

Maximum residue limits (MRLs) in Canada



Health Canada's scientists protect your health by setting safety standards on how much pesticide residue could be found on the food you eat. The reason pesticides are used on crops is to help protect them from weeds, fungi and insects. This allows you to access high-quality nutritious food.

What is an MRL?

A maximum residue limit (MRL) is the highest amount of pesticide residue that may remain on or in a food when a pesticide is used properly. MRLs are legal and enforceable limits based on how pesticides are used.

Is the food I'm eating safe?

MRLs are used to check if pesticides are being used properly. The level of pesticide residues that could be on or in foods grown or imported in Canada must be low enough to not harm you.



For example, **you would have to eat about 280 apples every day, for your whole life**, for there to be a health concern related to pesticide residues. That many apples can almost fill a shopping cart.

Using apples as an example, this number is based on the highest amount of a pesticide residue detected on an apple in Canada.

How are MRLs set?



Protecting health and environment

Before setting an MRL for a given pesticide on a food, Health Canada scientists evaluate the pesticide to ensure that it can be used in a way that protects human health and the environment, while effectively managing pests.



Examining exposure

Next, they examine the amount of a given pesticide residue you might be exposed to on or in your food. This potential exposure looks at all food you might eat in a typical day and the variety of food you may eat over your lifetime.



Following international guidelines

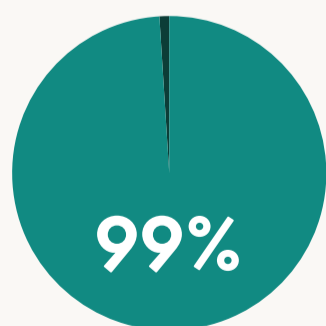
Then our scientists can set the MRL in line with international guidelines. Countries cooperate on setting MRLs so you can have a variety of food from all over the world.

MRLs can change over time based on changes in how pesticides are used. However, they must always meet our health and environmental protection requirements.

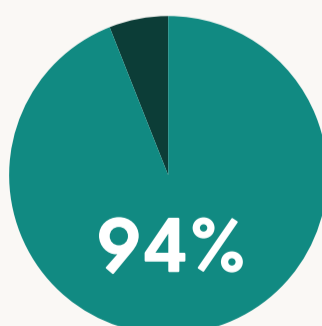
How is food tested in Canada?

The scientists at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) have an ongoing program to test food grown in and imported to Canada to determine pesticide residue levels. Year after year, the results show the majority of tested fresh fruits and vegetables have no pesticide residues or have residue levels below the MRL.

Fruits and vegetables with pesticide residue levels below the set MRLs



FOOD GROWN IN CANADA



IMPORTED FOOD

Any food found with pesticide residue levels above the legal limit undergoes an investigation, and CFIA takes the appropriate action to keep you safe.

Based on the 2019–2020 report for the National Chemical Residue Monitoring Program and Chemistry Food Safety Oversight Program.