

BfR proposes regional intake recommendations for fresh cod liver

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Cod liver is deemed to be a rarely eaten food that is mainly available on the market as a tinned product in its own oil. In some regions, however, it may sometimes be prepared fresh or freshly smoked. Cod liver may contain high levels of dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) as these fat-soluble contaminants accumulate in particular in lean fish, like in the liver of cod.

In recent years there was unclarity about whether there is a maximum level for fish liver in the European Union. This had led to legal uncertainty amongst national associations, industry and some federal *Laender* regarding the marketability of cod liver products. In an earlier assessment of the health risks of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in fat-containing fish (BfR Health Assessment No. 041/2006, 1 June 2006), the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) came to the conclusion that consumers should be protected from the risks of high dioxin and PCB levels in cod liver through a statutory maximum level provision. Until that was in place a general consumption warning should be examined.

BfR believes that a general consumption warning is no longer necessary. In the meantime the European Commission is of the opinion that the assessment of the marketability of cod liver tins can be undertaken using the maximum level for dioxins and PCBs in seafood oils. This maximum level is 10 pictograms WHOPCDD/F-PCB-TEQ1 per gram fat. Cod liver tins are deemed to be compound foods containing cod liver and cod liver oil.

Freshly smoked cod liver, which is sold on the market, should also be examined for its content of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs as cod liver oil is also released during preparation that can be eaten with the liver, too.

In the opinion of BfR there is now adequate consumer health protection and a reliable process for assessing cod liver tins and for smoked cod liver, during the production of which oil is always released.

Consumers such as fishermen and anglers who process or eat cod liver themselves, may not be protected by this maximum level. In areas in which cod is caught and processed for personal use, BfR, therefore, recommends the issuing of regional consumption warnings about the liver of this fish by the federal *Laender* concerned.

The full version of the BfR Opinion in German is available on http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/bfr_raet_zu_regionalen_verzehrsempfehlungen_fuer_frische_dorschleber.pdf