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## NEW PROCESS TO ELIMINATE CORK TAIN

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*French researchers deliver hop for cork.*

A new method of cleaning and treating cork which eliminates the organic compounds associated with cork taint (chloroanisoles and chlorophenols) has been developed by French researchers.

The group Sabaté Diosos, the world's No.2 cork producer and leading barrel manufacturer (Seguin Moreau, Radoux) in collaboration with the French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) established the process following trials run from 1997 to 2001.

Research has shown that the procedure of selective extraction by supercritical CO<sub>2</sub> (a stage between liquid and gas arrived at by heating the CO<sub>2</sub> to above 31°C and submitting it to a pressure of above 74 bars) allied to a solvent (water) enables the unwanted chloroanisoles (including 2,4,6-TCA trichloranisole) and their precursors (chlorophenols) to be extracted without eliminating other essential compounds.

Experiments on batches of naturally contaminated cork confirmed the treatment's effectiveness with the corks retaining all their mechanical properties. The CEA-Sabaté team then turned their attention to corks produced from treated raw material. Initial tastings and analyses have been very positive.

The process has been internationally patented and jointly registered by Sabaté Diosos and the CEA. It is deemed respectful of the product and environmentally friendly due to the almost total absence of effluent. The extracted compounds have to be recovered and the processed gas recycled but there is no liquid effluent.

"We know that the technique works and that it can be adapted to industry and have now arrived at the phase of decision over investment," said Nicolas Serpette, communications manager at Sabaté Diosos. "It will be at least two years before the process can be fully commercialised," he added.