



GENERAL STATEMENT AROUND TCHO AND HEAVY METALS:

Food safety is a top priority for TCHO. We always follow proper procedures and work with third-party organizations like the Safe Quality Food Institute (SQF) to ensure the safety of our products. The TCHO Chocolate factory is SQF Certified, ensuring all our products meet industry, customer, and regulatory requirements for all areas of the food supply chain - from the farm to the customer - as required by the SQF.

Heavy metals naturally occur in soil and are found in many everyday foods, such as rice, potatoes, dairy, fish, leafy vegetables, and alcohol. Cacao is grown worldwide, and the variance in the soil is quite large, meaning some regions have higher naturally occurring amounts of heavy metals than others.

At TCHO, we test every lot of cacao we purchase to ensure our products are under the allowable levels per the applicable federal and state requirements. We also work with our farming partners to identify solutions to further mitigate the levels of heavy metals in their cacao.

FAQ

Q: What practices does your brand currently employ to ensure that your products are safe and free of harmful heavy metals?

A: TCHO samples and tests every lot of cocoa beans for heavy metals before we purchase them. We then test all of the semi-processed cocoa used in TCHO chocolate to ensure that our products are compliant with applicable legal requirements for heavy metals.

Q: Do you test finished products for heavy metals?

A: In addition to testing all cocoa used in TCHO chocolate for heavy metals to ensure compliance with applicable legal requirements for heavy metals, we also administer a schedule to test our finished goods to ensure we are in good standing.

Q: What practices does your brand employ in your sourcing to ensure that your suppliers are testing for the presence of harmful heavy metals?

A: We sample and test every lot of cocoa beans used in TCHO chocolate before we buy them. We then oversee the processing of those cocoa beans into cocoa liquor, nibs, butter and powder and then retest all semi-processed cocoa lots for heavy metals before using the cocoa in TCHO chocolate. The farmer cooperatives TCHO purchases from are also active in researching heavy metal absorption by cocoa plants and mitigating absorption at the farm level as much as possible.

Q: Does your brand currently offer any products that have reliably and consistently tested below California's Maximum Allowable Dose Levels for these metals? If so, which products.

A: Our products are in compliance with the requirements of the California State court judgments on levels of heavy metals. The court Judgment established concentration levels for both lead and cadmium that supersede the OEHHA MADLs for cocoa and chocolate products.

Q: What changes in sourcing/testing are underway or planned as a result of Consumer Reports' research?

A: TCHO has continuously monitored heavy metal levels in our products for years to ensure we follow applicable legal requirements for heavy metals.

Q: Solving the heavy metal contamination issue is an industry wide issue. Is your brand working with any industry groups/brand coalitions to solve this challenge?

A: TCHO is a member of the Fine Chocolate Industry Association and also follows the guidance of the National Confectioners Association on this topic. We have worked closely with the group most affected by these regulations; the cocoa farmers themselves. Over the past 15 years TCHO has partnered with cocoa growing communities to implement best practices for organic cocoa farming and post-harvest practices. TCHO has also used our own resources and grants to fund improvements of on farm infrastructure to optimize quality and reduce any potential external contamination of cocoa beans.