

Solutions and Recommendations

For most North Americans it is simply not possible to avoid canned food and beverages. This is particularly true for low-income people who are more reliant on non-perishable canned goods. With the recent recession, more and more people have had to rely on canned good from food banks. Companies that produce BPA, companies that use it in food and beverage containers, and companies that sell these products need to aggressively research and implement safer solutions to BPA packaging. We have a right to safe products.

What Product Manufacturers Can Do

Canned goods manufacturers, producers, and retailers can play an important role in making the transition to safer products and promoting greener jobs.

As we have shown, contaminated food is sold on the shelves of all retailers, large and small, in products made by leading companies. Canned good producers should work with can manufacturers to ensure new technologies work with their food products, with the purpose of finding safe, effective can linings made without BPA or other hormone disrupting or otherwise harmful chemicals.

What Can Makers Can Do

Can makers and can lining makers should continue the research that is underway to identify an effective can lining that protects food from microbes and toxic contaminants. We recommend continued aggressive research utilizing green chemistry principles, which guide design of chemical products and processes to reduce or eliminate the use or generation of hazardous substances.⁷²

What Retailers Can Do

Retailers should continue to ask both private label and brand name manufacturers to develop and implement safer solutions to BPA linings, and to phase out BPA can linings in as quickly as possible.

What Shareholders Can Do

Shareholders in these publicly traded companies can engage in dialogue with companies, introduce and vote for resolutions that require companies to develop a plan to phase out BPA, and require companies to report their progress publicly.

What Government Can Do

Government entities should help drive this product sector transformation by expanding laws restricting use of BPA in



Making a selection at a food pantry.

“Every day, consumers rely on household products that contain thousands of chemicals. The American public expects the federal government to do all it can to ensure these chemicals are safe before they reach the market.”

Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)

baby bottles and sippy cups, prohibiting the use of BPA in canned goods, and providing funding for research into safer alternatives to BPA and other harmful chemicals.

At the same time, federal and state governments should take action to address other sources of exposure to toxic chemicals in household products, such as water cooler containers and thermal receipt paper.

In addition to restricting the use of BPA specifically, state and federal governments must significantly improve the overall framework for managing all chemicals. BPA has become the ubiquitous problem that it is today in part because federal laws and regulations fail to require information about a chemical’s toxicity to ensure chemicals are safe before they are allowed into the marketplace. Moreover,



current laws, including the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), which grants EPA limited authority to address toxic chemicals in the environment, and Food and Drug laws, which include FDA's Food Contact Notification program and petition-and-review of chemicals, provide insufficient authority for government agencies to take action when information about products and chemicals comes to light.

Therefore, in addition to restricting the use of bisphenol A specifically, state and federal governments must significantly improve the overall framework for managing all chemicals.

Real reforms are needed, including:

- **Taking immediate action on the most dangerous chemicals.** Persistent, bioaccumulative toxicants (PBTs) are uniquely hazardous. Any such chemical to which people could be exposed should be phased out of commerce. Exposure to other toxic chemicals, such as formaldehyde, that have already been extensively studied, should be reduced to the maximum extent feasible.
- **Holding manufacturers responsible for the safety of their chemicals and products.** Since TSCA was adopted in 1976, EPA has only required testing of only a few hundred of the more than 60,000 chemicals that were on the market at the time. Those chemicals still constitute the majority of chemicals in commerce today. Companies should be required to provide full information about the impact their chemicals can have on the environment and our health, including whether or not those chemicals mimic or block the effects of human hormones.
- **Using the best science to ensure all people, especially vulnerable and sensitive groups, are protected.** Sensitive, vulnerable, and overburdened populations include children, pregnant women and their fetuses, workers, people of color, people with low incomes and indigenous communities. These people bear the highest costs of toxic chemical exposures. EPA and other state and federal agencies should revise how they assess risk, and expand development and use of information gathered through testing human blood, urine and hair samples, to reduce the burden now placed on these populations.

What Individuals Can Do

Canned food can play a significant role in contaminating people with BPA at levels linked to health problems in laboratory animals. **The solution must be sustainable, non-toxic packaging.** Metal cans are easily recyclable, so for manufacturers, identifying and using safer can linings is an obvious need. In the meantime, there are actions that individuals can take to help prevent their personal exposure to BPA in packaged goods. No option is a no-impact option, and we all have to work with financial constraints and limited access. When choosing from the range of options to limit BPA exposure, consider:

- **Choose fresh foods (preferably local and sustainably grown) whenever possible, followed by dried or frozen products over canned goods.** (Dried beans, for example, are much less expensive than canned and can be cooked and frozen in advance to make meal preparation nearly as simple as using canned beans.)
- **For room temperature packaged products, try to choose products in glass jars when available (such as tomato sauce), followed by aseptic (boxed) packaging or less toxic plastics.** Keep in mind that we don't know enough about unlabeled additives in even "safer" plastics, which can be identified by the recycling numbers 1, 2, 4 and 5, but we do know that #3 plastic, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), has a toxic lifecycle, as does #6, polystyrene (PS). #7 plastics that are polycarbonate (hard, clear plastics, sometimes with a "PC" near the recycling triangle) should also be avoided, since BPA is the building block of polycarbonate plastics.

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