

Brussels, 6 August 2007

Occupational Exposure Limits for Flour Dust

UEAPME position on the Recommendation from the Scientific Committee on Occupational Exposure Limits for Flour Dust (SCOEL) from March 2007

Consultation of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities from 16 April 2007

- The problem of the exposure of bakers to flour dust is well known to the professionals all over Europe.
- They have the practical experience to ensure good practices to avoid excessive flour dust in processing enterprises. This is to prevent the possibilities of explosion and to protect the health of the workforce.
- UEAPME points out the necessity to take into account the exposure time, not only the exposure level.
- Austrian authorities fixed the maximum level of exposure at 15 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and a short time limit (maximum one hour) at 30 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. The limit in UK is 10 mg per cubic metre over an eight hour time weighted average. These limits allow for the momentary high levels unavoidable in hand craft procedures.
- The Scientific Committee for Occupational Exposure of limit (SCOEL) suggests in its recommendation a limit value from 0,5 to 1 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. The proposed level of 0,5-1,0 mg/m<sup>3</sup> at any time in all flour processing enterprises in the EU cannot be reached by reasonable and proportional measures.
- In the recommendation of the Committee no short time limit value is allowed for. That has been seen as necessary after the experiences in several European countries.
- Even the proposed low level will not protect sensitive people from conditions which derive from the exposure to flour.
- Additional air filtration will have negative effects on the product quality as well as on the health of the employees because of unavoidable supply air which causes coughs and sneezes and worsens rheumatism. A good balance between several risks will have to be found.
- UEAPME doesn't see any need for additional European legislation for occupational Exposure Limits for flour dust that does not reflect the practicalities of traditional craft methods.

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