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Removing Bisphenol A

Canned Foods: Many companies plan to phase out use of chemical in product containers, survey finds

By Melody Voith

Food companies are making notable progress in replacing the bisphenol A (BPA) used to make epoxy can linings, according to a new report by Green Century Capital Management, an advisory firm focused on environmentally responsible investing, and **As You Sow**, a shareholder advocacy group.

Consumers and researchers have raised concerns about possible health effects of BPA, which can migrate into food from epoxy resin can liners ([C&EN, July 20, 2009, page 28](#)). The report's authors say that a consumer backlash against BPA poses a risk to shareholder value and brand reputations but that firms are taking action. Half of the food companies responding to a survey for the report have a plan to phase out the use of BPA, compared with only 21% in 2009.

Overall, three firms—[Hain Celestial](#), [ConAgra](#), and [H. J. Heinz](#)—received a grade of A for their efforts to remove BPA from their products. Each has begun using non-BPA can linings in some products. Of the 22 firms that responded to the survey, 18 are exploring substitutes and 11 have committed to phasing out BPA. Six companies are disclosing their BPA actions to the public. Four companies didn't respond.

Although several firms said they rely on their suppliers to make changes to food packaging, the report commends ConAgra and [Campbell Soup](#) for "extensive testing processes for BPA-free can linings." Yet the firms' efforts still lack transparency, says report author Emily Stone of Green Century. "The companies are tight-lipped about the substitutes they are testing," she says. "We don't want companies introducing new materials that could pose risks."

In addition to consumer pressure, food makers face increased regulatory action on BPA. Earlier this month, Environment Canada designated BPA as toxic ([C&EN, Oct. 18, page 22](#)). But the [American Chemistry Council](#), a U.S. chemical industry trade group, counters that BPA is safe to use in food-contact applications.

	SEEKING ALTERNATIVES	PLANNING PHASEOUT	PUBLIC DISCLOSURE
Hain Celestial	A	A	A
ConAgra	A	A	B+
H. J. Heinz	A	A	B+
General Mills	A	C	B+
Nestlé	C	A	B+

NOTE: Top five of 22 food company respondents.
SOURCE: Green Century Capital Management