identify and discuss nearly 200 potential breast carcinogens that have been detected in food contact materials (FCMs) on the market.

Many nations have food contact material legislation intended to protect citizens from hazardous chemicals, often specifically by regulating

As cancer is one of the few health endpoints specifically targeted in FCM regulations and testing, carcinogenic chemicals in food packaging and other food contact materials and articles should not be commonplace.

“This study is important because it shows that there is a huge opportunity for prevention of human exposure to breast cancer-causing chemicals,” said Jane Muncke, Managing Director of the Food Packaging Forum and co-author of the study.

“The potential for cancer prevention by reducing hazardous chemicals in your daily life is underexplored and deserves much more attention.”

By comparing a recently published list of potential breast carcinogens developed by scientists at the Silent Spring Institute with the Food Packaging Forum's own Database on migrating and extractable food contact chemicals ([FCCmigex](#)), the authors find that 189 potential breast carcinogens have been detected in FCMs, including 143 in plastics and 89 in paper or board.

“Identifying the presence of these hazardous chemicals in food contact materials was possible thanks to our FCCmigex Database,” said Lindsey Parkinson, Data Scientist and Scientific Editor at the Food Packaging Forum and lead author of the study.

“This resource brings valuable information from thousands of published scientific studies on chemicals in food contact materials together into a single and easily explorable place.”

When limiting the comparison to the most recently available studies in FCCmigex (2020-2022) that used migration experiments that mimic realistic conditions, there is evidence of exposure to 76 suspected mammary carcinogens from FCMs purchased all over the world, 61 of which (80%) are from plastics.

This indicates continued exposure of the global population to these chemicals under realistic use conditions.

Despite existing regulations intended to limit carcinogenic substances in FCMs, the study highlights gaps in current regulatory frameworks.

The food contact articles were purchased within the last few years from markets in highly regulated regions, including the EU and the US.

“Our findings imply that chronic exposure of the entire population to suspected mammary carcinogens from FCMs is the norm and highlights an important, but currently underappreciated, opportunity for prevention,” the authors explain.

Source: [Food Packaging Forum Foundation](#)

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