



Statement from the Alter Eco Leadership Team on Heavy Metals in Chocolate August 14th, 2017

To Our Loyal Consumers & Other Interested Stakeholders:

We at Alter Eco Foods have a great sense of pride in not only our mission and products, but more importantly, you! Our team has taken great measures, and will continue to take all necessary steps, to ensure that quality and safety are at the forefront of our operation and business strategy.

The chocolate industry has received a number of inquiries pertaining to recent reports of heavy metals such as cadmium and lead in chocolate products. Our goal with this letter is to address those inquiries, and educate all interested parties on this important and misunderstood topic.

Cadmium and lead are elements that are present naturally in the environment, and when absorbed by crops, can be found in food products. Trace levels can be found in chocolate as well as other agricultural products like legumes, seed pods, grains, and some leafy vegetables. These elements (in addition to other beneficial minerals) are absorbed naturally from the soil by the roots of cocoa trees, and are thus a natural constituent of pods, beans, and eventually the finished product. Volcanic soils in particular have higher levels of cadmium than other soils, and volcanic soil is more common in the regions where we source our cocoa beans from.

Alter Eco is attentive to and compliant with standards applicable to its products in various markets. Because of the types of products we sell, Alter Eco is regulated in the United States by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA), which has not established limits or provided guidance on the topic of heavy metals in food at this time. Because of this, we have invested a lot of time and energy to research other points of reference used around the world by, for example, the European Union and the World Health Organization, and our products are meeting these standards.

Product-specific limits are the exception, so we often must interpret and apply numeric standards established for different purposes or expressed as a daily exposure level for an individual or based on body weight. For example, California's [Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986](#) (also known as Proposition 65 or Prop 65 for short) requires companies to notify California consumers of exposure to significant levels of chemicals causing cancer or reproductive toxicity in food and consumer products. Prop 65 does not provide a specific standard for either cadmium or lead in chocolate specifically. Instead, it provides a daily exposure standard, which may be adjusted for naturally occurring chemicals. The standard for a carcinogen is an amount that poses no significant risk of cancer from a lifetime of exposure. The standard for reproductive toxicity is one-thousandth of the amount that has been shown to have no observable effect. Actual exposure and its health risk thus depend on not only how much chocolate is consumed, but a person's weight, consumption frequency, and other factors. Food safety cannot always be reduced to a simple number. While we support Prop 65 objectives of consumer awareness and public health, and recognize that Prop 65 has prompted reformulation of many products with less toxic components to the benefit of public health, lawsuits by bounty hunters have created significant consumer confusion around its application to food products. For more information about cadmium, lead, and Prop 65, see <https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov>.

Alter Eco Americas, PBC
2339 Third Street, Suite 70, San Francisco, CA 94107
T: +1 (415) 701-1212 – F: +1 (415) 701-1213
www.alterecofoods.com

ALTER ECO

At Alter Eco, we work very closely with all partners throughout the entire “bean to bar” supply chain to ensure that cadmium and lead are **not** being introduced from human sources during any step of the manufacturing process. As described above, these elements are naturally occurring in chocolate, and we believe our chocolate is as safe as it is pleasurable to eat. If you are concerned about your exposure to these elements, you can always limit your exposure by moderating your consumption.

We at Alter Eco stand strongly behind the quality and safety of our products, and we consume our own products frequently! We work very hard, along with our suppliers, manufacturers and distributors, to ensure that all food safety management systems, like ISO 22000 and Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points (HACCP), are implemented and carefully followed. In addition to this, Alter Eco also maintains a number of third-party certifications, which can be found on the product packaging. Different testing programs are also in place for both raw materials and our finished products.

Thank you for your time and understanding, and we hope this clarifies the general questions regarding heavy metals in chocolate products. To all of Alter Eco’s customers, thank you for buying our products and continuing to support our mission!

Regards,

The Alter Eco Leadership Team