

“The catering industry (horeca) frequently uses biocidal products, such as disinfectants”

Disinfectants are a daily feature of the catering industry. They keep kitchens and workplaces hygienic. These products - biocidal products - can be very effective, but some of present health risks for employees and customers. If used incorrectly, they can also affect food quality. Jean-Louis Simonet, chairman of CQSHoreca (Conseils - Qualité - Solutions Horeca) and Laetitia van Vyve, advisor on food hygiene and safety at COALI and instructor at CQSHoreca, explain how to handle biocides safely as a catering business, and what obligations you have to comply with.

Biocides are pesticides. They are used in the horeca to render harmless or destroy harmful organisms, ranging from bacteria and viruses to moulds and vermin. Biocides are categorised into either the free or closed circuit, depending on the risks that they present. “We observe that the catering industry is not familiar with this categorisation into free and closed circuits. In fact, the term ‘biocides’ is not always known,” explains Jean-Louis Simonet, chairman of CQSHoreca.

Closed-circuit biocidal products present significant health risks. For example, they can be toxic, carcinogenic or harmful to reproduction. This is why they are primarily restricted to professional users. How can you know if a biocide belongs to the closed circuit? This information is to be found in the authorisation act or in the list of authorised biocidal products on the website of the FPS Public Health (www.biocide.be).

Mandatory registration

If you want to use a closed-circuit biocidal product, you have to register online at www.biocide.be. Before 31 December every year, you need to confirm your user status via your account.



“When I work with closed-circuit biocidal products, I always wear gloves”

FRÉDÉRIC DEROPPE, LECTURER AND HORECA SPECIALIST HORECA FORMATION WALLONIE

Frédéric Deroppe gives practical training as a chef at the ‘Centre wallon de Formation et de Perfectionnement du Secteur Horeca’. He comes into daily contact with biocidal products. “These are often free circuit disinfectant sprays, which I handle with caution. However, if I use a closed-circuit disinfectant, I always wear gloves. If there is a risk of splashing, I also wear protective goggles. It is important to always follow the instructions for use carefully, in order to minimize the health risks. I also advise students to pay constant attention to their personal safety and hygiene.”

Products for disinfection and pest control

“The catering industry frequently uses biocidal products, both free and closed-circuit. Examples include disinfectants to decontaminate counters and work surfaces, equipment such as cutting machines, etc.”, explains Laetitia van Vyve, food hygiene and safety advisor at COALI and instructor at CQSHoreca. “Sometimes these products need to be rinsed, but not always. If rinsing is not necessary, it is generally fast-acting alcohol-based disinfectant sprays the product of which completely evaporates after five minutes, leaving no residue”. In addition, catering businesses often have to take care of pest control and prevention. Poisonous baits used against rats and mice are also biocides.



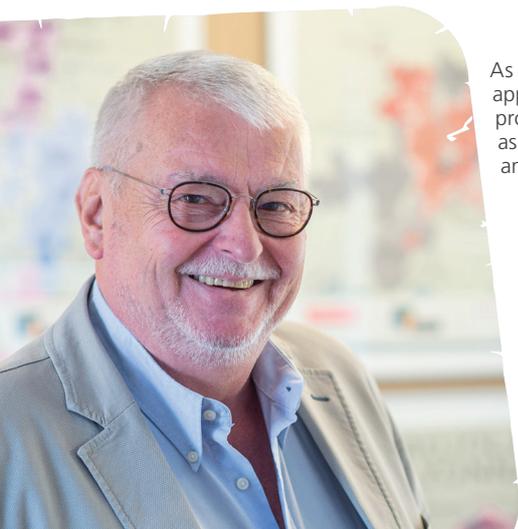
“The catering industry uses biocidal products from both the free and closed circuit”

LAETITIA VAN VYVE

Protect yourself, your colleagues and your customers

“Biocides must be used with caution and in full knowledge of the facts”, admits Jean-Louis Simonet. “If it is a closed-circuit biocidal product, it is often compulsory to wear personal protective equipment such as appropriate gloves.” The hazards and risks of each closed-circuit biocidal product can be found on the safety data sheet and in the authorisation act. In addition, as an employer, you must ensure that biocides are only used for the applications for which they are authorised. These applications are mentioned in the authorisation act of the product and possibly in the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC), both of which can be found in the list of authorised biocidal products at www.biocide.be.

“It is the employer’s responsibility to supervise the proper and safe use of hazardous biocidal products in the workplace. Both for your own safety and that of the customer. The employer must provide personal protective equipment such as safety goggles, masks and gloves, and ensure that this personal protective equipment is used properly. More information on this subject is to be found in the authorisation act. The employer needs to make sure employees are aware that these are hazardous products, which they must handle with caution, and show them how to read the label, where they will find the most important information about the hazards and risks of the product.”



As an employer, provide appropriate personal protective equipment such as safety goggles, masks and gloves.

“Sellers of biocides also have an important role to play. They need to properly inform customers about the hazards and risks of the purchased biocidal products and explain them how to use the product safely. The supplier will often provide training for horeca staff, but unfortunately the catering industry is a sector with a small workforce of which the staff often changes. Valuable knowledge thus gradually gets lost. That is why it is important to disseminate the information at as many levels as possible. By doing so, working on the work floor becomes more pleasant and safer. That benefits everyone”, confirms Laetitia van Vyve.

The FPS Public Health informs

Do you want to know more about the safe use of biocidal products, the risks involved or the registration obligation? You can find plenty of information on www.biocide.be.

You can also find a video, a leaflet and an information sheet tailored to the catering industry:

- **Folder: Biocides in the catering industry. What do you need to know as a professional user? (for the employer/prevention advisor)**
- **Information sheet: Working safely with hazardous products. Biocides: recognise them and protect yourself! (for employees)**



Biocides?
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the necessary
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