

HSIAS STATEMENT

HSIAS members encouraged to procure their fish oils from reliable suppliers that can comply with industry quality standard

We refer to the South China Morning Post (SCMP) news report dated 15 November 2022 on the test results of 25 fish oil supplements released by the Consumer Council Hong Kong. According to this news report, out of the 25 products tested, 14 products contained "cancer-causing" Glycidol, with 1 product exceeding the EU limit for Glycidol. The fact is that nearly all edible oil products contain some level of Glycidol and 3-MCPD (Chloropropanols) and in HK only 3 products had levels that exceeded the EU limit for 3-MCPD. One product for pregnant women was found to contain Benzopyrene, a carcinogen, and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) at levels that exceeded the EU limits for Benzopyrene and PAHs.

HSIAS understands that this news report has caused some concerns among the consumers of fish oil supplements in Singapore. As far as consumer safety is concerned, what matters most is whether the levels of these sometimes difficult to avoid contaminants in fish oil supplements exceeded the safety limits, less so on whether these fish oil supplements contained minute but detectable levels of contaminants.

It is important to note that glycidol and 3-MCPD are by-products of the refining process of all edible oils, including fish oils. Sometimes measurable amounts of these processing contaminants can be detected in fish oil supplements, as well as in food. Please refer to Singapore Food Agency statement on the presence of these contaminants in food (<https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-information/risk-at-a-glance/glycidol-and-mcpd>). Benzopyrene and PAHs are environmental contaminants which result from burning coal, oil, gas, wood, garbage...etc that can accumulate in the body of the fish. Sometimes minute amounts of these environmental contaminants can also be detected in fish oil supplements.

HSIAS regrets that the press had come up with an attention-grabbing headline: "Hong Kong watchdog finds carcinogens in more than half of fish oil supplements tested" when in actual fact, only 4 out of the 25 products were found to have exceeded at least one EU contaminant limit, while 21 products (84%) were in full compliance with all parameters.

Like Hong Kong, currently there are no prescribed limits for these contaminants in Singapore. HSIAS has advised its members with fish oil supplement products to take appropriate measures to ensure the presence of these difficult to avoid contaminants is as low as reasonably achievable. HSIAS reiterates the importance of procuring quality fish oils from reliable suppliers that comply with the industry standards on oxidative quality, environmental contaminants and the measurement of EPA and DHA, such as the Global Organisation for EPA and DHA Omega-3s (GOED) Voluntary Monograph (<https://goedomega3.com/goed-monograph>).

About Health Supplements Industry Association of Singapore (HSIAS)

The Health Supplements Industry Association of Singapore (HSIAS), is a trade association of health supplements companies in Singapore formed in 2001 that works towards shaping policies and regulations of this industry. Comprising of leading health supplement companies in Singapore, HSIAS represents over 90% of the health supplement products marketed in Singapore. The association works towards promoting the interests of the industry by encouraging and advancing optimum community health by creating greater awareness of the role of improved nutrition and preventative approaches, including the appropriate use of health supplements.

For more information, please visit www.hsias.org

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