

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1404/02
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to the Commission

Subject: Presence of acrylamide in foodstuffs

On Wednesday, 24 April 2002 a team of researchers at Stockholm University announced that they had discovered that acrylamide formed when starchy foods were heated to a high temperature. The foodstuffs in question are basic ones such as bread and biscuits – not to mention cereals and chips which, according to the research, could contain particularly high levels of acrylamide. If consumed in large amounts, acrylamide can affect the nervous system and cause impotence, paralysis and cancer.

This information is in addition to the impact analyses commissioned by the Scientific Committee on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment (SCTEE) in order to investigate the presence of acrylamide in the wastewater treatment cycle. Those analyses, which were presented in October 2000, indicated that neurotoxic effects on human beings could not be ruled out.

In view of the above information and in full awareness of the fact that this does not constitute a new threat but, rather, the identification of a risk to which people have been exposed for generations (though bearing in mind that, according to the Swedish authorities, between 200 and 600 new cases of cancer each year are attributable to acrylamide in Sweden alone), what action does the Commission intend to take or propose at European level in response to the emergence of this new information?