

# Switzerland bans the use of BPA and BPS in thermal paper

First European country to vote to prohibit both substances

21 May 2019 / Alternatives assessment & substitution, Bisphenols, Retail, Switzerland

Switzerland has become the first country in Europe to ban bisphenol S (BPS) and bisphenol A (BPA) from being used in thermal paper, after the Federal Council voted in favour of their prohibition.

The decision, approved on 7 April, will enter into force on 1 June. The use of the two substances will be banned in thermal paper at a concentration equal to or greater than 0.02% by weight. Companies will need to comply by 1 June 2020.



BPA is on the EU's candidate list for its reprotoxic and endocrine-disrupting properties and was **subject<sup>1</sup>** to an EU ban in 2016, which will apply from 2020.

As a consequence, BPS, has increasingly been used by paper manufacturers across Europe as an **alternative<sup>2</sup>** to BPA. It is not subject to EU restrictions but there are **concerns<sup>3</sup>** that it has similar effects to BPA.

The regulatory process started in Switzerland "after the decision of the EU to ban BPA from thermal paper", the scientific collaborator for chemicals risk assessment at the Federal Office of Public Health Anne-Laure Demierre told Chemical Watch.

Authorities took into consideration "the growing concerns regarding BPS based on the scientific literature", she added.

According to Dr Demierre, the restriction was not only important to prevent people from exposure. It was also meant to "give a signal" not to substitute BPA with BPS.

And the signal, she added, was also a way of telling industry "not to invest in alternatives which could face the same problem as BPA".

The Swiss restriction proposal was part of a broader package for which a four-month public consultation, in which stakeholders from the thermal paper industry had the opportunity to provide comments on the draft proposal, was launched at the end of April 2018.

After this there followed a further inter-service consultation, and the package was finally approved by the Federal Council.

Switzerland is to publish "soon" an analysis to assess how the use of BPA alternatives in the country has evolved. In 2015 a similar study found that the main colour developer used in thermal papers in Switzerland was BPA (about 80%), while BPS was found in "minor quantities", around 3%, Dr Demierre said.

NGOs welcomed the Swiss decision. ClientEarth told Chemical Watch that it "can only agree that BPA should be regulated with BPS, following a grouping approach", while CHEM Trust called the Swiss decision "a welcome step" considering "the lack of EU progress in controlling BPS use".

However CHEM Trust, which has long **raised**<sup>4</sup> concerns on the risks linked to BPS, warned about the fact that "there are many closely-related bisphenols with endocrine disrupting properties".

## EU developments

BPS is allowed and broadly used in the EU, but the substance is listed in Echa's community rolling action plan (Corap), being evaluated by Belgium as a substance of potential concern.

When the BPA restriction was agreed, concerns were raised over potential risks, but the available information "did not allow confirm them", and no concrete actions were taken, an EU official told Chemical Watch.

However, the Commission mandated Echa to collect information on the presence of BPA, BPS and other developers in thermal paper placed on the EU market, the official added.

The agency will publish a report soon "on the use of the different developers in thermal paper for the years 2014 to 2018", the official said.

Belgium is currently evaluating BPS for its suspected endocrine-disrupting and CMR properties. In April this year it also hosted a **workshop**<sup>5</sup> on BPA alternatives in thermal paper. It has also notified Echa of its intentions to submit a proposal to harmonise the classification and labelling of BPS for reprotoxicity.

"The new scientific information recently submitted to Echa and the Belgian authorities" are currently being assessed, the official said, and "can then assist a decision on whether further risk management measures are necessary."



**Caterina Tani**<sup>6</sup>  
Europe reporter

## Related Articles

[Commission adopts BPA restriction in thermal paper](#)<sup>7</sup>

[BPS rapidly replacing BPA in thermal paper – Echa survey](#)<sup>8</sup>

[Bisphenol S 'ubiquitous in environment', study finds](#)<sup>9</sup>

[NGO urges EU phase-out of hazardous chemical groups](#)<sup>10</sup>

[Greater supply chain collaboration, information key to BPA substitution](#)<sup>11</sup>

## Further Information:

[Ordinance of risk reduction](#)<sup>12</sup>