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Maximum Tolerable Limit Of PCB

Japan's first official standards for maximum tolerable content of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) remaining in milk, milk products, meat, fish, eggs and direct food packages (packing materials) were provisionally recommended to Healt and Welfare Minister S. Shiomi.

The provisional standards, expected to be adopted as they are, were decided earlier the same day by the Food and Sanitation Investigation Council at its standing committee session. The decision came at the end of four months of studies by the Council's special PCB Division.

The recommendation was accompanied by the proviso that it will be reviewed inside of the next one-year period.

This was because of the lack of answers to complex scientific, technological and administrative phases of the problem which has given rise of criticism of the recommendation and the time-consuming research on chronic toxic effects of the controversial chemical compound still under way by a special team of the National Institute of Hygienic Sciences.

The team's conclusion is not expected to be available before next August. Even its interim report to the council was delayed so that the provisional recommendation came about two months behind schedule.

According to the recommendation, the maximum tolerable limit of PCB in the edible parts of offshore (deep sea) fish and shellfish is to be set at 0.5 ppm (parts per million). The equivalent for those of inshore (coastal water) fish and shellfish is to be fixed at 3 ppm, and that for milk at 0.1 ppm.

The equivalents for powder milk, milk products including butter, meat including chicken, eggs, and direct food packages are to be respectively set 0.2, 1.0, 0.5, 0.2 and 5.

By simple comparison of such figures, the recommended standards are seen to be far more rigid than the existing American standards of the kind in controlling human intake through natural foods of the insidious toxic chemical compound already found in birds and fish and even in mothers' milk in many countries.

The American standards, set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, are, for instance, 5 ppm for fish and shellfish, 0.2 for milk, 3 for meat, and 0.5 for eggs.

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