



Brussels, 17.02.2011  
AB (2011) 183147  
Ares (2011) 176550

## INFORMATION NOTE

### Subject: Consumption of brown crab meat

1. This Information Note on cadmium in brown crab meat intends to raise awareness of all national authorities, institutions, associations, etc. which have a responsibility in public health or which provide safety information to consumers.
2. Crabs and crab-like crustaceans can contain high amounts of cadmium in their main body, the cephalothorax. This part is often called "brown crab meat" as it has a brownish-greenish appearance. This part of the crab is strictly speaking not "meat". It contains the crab's digestive organ, the hepatopancreas, which accumulates cadmium due to its function as digestive organ. Levels of cadmium in the muscle meat of legs and claws of crab (the so-called appendages, often called "white" meat) are low.
3. An EU wide maximum level is established for meat from legs and claws (white meat), these parts of the crabs can therefore be consumed safely. In most of the European Member States legs and claws are the only parts of the crabs that are eaten.
4. In some countries the "brown meat" is also eaten by some consumers. Consumers who regularly eat these parts, may be exposed to high cadmium levels.
5. In a monitoring exercise carried out in 2009/2010 by the European Commission the levels found in "brown meat" were high and very variable. On average cadmium levels were 8 mg/kg in "brown meat" of crabs while the white meat contained average levels of only 0,080 mg/kg cadmium. Cadmium levels also depend on the species and particularly the size of the crabs.
6. Consumers must be aware that brown crab meat contains high levels of cadmium as its consumption can lead to unacceptable cadmium exposure from all food together, in particular if brown crab meat is eaten regularly. Cadmium intake of average consumers who are not eating brown crab meat is already close to or slightly exceeding the tolerable weekly intake (TWI) of 2,5 µg/kg body weight set by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in 2009. Specific sub groups of the

population, e.g. children or people in highly contaminated areas, can exceed this tolerable weekly intake by about two-fold without eating brown crab meat<sup>1</sup>.

7. It is necessary, that unacceptable additional exposure to cadmium from eating brown crab meat is avoided as much as possible. Consumer advice to discourage or to limit consumption of brown meat is therefore an appropriate and proportionate risk management tool that ensures that market supply of crabs remains guaranteed. National authorities of the Member States should consider giving targeted advice to consumers or to specific sub groups of consumers, if appropriate for their country.
8. Dietary habits are not the same across the Member States. Therefore, the need for consumer advice, the specific type of advice and the target populations or sub groups of the population should be identified at Member State level. This ensures that the specific dietary habits and situation in the Member States are properly taken into account.

---

<sup>1</sup> Scientific Opinion of the Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain on a request from the European Commission on cadmium in food. *The EFSA Journal* (2009) 980, 1-139  
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/doc/980.pdf>