

# Be aware when buying leather

Leather products go through several production steps before reaching the market. One of these steps is tanning. Both within and outside the EU this involves the use of, among other things, chromium (III) sulfate. The leather is preserved and strengthened by chemically crosslinking the fibres. Under certain conditions, chromium (III) can chemically change into chromium (VI) during and after processing. Skin contact can lead to allergic contact dermatitis in people who react sensitively to chromium (VI). People at risk can protect themselves by opting for chromium-free tanned leather or foregoing leather products entirely.



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## A GREATER SAY FOR EVERYONE

In citizen participation processes, citizens jointly develop and express viewpoints, for example regarding new technologies. Researchers from the BfR and other research organisations are analysing how opinions can influence each other and either promote or hinder consensus. They investigated the past BfR Consumer Conference on Genome Editing to answer questions such as: What is the influence of participants with stronger opinions? How can all citizens be involved? How can the processes be improved? A German Parliament citizens' council on nutrition is also being examined to answer the question of how linguistic abilities and educational background influence decision-making, and how the process can be made more inclusive. This also takes risk analysis in a European context into account.

### More information



Dendler, L., Morais, M., Hargart, J. N. et al. 2023. Participatory versus analytic approaches for understanding risk perceptions: a comparison of three case studies from the field of biotechnology. *Journal of Risk Research*, 26(8), 866–882. DOI: 10.1080/13669877.2023.2197615



## COW-FREE – AND RISK- FREE?

Whether in coffee or muesli, plant-based drinks made from soy, oats, or almonds are popular alternatives to cow milk. But what is the situation regarding undesirable substances with these vegan alternatives? The Max Rubner Institute analysed plant-based drinks and detected mould toxins (mycotoxins) in some of the samples. The BfR assessed the results with respect to a particularly sensitive group – children aged six months up to six years. Many almond drinks contained small amounts of aflatoxin B1, which can cause health impairments if consumed regularly. Oat drinks often contained the toxins T2 and HT2. Soy drinks were found to contain mould toxins less often and in lower amounts. However, due to limited data, further research is needed.

### More information



BfR opinion  
"Mycotoxins in plant-based drinks:  
more data required" (pdf)

## IT'S ALL IN THE MIX

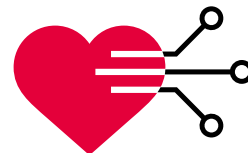
Fat-dissolving, foaming and fragrant – dishwashing detergents have many effects. To give products certain properties, manufacturers deliberately 'mix' substances with each other in many everyday products. Manufacturers must guarantee the safety of their products when they are used as intended, but also in the case of "foreseeable misuse" – for example, when dishwashing detergent is occasionally used for washing one's hands. The health effects of mixtures are also part of the risk assessment in other areas, such as pesticides or cosmetics.

### More information



BfR-FAQ  
"Chemical mixtures"

## New digital trust



How is trust established in trading systems that employ emerging digital technologies, specifically blockchain, when said systems are no longer under the control of central institutions, but rather digitally controlled by a multitude of participants, such as companies, and consumers? In order to investigate this topic, the BfR and University of Stuttgart have thus embarked on a three-year research project. The research will concentrate on two principal areas: firstly, the impact of digital technologies on the construction of trust within the global food supply chain; and secondly, the protection of consumer health.

### More information



Roth, B. 2024. **Blockchain-enabled Consumer Engagement: An Emerging Pandora to Safer Food and Enhanced Consumer Trust?** Science and Technology of Cereals, Oils and Foods 32(4), 24 - 32. DOI: 10.16210/j.cnki.1007-7561.2024.04.003



## Tiny particles with a large effect?

An Italian research team has demonstrated the presence of microplastics in blood vessel plaque. The research compared two groups in their study about the influence of microplastics on human health. The results show that people with microplastics in their plaque had more heart attacks and higher inflammation values than those in whom no microplastics were found. However, the study merely shows a connection, rather than claiming a causal link. In other words, it does not prove that microplastics increase the risk of vessel diseases and the resulting heart attacks or strokes. Further research is needed to determine whether and how microplastics lead to plaque formation.

### More information



BfR communication  
"Do microplastic particles  
increase the risk of a stroke?" (pdf)