ATOS Antimony Trioxide Stakeholders

International ANTIMONY OXIDE Industry Association

ATOS statement on the occurrence of antimony in PET bottles

Between July 2005 and March 2006 sections of the media have published statements about antimony leaching into PET bottled water. ATOS would like to point out that there are a number of questionable statements regarding PET and antimony in these articles.

Antimony trioxide is the major catalyst for the production of PET plastic used in the packaging of mineral water. It should be emphasised that PET continues to prove itself as an excellent material for mineral water bottles, with a history of safe use by millions of consumers everyday.

Prof. William Shotyk, a Canadian scientist from Heidelberg University has published a scientific article in the Royal Society of Chemistry's journal. The research by Prof. Shotyk is known to the industry and his published study has been misinterpreted by the media. Prof. Shotyk states that the motivation for his study had been to demonstrate that PET containers for bottled water cannot be used to study the natural abundance of antimony in groundwaters. He also emphasised that all of the PET packaged waters measured in his lab to date were found to contain antimony in concentrations well below the established safety limits recommended for drinking water.

The European beverage industry applies a limit of 0.005 mg Sb/l according to Directive 2003/40/EC for drinking water. Please note that in 2003 the World Health Organisation has increased its value for antimony from 0.005 mg/l to 0.02 mg/l in drinking water, reflecting increased margins of consumer safety. This WHO value represents the concentration of a constituent that does not result in any significant risk to health over a lifetime of consumption. The European Food Safety Authority doubled the specific migration limit of antimony trioxide into food from 0.02 mg/kg to 0.04 mg/kg (expressed as antimony). The maximal value measured by Prof. Shotyk is 0.00063 mg/l. The UK Food Standards Agency has also commented on the research by Prof. Shotyk saying that his published levels are well below safety levels.

The International Antimony Oxide Industry Association (IAOIA) has sponsored scientific studies within the framework of the EU Risk Assessment process which has confirmed that there is no risk to human health related to the use of antimony trioxide in the production of PET bottles.

ATOS is the Antimony Trioxide Stakeholders Group uniting producers and users of antimony trioxide. ATOS was established to develop the scientific information required for the antimony trioxide EU Risk Assessment. ATOS is supported by stakeholders including IAOIA, the European PET industry, Plastics*Europe*, European Plastics Converters (EuPC), Comité International de la Rayonne et des Fibres Synthétiques (Cirfs), Euratex and the UK Textile Association. Please contact Karine Van de Velde, Secretary General of IAOIA (karine.vandevelde@campine.be) or Mike Neal, chair of the PET HSE Group of Plastics*Europe* (mike.neal@plasticseurope.org), for any further information.

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