

Coca-Cola Says Will Not Phase Out BPA

Thursday, 28 April 2011

Coca-Cola has rejected calls to eliminate a controversial hormone disrupter in its canned soft drinks despite facing mounting pressure from its shareholders.

Though 26 percent of its investors voted in favor of looking into packaging alternatives to bisphenol A (BPA) - a hormone disrupting agent used to make polycarbonate plastic and epoxy resins - the company maintained there wasn't enough scientific consensus to warrant a system-wide change in its packaging, reports food industry site FoodQualitynews.com.

The company announced its position Wednesday at an annual shareholders' meeting in Atlanta.

The decision was in response to a resolution put forward by a trio of shareholder advocacy groups - **As You Sow**, Domini Social Investments and Trillium Asset Management Corporation - who asked that Coca-Cola develop packaging alternatives to BPA-lined cans, in light of public concerns over possible health risks.

Support for the resolution is rising, as the same motion garnered 22 percent when it was put forward to shareholders last year and similarly rejected by the company.

BPA is a hormone disrupter as it mimics estrogen and is commonly found in hard-shelled plastic bottles, milk containers and canned food linings. The coating guards against contamination and extends the shelf life of foods.

Some studies suggest that BPA can affect reproductivity, fertility and development.

Muhtar Kent, CEO of the company, maintained that the company's packaging is in line with regulatory agencies around the world like US, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

"If we had any sliver of doubt about the safety of our packaging, we would not continue to use (BPA)," he told shareholders Wednesday. "It's that simple."

Meanwhile, Nestlé last year announced plans to phase out BPA in its US products within the next three years. Heinz and the Campbell Soup Company have also been exploring packaging alternatives to eliminate the compound and General Mills already has eliminated BPA from some products.

Last year Canada banned BPA, declaring it a toxic substance, and the European Union also voted to ban BPA from baby bottles over concerns that the chemical could affect developmental and immune responses in young children - a move that kicked in last month. Swedish safety agencies have also proposed that it be phased out in food and beverage can linings.

For those concerned about BPA exposure, Canadian action group Environmental Defence advises using glass or stainless steel refillable drinking bottles instead of hard plastic ones often sold as sports bottles. Using glass baby bottles, avoiding canned food, and choosing glass bottles over canned soft drinks are also recommended.



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