

Safety assessment of the process Guangxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable, based on the Vacunite (EREMA basic and Polymetrix SSP V-LeaN) technology, used to recycle post-consumer PET into food contact materials

EFSA Panel on Food Contact Materials, Enzymes and Processing Aids (CEP) |
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Abstract

The EFSA Panel on Food Contact Materials, Enzymes and Processing Aids (CEP) assessed the safety of the recycling process Guangxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable (EU register number RECYC310), which uses the VACUNITE (EREMA basic and Polymetrix SSP V-leaN) technology. The input consists of hot caustic washed and dried poly(ethylene terephthalate) (PET) flakes, mainly originating from collected post-consumer PET containers, with no more than 5% PET from non-food consumer applications. The flakes are pre-decontaminated in the [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] under [REDACTED] (step 2) before being extruded, pelletised and crystallised (step 3). The [REDACTED] pellets are then [REDACTED] (step 4) and submitted to solid-state polycondensation (SSP) (step 5) at high temperature under [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Having examined the challenge tests provided, the Panel concluded that step 2 as well as steps 4 and 5 are critical for determining the decontamination efficiency of the process. The operating parameters to control the performance are temperature, pressure and residence time for steps 2, 4 and 5 as well as the [REDACTED] for steps 4 and 5. It was demonstrated that this recycling process is able to ensure that the level of migration of potential unknown contaminants into food is below the conservatively modelled migration of 0.1 µg/kg food. Therefore, the Panel concluded that the recycled PET obtained from this process is not of safety concern, when used at up to 100% for the manufacture of materials and articles for contact with all types of foodstuffs, including drinking water, for long-term storage at room temperature or below, with or without hotfill. Articles made of this recycled PET are not intended to be used in microwave and conventional ovens and such uses are not covered by this evaluation.

KEYWORDS

food contact materials, Guangxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable, plastic, poly(ethylene terephthalate) (PET), recycling process, safety assessment, VACUNITE (EREMA basic and Polymetrix SSP V-leaN)

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1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 | Background and Terms of Reference

1.1.1 | Background

Recycled plastic materials and articles shall only be placed on the market if the recycled plastic is from an authorised recycling process. Before a recycling process is authorised, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)'s opinion on its safety is required. This procedure has been established in Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 282/2008^{1,2} on recycled plastic materials intended to come into contact with foods and Articles 8 and 9 of Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004³ on materials and articles intended to come into contact with food.

According to this procedure, the industry submits applications to the competent authorities of Member States, which transmit the applications to EFSA for evaluation.

In this case, EFSA received an application from the German Bundesamt für Verbraucherschutz und Lebensmittelsicherheit for the evaluation of the recycling process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable using the VACUNITE® (EREMA Vacurema® Basic + Polymetrix SSP V-LeaN) recycling technology, European Union (EU) register No RECYC310. The request is in EFSA's register of received questions under the number EFSA-Q-2022-00227. The dossier was submitted on behalf of Guangxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable., Lingang Industrial Park, 313306 Anji county, Huzhou City, China (see '[Documentation provided to EFSA](#)').

1.1.2 | Terms of Reference

The Bundesamt für Verbraucherschutz und Lebensmittelsicherheit, Germany requested the safety evaluation of the recycling process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable, based on the VACUNITE® technology, in compliance with Regulation (EC) No 282/2008 and Articles 8, 9 and 10 of the Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004.

1.2 | Interpretation of the Terms of Reference

According to Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 282/2008 on recycled plastic materials intended to come into contact with foods, EFSA is required to carry out risk assessments on the risks originating from the migration of substances from recycled food contact plastic materials and articles into food and deliver a scientific opinion on the recycling process examined.

According to Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 282/2008, EFSA will evaluate whether it has been demonstrated in a challenge test, or by other appropriate scientific evidence, that the recycling process is able to reduce the contamination of the plastic input to a concentration that does not pose a risk to human health. The poly(ethylene terephthalate) (PET) materials and articles used as input of the process as well as the conditions of use of the recycled PET make part of this evaluation.

2 | DATA AND METHODOLOGIES

2.1 | Data

The applicant has submitted a confidential and a non-confidential version of a dossier following the 'EFSA guidelines for the submission of an application for the safety evaluation of a recycling process to produce recycled plastics intended to be used for the manufacture of materials and articles in contact with food, prior to its authorisation' (EFSA, 2008) and the 'Administrative guidance for the preparation of applications on recycling processes to produce recycled plastics intended to be used for manufacture of materials and articles in contact with food' (EFSA, 2021).

Additional information was sought from the applicant during the assessment process in response to requests from EFSA sent on 21 October 2022 and 13 January 2023 and was subsequently provided (see '[Documentation provided to EFSA](#)').

In accordance with Art. 38 of the Regulation (EC) No 178/2002⁴ and taking into account the protection of confidential information and the personal data in accordance with Articles 39 to 39e of the same Regulation, and of the Decision of the

¹Commission Regulation (EC) No 282/2008 of 27 March 2008 on recycled plastic materials and articles intended to come into contact with foods and amending Regulation (EC) No 2023/2006. OJ L 86, 28.3.2008, p. 9–18.

²Commission Regulation (EC) No 282/2008 was repealed by Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/1616 of 15 September 2022 on recycled plastic materials and articles intended to come into contact with foods, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 282/2008 (OJ L 243 20.9.2022, p. 3) which entered into force on 10 October 2022. Applications submitted to EU Member State competent authorities before the date of entry into force of Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/1616 are evaluated by EFSA in accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) No 282/2008.

³Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 of the European parliament and of the council of 27 October 2004 on materials and articles intended to come into contact with food and repealing Directives 80/590/EEC and 89/109/EEC. OJ L 338, 13.11.2004, p. 4–17.

⁴Commission Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety. OJ L 31, 1.2.2002, p.1–48.

EFSA's Executive Director laying down practical arrangements concerning transparency and confidentiality,⁵ the non-confidential version of the dossier has been published on Open.EFSA.⁶

According to Art. 32c(2) of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 and to the Decision of EFSA's Executive Director laying down the practical arrangements on pre-submission phase and public consultations,⁵ EFSA carried out a public consultation on the non-confidential version of the application from 13 June to 4 July 2023 for which no comments were received.

The following information on the recycling process was provided by the applicant and used for the evaluation:

- General information:
 - general description,
 - existing authorisations.
- Specific information:
 - recycling process,
 - characterisation of the input,
 - determination of the decontamination efficiency of the recycling process,
 - characterisation of the recycled plastic,
 - intended application in contact with food,
 - compliance with the relevant provisions on food contact materials and articles,
 - process analysis and evaluation,
 - operating parameters.

2.2 | Methodologies

The risks associated with the use of recycled plastic materials and articles in contact with food come from the possible migration of chemicals into the food in amounts that would endanger human health. The quality of the input, the efficiency of the recycling process to remove contaminants as well as the intended use of the recycled plastic are crucial points for the risk assessment (EFSA, 2008).

The criteria for the safety evaluation of a mechanical recycling process to produce recycled PET intended to be used for the manufacture of materials and articles in contact with food are described in the scientific opinion developed by the EFSA Panel on Food Contact Materials, Enzymes, Flavourings and Processing Aids (EFSA CEF Panel, 2011). The principle of the evaluation is to apply the decontamination efficiency of a recycling technology or process, obtained from a challenge test with surrogate contaminants, to a reference contamination level for post-consumer PET, conservatively set at 3 mg/kg PET for contaminants resulting from possible misuse. The resulting residual concentration of each surrogate contaminant in recycled PET (C_{res}) is compared with a modelled concentration of the surrogate contaminants in PET (C_{mod}). This C_{mod} is calculated using generally recognised conservative migration models so that the related migration does not give rise to a dietary exposure exceeding 0.0025 µg/kg body weight (bw) per day (i.e. the human exposure threshold value for chemicals with structural alerts for genotoxicity), below which the risk to human health would be negligible. If the C_{res} is not higher than the C_{mod} , the recycled PET manufactured by such recycling process is not considered of safety concern for the defined conditions of use (EFSA CEF Panel, 2011).

The assessment was conducted in line with the principles described in the EFSA Guidance on transparency in the scientific aspects of risk assessment (EFSA, 2009) and considering the relevant guidance from the EFSA Scientific Committee.

3 | ASSESSMENT

3.1 | General information⁷

According to the applicant, the recycling process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable is intended to recycle food grade PET containers using the VACUNITE (EREMA basic and Polymetrix SSP V-leaN) technology. The recycled PET is intended to be used at up to 100% for the manufacture of materials and articles for direct contact with all kinds of foodstuffs, such as bottles for mineral water, soft drinks, fruit juices and beer, for long-term storage at room temperature or below, with or without hotfill. The final articles are not intended to be used in microwave or conventional ovens.

⁵Decision available online: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/corporate-pubs/transparency-regulation-practical-arrangements>

⁶The non-confidential version of the dossier has been published on Open.EFSA and is available at the following link: <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/dossier/FCM-2022-4171>

⁷Technical dossier, sections 'Recycling process' and 'Intended application in contact with food'.

3.2 | Description of the process

3.2.1 | General description⁸

The recycling process Guangxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable produces recycled PET pellets from PET materials originating from post-consumer collection systems (kerbside and deposit collection systems). It comprises the four steps below.

Input

- In step 1, the post-consumer PET is sorted and processed into hot caustic washed and dried flakes. This step is performed by [REDACTED].

Decontamination and production of recycled PET material

- In step 2, the flakes are decontaminated under [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].
- In step 3, the decontaminated flakes are extruded to produce pellets, which are then [REDACTED].
- In steps 4 and 5, the [REDACTED] pellets are [REDACTED] to a [REDACTED] under [REDACTED] and then decontaminated during solid-state polycondensation (SSP) under [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

The operating conditions of the process have been provided to EFSA.

Pellets, the final product of the process, are checked against technical requirements, such as intrinsic viscosity, colour and black spots.

3.2.2 | Characterisation of the input⁹

According to the applicant, the input material for the recycling process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable consists of hot washed and dried flakes obtained from PET materials, e.g. bottles, previously used for food packaging, from post-consumer collection systems (kerbside and deposit systems). A small fraction may originate from non-food applications. According to the applicant, the proportion will be no more than 5%.

Technical data on the hot washed and dried flakes are provided, such as on physical properties and residual contents of moisture, poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC), glue, polyolefins, other thermoplastics, polyamide, cellulose (paper, wood) and aluminium (see Appendix A).

3.3 | VACUNITE (EREMA basic and Polymetrix SSP V-lean) technology

3.3.1 | Description of the main steps¹⁰

The general scheme of the VACUNITE technology, as provided by the applicant, is reported in Figure 1. The steps are:

- **Decontamination in the [REDACTED] (step 2):**
The flakes are continuously fed into a [REDACTED] equipped with a rotating device, running under [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for a pre-defined minimum residence time.
- **Extrusion of the decontaminated flakes (step 3):**
The flakes, [REDACTED] introduced from the [REDACTED], are molten in the extruder. Residual solid particles (e.g. paper or aluminium) are filtered out of the extruded plastic before the melt is converted into pellets. The pellets are then crystallised and fed to a buffer silo.
- **Preheating and SSP (steps 4 and 5):**
The [REDACTED] pellets from the [REDACTED] are brought to a [REDACTED] in a [REDACTED] by [REDACTED] and then fed to the [REDACTED] running under high [REDACTED] and countercurrent [REDACTED] for a predefined residence time.

⁸Technical dossier, sections 'Recycling process', 'Characterisation of the input' and 'Characterisation of the recycled plastic'.

⁹Technical dossier, section 'Characterisation of the input'.

¹⁰Technical dossier, sections 'Recycling process' and 'Determination of the decontamination efficiency of the recycling process'.

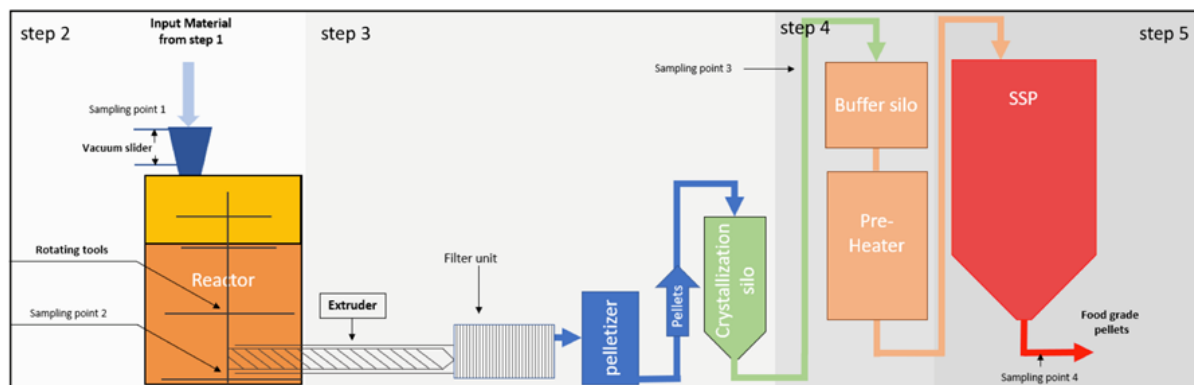


FIGURE 1 General scheme of the VACUNITE technology (provided by the applicant).

The process is run under defined operating parameters¹¹ of temperature, pressure, [REDACTED] and residence time.

3.3.2 | Decontamination efficiency of the recycling process¹²

To demonstrate the decontamination efficiency of the recycling process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable, challenge tests on steps 2 as well as 4 and 5 were submitted to the EFSA.

PET flakes were contaminated with toluene, chlorobenzene, chloroform, methyl salicylate, phenylcyclohexane, benzophenone and methyl stearate, selected as surrogates in agreement with the EFSA guidelines (EFSA CEF Panel, 2011) and in accordance with the recommendations of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA, 2006). The surrogates include different molecular masses and polarities to cover possible chemical classes of contaminants of concern and were demonstrated to be suitable to monitor the behaviour of PET during recycling (EFSA, 2008).

For this purpose, 25 mL of each of the liquid surrogates (toluene, chlorobenzene, chloroform, methyl salicylate and phenylcyclohexane) and 25 g of each of the solid surrogates (benzophenone and methyl stearate) were added to 25 kg of conventionally recycled¹³ post-consumer PET flakes. Eight such batches were produced and stored for 7 days at 50°C with periodical agitation. Afterwards, the contaminated flakes were rinsed with 10% ethanol. The concentrations of the surrogates in this material were determined.

Step 2 of the VACUNITE technology was challenged at industrial scale. Contaminated flakes ([REDACTED] kg) were fed into the reactor. At the exit, a sample was taken for analysis. Instead of being operated continuously, as in the industrial process, step 2 was run in batch mode. The Panel considered that the reactor ran at a temperature and pressure condition equal to or less severe than those foreseen for the industrial process.

In order to prove the representativeness of the residence time of the flakes in the challenge test in respect to the process, an additional challenge test running in continuous mode was provided. In this test, a mixture of green (contaminated) and clear (non-contaminated) flakes was challenged. At different residence times, the ratio of green and clear flakes exiting the reactor was determined. Based on the results provided, the Panel concluded that the residence time in the reactor ran in batch mode for the challenge test corresponded to the minimum residence time in the industrial continuous reactor.

The flakes were then extruded to pellets and [REDACTED] (step 3, which was not challenged).

Steps 4 and 5 ([REDACTED] and SSP) were challenged at laboratory scale in batch mode, using 1 kg of the extruded pellets. Since the [REDACTED] SSP [REDACTED] in the process is operated in the first-in, first-out mode, the Panel considered that this challenge test is representative of the process under the same operational conditions.

The decontamination efficiencies of step 2 ([REDACTED]) as well as steps 4 ([REDACTED]) and 5 (SSP [REDACTED]) were calculated from the concentration of the surrogates before and after each [REDACTED] (Tables 1 and 2, respectively).

¹¹In accordance with Art. 9 and 20 of Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 the parameters were provided to EFSA by the applicant and made available to the Member States and the European Commission (see Appendix C).

¹²Technical dossier, Section 'Determination of the decontamination efficiency of the recycling process'.

¹³Conventional recycling commonly includes sorting, grinding, washing and drying steps and produces washed and dried flakes.

TABLE 1 Efficiency of the decontamination by the [REDACTED] in step 2 of the challenge test.

Surrogates	Concentration of surrogates before step 2 (mg/kg PET)	Concentration of surrogates after step 2 (mg/kg PET)	Decontamination efficiency (%)
Toluene	357.0	57.0	84.0
Chlorobenzene	641.1	100.6	84.3
Chloroform	165.6	78.0	52.9
Methyl salicylate	900.6	112.6	87.5
Phenylcyclohexane	588.2	140.1	76.2
Benzophenone	852.1	171.4	79.9
Methyl stearate	1279.9	205.2	84.0

Abbreviation: PET, poly(ethylene terephthalate).

TABLE 2 Efficiency of the decontamination of the Polymetrix SSP [REDACTED] in steps 4 and 5 of the challenge test.

Surrogates	Concentration of surrogates before step 4 (mg/kg PET)	Concentration of surrogates after step 5 (mg/kg PET)	Decontamination efficiency (%)
Toluene	12.6	< 0.4	> 96.8
Chlorobenzene	25.2	0.8	96.8
Chloroform	25.1	0.9	96.4
Methyl salicylate	7.9	0.1	98.7
Phenylcyclohexane	67.5	8.2	87.9
Benzophenone	100.9	9.4	90.7
Methyl stearate	100.4	2.0	98.0

Abbreviation: PET, poly(ethylene terephthalate).

TABLE 3 Efficiency of the decontamination of the VACUNITE technology in the challenge test.

Surrogates	Decontamination efficiency (%) step 2	Decontamination efficiency (%) steps 4 and 5	Combined decontamination efficiency (%)
Toluene	84.0	> 96.8	> 99.5
Chlorobenzene	84.3	96.8	99.5
Chloroform	52.9	96.4	98.3
Methyl salicylate	87.5	98.7	99.8
Phenylcyclohexane	76.2	87.9	97.1
Benzophenone	79.9	90.7	98.1
Methyl stearate	84.0	98.0	99.7

Abbreviation: PET, poly(ethylene terephthalate).

A combined decontamination efficiency of the process was then calculated from the decontamination efficiencies of steps 2, 4 and 5 (Table 3). As shown in Table 3, the combined decontamination efficiency ranged from 97.1% for phenylcyclohexane to 99.8% for methyl salicylate.

3.4 | Discussion

Considering the high temperatures used during the process, the possibility of contamination by microorganisms can be discounted. Therefore, this evaluation focuses on the chemical safety of the final product.

Technical data, such as on physical properties and residual contents of moisture, PVC, polyolefins, glue, polyamide, other thermoplastics, cellulose and aluminium, were provided for the input materials (i.e. washed and dried flakes, step 1). These flakes are produced from PET containers, e.g. bottles, previously used for food packaging, collected through post-consumer collection systems. However, a small fraction may originate from non-food applications, such as bottles for soap, mouthwash or kitchen hygiene agents. According to the applicant, the collection system and the sorting are managed in such a way that this fraction will be no more than 5% in the input stream, as recommended by the EFSA CEF Panel in its ‘Scientific opinion on the criteria to be used for safety evaluation of a mechanical recycling process to produce recycled PET intended to be used for the manufacture of materials and articles in contact with food’ (EFSA CEF Panel, 2011).

The process is adequately described. The washing and drying of the flakes from the collected PET containers (step 1) is conducted in-house and, according to the applicant, this step is under control. The VACUNITE technology comprises the continuous [REDACTED] decontamination [REDACTED] (step 2), extrusion and [REDACTED] (step 3), as well as [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

(step 4) and decontamination in the SSP [REDACTED] (step 5). The operating parameters of temperature, pressure, residence time and [REDACTED] have been provided to EFSA.

The challenge tests to measure the decontamination efficiency were conducted in a small industrial scale [REDACTED] for step 2 and a small laboratory SSP [REDACTED] for steps 4 and 5, respectively. The reactors were operated under pressure, temperature and [REDACTED] conditions as well as residence time equivalent to or less severe than those of the commercial process. The Panel considered that these challenge tests were performed correctly according to the recommendations of the EFSA guidelines (EFSA, 2008) and that step 2, 4 and 5 are critical for the decontamination efficiency of the process. Consequently, temperature, pressure and residence time in steps 2, 4 and 5 as well as the [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] in steps 4 and 5 of the process should be controlled to guarantee the performance of the decontamination (Appendix C).

The decontamination efficiencies obtained for each surrogate, ranging from 97.1% to 99.8%, have been used to calculate the residual concentrations of potential unknown contaminants in PET (C_{res}) according to the evaluation procedure described in the ‘Scientific opinion on the criteria to be used for safety evaluation of a mechanical recycling process to produce recycled PET’ (EFSA CEF Panel, 2011; Appendix B). By applying the decontamination efficiency percentage to the reference contamination level of 3 mg/kg PET, the C_{res} for the different surrogates was obtained (Table 4).

According to the evaluation principles (EFSA CEF Panel, 2011), the dietary exposure must not exceed 0.0025 µg/kg bw per day, below which the risk to human health is considered negligible. The C_{res} value should not exceed the modelled concentration in PET (C_{mod}) that, after 1 year at 25°C, results in a migration giving rise to a dietary exposure of 0.0025 µg/kg bw per day. Because the recycled PET is intended for the manufacturing of articles (e.g. bottles) to be used in direct contact with drinking water, the exposure scenario for infants has been applied (water could be used to prepare infant formula). A maximum dietary exposure of 0.0025 µg/kg bw/day corresponds to a maximum migration of 0.1 µg/kg of a contaminant substance into the infant's food and has been used to calculate C_{mod} (EFSA CEF Panel, 2011). C_{res} reported in Table 4 is calculated for 100% recycled PET, for which the risk to human health is demonstrated to be negligible. The results of these calculations are shown in Table 4. The relationship between the key parameters for the evaluation scheme is reported in Appendix B.

TABLE 4 Decontamination efficiencies from the combined challenge tests on steps 2, 4 and 5, residual concentrations of the surrogates (C_{res}) related to the reference contamination level and calculated concentrations of the surrogates in PET corresponding to a modelled migration of 0.1 µg/kg food after 1 year at 25°C (C_{mod}).

Surrogates	Decontamination efficiency (%)	C_{res} for 100% rPET (mg/kg PET)	C_{mod} (mg/kg PET)
Toluene	> 99.5	<0.02	0.09
Chlorobenzene	99.5	0.02	0.09
Chloroform	98.3	0.05	0.10
Methyl salicylate	99.8	0.01	0.13
Phenyl cyclohexane	97.1	0.09	0.14
Benzophenone	98.1	0.06	0.16
Methyl stearate	99.7	0.01	0.32

Abbreviations: PET, poly(ethylene terephthalate); rPET, recycled poly(ethylene terephthalate).

On the basis of the provided data from the challenge test and the applied conservative assumptions, the Panel concluded that under the given operating conditions the recycling process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable using the VACUNITE® using the VACUNITE technology is able to ensure that the level of migration of unknown contaminants from the recycled PET into food is below the conservatively modelled migration of 0.1 µg/kg food. At this level, the risk to human health is considered negligible when the recycled PET is used at up to 100% to produce materials and articles intended for contact with all types of foodstuffs including drinking water, for long-term storage at room temperature or below, with or without hotfill.

The Panel noted that the input of the process originates from China. In the absence of data on misuse contamination of this input, the Panel used the reference contamination of 3 mg/kg PET (EFSA CEF Panel, 2011) that was derived from experimental data from an EU survey. Accordingly, the recycling process under evaluation using the VACUNITE (EREMA basic and Polymetrix SSP V-leaN) technology is able to ensure that the level of unknown contaminants in recycled PET is below a calculated concentration (C_{mod}) corresponding to a modelled migration of 0.1 µg/kg food.

4 | CONCLUSIONS

The Panel considered that the process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable, using the VACUNITE (EREMA basic and Polymetrix SSP V-leaN) technology, is adequately characterised and that the main steps used to recycle the PET flakes into decontaminated PET pellets have been identified. Having examined the challenge test provided, it concluded that temperature, pressure and residence time in the continuous reactors of steps 2, 4 and 5 as well as the [REDACTED] in steps 4 and 5 are critical for the decontamination efficiency.

The Panel concluded that the recycling process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable is able to reduce foreseeable accidental contamination of post-consumer food contact PET to a concentration that does not give rise to concern for a risk to human health if:

- i) it is operated under conditions that are at least as severe as those applied in the challenge test used to measure the decontamination efficiency of the process;
- ii) the input material of the process is washed and dried post-consumer PET flakes originating from materials and articles that have been manufactured in accordance with the EU legislation on food contact materials and contains no more than 5% of PET from non-food consumer applications;
- iii) the recycled PET obtained from the process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable is used at up to 100% for the manufacture of materials and articles for contact with all types of foodstuffs, including drinking water, soft drinks, juices, tea, milk, oil and alcoholic beverages, for long-term storage at room temperature or below, with or without hotfill.

The final articles made of this recycled PET are not intended to be used in microwave and conventional ovens and such uses are not covered by this evaluation.

5 | RECOMMENDATION

The Panel recommended periodic verification that the input to be recycled originates from materials and articles that have been manufactured in accordance with the EU legislation on food contact materials and that the proportion of PET from non-food consumer applications is no more than 5%. This adheres to good manufacturing practice and the Regulation (EC) No 282/2008, Art. 4b. Critical steps in recycling should be monitored and kept under control. In addition, supporting documentation should be available on how it is ensured that the critical steps are operated under conditions at least as severe as those in the challenge test used to measure the decontamination efficiency of the process.

6 | DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED TO EFSA

Dossier 'Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable_VACUNITE® (EREMA Vacurema® Basic + Polymetrix SSP V-LeaN)'. July 2022. Submitted on behalf of Guangxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable., China.

Additional information, December 2022. Submitted on behalf of Guangxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable., China.

Additional information, April 2023. Submitted on behalf of Guangxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable., China.

ABBREVIATIONS

bw	body weight
CEF	Panel on Food Contact Materials, Enzymes, Flavourings and Processing Aids
CEP	Panel on Food Contact Materials, Enzymes and Processing Aids
C_{mod}	modelled concentration in PET
C_{res}	residual concentration in PET
iV	intrinsic viscosity
PET	poly(ethylene terephthalate)
PVC	poly(vinyl chloride)
SSP	solid-state polycondensation

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

If you wish to access the declaration of interests of any expert contributing to an EFSA scientific assessment, please contact interestmanagement@efsa.europa.eu.

REQUESTOR

Bundesamt für Verbraucherschutz und Lebensmittelsicherheit, Germany

QUESTION NUMBER

EFSA-Q-2022-00227

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PANEL MEMBERS

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APPENDIX A

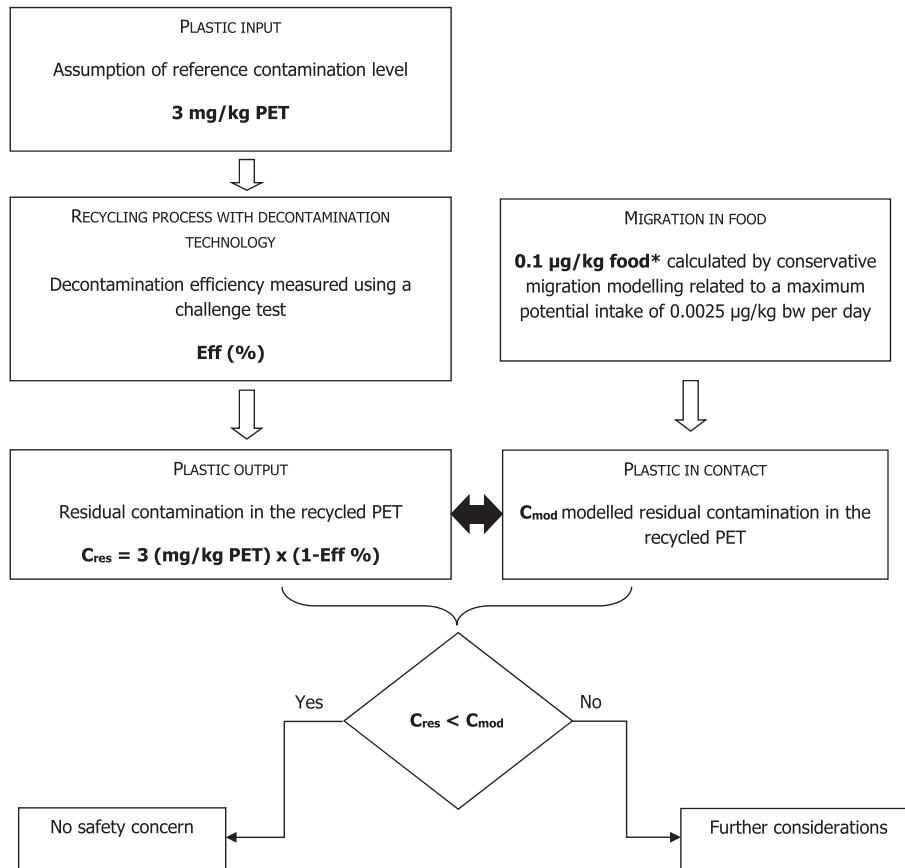
Technical data of the washed flakes as provided by the applicant⁹

Parameter	Value
Moisture max.	1.5%
Bulk density	250–500 kg/m ³
PVC max.	100 mg/kg
Glue max.	500 mg/kg
Polyolefins (HDPE, PP) max.	500 mg/kg
Other thermoplastics	300 mg/kg
Polyamide	10 mg/kg
Cellulose (paper, wood)	500 mg/kg
Aluminium max.	400 mg/kg
PET dust	1%

Abbreviations: PET, poly(ethylene terephthalate); PVC, poly(vinyl chloride).

APPENDIX B

Relationship between the key parameters for the evaluation scheme (EFSA CEF Panel, 2011)



*Default scenario (infant). For adults and toddlers, the migration criterion will be 0.75 and 0.15 µg/kg food, respectively. The figures are derived from the application of the human exposure threshold value of 0.0025 µg/kg bw per day applying a factor of 5 related to the overestimation of modelling.

APPENDIX C

Table on operational parameters¹⁴

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Process Guanxi Wuzhou Guolong Recyclable (RECYC310) based on the VACUNITE technology										
Parameters	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

^a [REDACTED] temperature > 140°C, > 45 min.
^b [REDACTED] The profile of pressure was not provided.

^c Applicable only to SSP. [REDACTED] is done at atmospheric pressure.
^d There is experimental evidence (Huang and Walch 1998, Polymer, 93, p.6991–9; Solid State Polymerization, ed. C.Papaspyrides and N. Vouyiouka, J. Wiley & Sons Inc., 2009) that above a minimal gas flow, the velocity of the gas has no longer influences on the rate of SSP process. Taking into account the gas flow in plant and the size of pellets, the gas flow used in the challenge test is considered representative of the one used in the plant. The gas velocity values [REDACTED] m/s (challenge test) and ≥ [REDACTED] m/s (process) correspond to gas flow rates of [REDACTED] m³/h (challenge test) and > [REDACTED] m³/h (process, 14.5 m³ capacity reactor).

¹⁴ Technical report, section 'Table of operating Parameters'.