

PFAS Grease-Proofing Agents Officially Slip Out of U.S. Market

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Rest assured, you can stop worrying about ingesting “forever chemicals” when you use fast-food wrappers, microwave popcorn bags, and take-out paperboard containers. Last week, FDA announced [here](#) that so-called “grease-proofing” food packaging products containing PFAS will no longer be sold in the U.S. According to FDA, these types of food-contact paper products are the highest contributors of PFAS dietary exposure among all FDA authorized uses of food-contact products containing PFAS.

Other FDA-authorized categories, such as non-stick pots and pans, rubber O-rings and gaskets used in food processing equipment, and manufacturing aids added to other food contact polymers remain in place at the federal level. FDA determined that PFAS in these products would not be available to migrate at more than negligible amounts under the intended conditions of use and would, therefore, not pose a safety risk.

The recent phase-out of PFAS-containing grease-proofing food packaging was a result of a series of FDA determinations and industry action. In the early 2000s, FDA first raised safety concerns with certain PFAS substances commonly referred to as “C8 compounds” or “long-chain” compounds. This category was phased out of the U.S. market between 2011 and 2016 voluntarily and through FDA authorization revocations. In their stead, industry began to use “short-chain” PFAS replacements that had been authorized for use as grease-proofing agents.

In 2020, FDA found that a short-chain PFAS – 6:2 fluorotelomer alcohol (“6:2 FTOH”) – also may pose a safety risk. FDA found that under certain conditions, the smaller PFAS “sidechain” can detach from the polymerized molecule. As a result, there is potential for PFAS to migrate to food at levels that may result in a potential safety concern. FDA sought and obtained market-phase-out commitment letters from each of the manufacturers of PFAS grease-proofing agents that contain this substance. And in 2023, FDA received confirmation from manufacturers of all remaining authorized grease-proofing substances containing different types of PFAS (not the subject of the safety review) that those manufacturers had voluntarily stopped producing and selling these products for business reasons unrelated to safety.

FDA indicated that it will continue to test foods from the general food supply this year and next to accurately estimate U.S. consumers’ exposure to PFAS from foods. This includes testing samples from the Total Diet Study (see more on this study [here](#)) as well as a survey of bottled water. The agency will also conduct additional seafood testing. If the testing supports an FDA finding of a health concern relating to a particular food based on PFAS exposure, FDA has indicated it will take action.

As we have discussed [here](#) and [here](#), several states have laws regulating PFAS exposure from food packaging products that are in place or moving rapidly through legislatures. Please continue to

watch this space as “forever chemicals” continue to consume ever greater attention from regulators.