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## **Benzo (a) pyrene in Olive Oils Imported into Qatar and Available in Local Market**

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Following a report in July 2001, that some batches of Spanish olive-pomace oil had been found to contain high levels of benzo(a) pyrene[B(a)P], a survey was carried out for the presence of B(a)P in olive oils available in local market. Its occurrence in olive oil was determined by extraction with solvents followed by clean up on silica gel column and quantification by GC/MS/MS. This method is found to be very efficient. The recovery and limit of detection of B(a)P in olive oil by this method were estimated to be 88% and 0.5 $\mu$ g/kg, respectively.

In the survey, samples of olive oils collected for analysis were product of Spain and other Mediterranean countries. B(a)P was detected in amounts below the permitted level of 2  $\mu$ g/kg in all the virgin olive oil samples (31) and refined olive oil samples (13). However, all 7 samples of Spanish olive-pomace oil produced and packed in Saudi Arabia were found contaminated with B(a)P, and the level ranged from 3.1 to 70.83  $\mu$ g/kg. In two samples of olive-pomace oil produced in Greece B(a)P was not detected.

Succeeding the survey report, a ban was imposed on the import of olive - pomace oil, and as a precautionary measure samples of virgin and refined olive oils from the new consignments were regularly analysed for B(a)P. During a period of one year (August 2001 to July 2002) 32 samples of virgin and refined olive oils were analysed for B(a)P and in all the samples B(a)P was found to be present below the permitted level of 2  $\mu$ g/kg.