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GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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France bans Titanium Dioxide in food products by January 2020

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Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

SP2 - Prevent or Resolve Barriers to Trade that Hinder U.S. Food and Agricultural Exports

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Report Highlights:

France announced a ban the sale of food products containing titanium dioxide (TiO₂) starting January 1, 2020 based on an opinion published by the French food safety agency (ANSES) recommending reducing the exposure of TiO₂ to workers, consumers and the environment. The ban is in place for one year initially as a safeguard clause. U.S. confectioneries and pastries exported to France will have to be TiO₂ free by 2020, impacting almost \$ 6 million in export annually.

Titanium dioxide, also known as titanium (IV) oxide or titania, is the naturally occurring oxide of titanium with the chemical formula TiO₂. When used as a pigment, it can be called titanium white or E171, and is indicated as such on the product's ingredient list. Titanium dioxide (TiO₂) is the most widely used white pigment because of its brightness. In food, TiO₂ is used as a white pigment in confectioneries, such as candy covered chocolates like M&Ms, cakes, and sugarcoated almonds. It is also widely used in cosmetics for sunblock, as well as in toothpastes and medicines. The French branch of the organization OpenFoodFact published a [list of food](#) items containing TiO₂.

In January 2017, the French Agricultural Research Institute (INRA) published a [study](#) on the food additive E171. It highlighted the development of pre-tumorous damage in the colon of rats fed with TiO₂ nanoparticles. The French Food Safety Agency (ANSES) was tasked by the French Ministry of Health and Consumption and the Ministry of Agriculture to [evaluate the INRA study](#) and make recommendations about [any potential danger from TiO₂](#). ANSES confirmed that the INRA study highlighted previously unassessed carcinogenic impacts of nanoparticles of TiO₂ and recommended additional research. ANSES also proposed that the European Chemicals Agency classify TiO₂ as a probable carcinogen when inhaled.

During the French Farm Bill debates in April 2018, several amendments proposed bans on the import and marketing of any food product containing titanium dioxide as a food additive. Those amendments were not included in the final version of the French Farm Bill, but raised public awareness on the issue and consumer groups and NGOs have been demanding a ban since those debates.

In February 2019 ANSES was tasked by the Government of France (GOF) to review the most recent studies on the oral toxicology of E171 and to update its recommendations. On April 12 ANSES published its [opinion](#). In short, ANSES concluded that it did not have enough information to question the concerns raised by INRA regarding the safety of E171. It reiterated its general recommendations on nanomaterials, aimed primarily at limiting the exposure of workers, consumers and the environment to the products. The French government decided that the ANSES opinion left uncertainty about the safe consumption of TiO₂ and issued a [decree](#) on April 17 suspending sales in France of any food product containing TiO₂, at least for the period from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. France bases this safeguard measure on what is permitted by Article 54 of [EU Regulation 178/2002](#).

When France began exploring limits on TiO₂, representatives from the French confectionary industry raised their concerns about a ban with Parliamentarians and the Ministry of Agriculture. Large companies such as [Mars Wrigley Confectionery France](#), the French confectionary subsidiary of [Mars Inc.](#), confirmed that they would be ready to phase out the use of TiO₂ in their products by 2020. The company is investing close to \$100 million to phase out TiO₂ and upgrade production. For example, they are investing significant sums in Haguenau, France that produces the majority of M&Ms for Europe, and the plant will start TiO₂-free production by mid-2019. The French confectioner's association announced that 90 percent of French food manufacturers have already stopped the use of TiO₂.

This French decision on TiO₂ is another French challenge to the EU single market principle with France setting its own sanitary standards under a safeguard clause. The ban means that U.S.

confectioneries (\$2.3 million in imports in 2018) and pastries (\$3.6 million in imports in 2018) exported to France will have to be TiO₂ free by 2020.

The French ban does not apply to non-food products such as medications, cosmetics and toothpastes. However, the NGO [Agir pour l'Environnement](#), among others, has public relations campaigns against the use of nanomaterials in such products, including TiO₂. It recently published a [list of toothpastes](#) containing TiO₂, claiming more than two thirds of toothpaste used in France contain the compound.