**Review Article** 

# Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Brazilian Food: A Critical Review of Levels, Human Health Risk Assessment, and Potential Gaps in the Recent Literature

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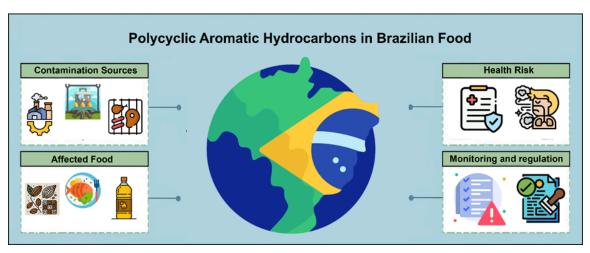
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Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are pollutants with well-known carcinogenic, mutagenic, and teratogenic properties. Their presence in food is a critical concern, particularly in developing countries such as Brazil, where regulatory frameworks may be inadequate to mitigate contamination risks effectively. This article systematically reviews the recent literature on PAH contamination in Brazilian food, assesses the associated health risks, and identifies critical gaps in research and regulatory practices. A literature search was conducted using predefined inclusion criteria across databases: Scopus, ScienceDirect, PubMed, and Web of Science. Health risk characterization was performed using risk assessment methodologies, including Estimated Daily Intake, Hazard Quotient (HQ), and Cancer Risk (CRisk) calculations, with consumption data derived from the Brazilian Family Budget Research. Out of 36 eligible studies, significant regional disparities in research efforts were noted, with 55.6% of studies concentrated in Southeast Brazil. Analysis revealed that several food categories exceeded European Union regulatory limits for benzo[a] pyrene and PAH4 (benzo[a] pyrene, chrysene, benzo[b] fluoranthene, and benzo[a] anthracene). CRisk alarming values in tea (3.73×10<sup>-2</sup>), cheese (1.24×10<sup>-2</sup>), and vegetable oils (4.05×10<sup>-3</sup>), all of which exceeded the acceptable threshold. These findings underscore the need for stringent regulatory measures. Currently, Brazilian standards are limited mainly to olive oils. The analysis identified critical gaps in PAH monitoring, with research funding disparities contributing to uneven geographical coverage, thereby hindering comprehensive national risk assessments. This article highlights an urgent need for enhanced regulatory oversight, standardized monitoring protocols, and increased investment in research to address PAH contamination across Brazil's food supply.

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## Highlights

- Thirty-six studies were included in this review.
- Brazilian legislation on PAH levels in food is inadequate for effectively regulating exposure.
- The highest concentration of PAHs was found in fishery products.
- The reviewed food products showed a CRisk higher than the international threshold.



#### 1. Introduction

PAHs are a significant class of legacy pollutants from natural processes and anthropogenic activities. Their formation primarily occurs through the incomplete combustion of organic matter, fossil fuels, wood, and tobacco, as well as various industrial processes, such as coal tar production and aluminum smelting[1]. Structurally, these organic compounds are characterized by two or more fused benzene rings, categorized based on their molecular mass into low and high-molecular-weight compounds. This classification influences their environmental distribution patterns. These compounds have been extensively documented for their adverse biological effects, including carcinogenic, mutagenic, and teratogenic properties [11][2][4].

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (US.EPA) has established a list of 16 priority PAHs (Table 1) for environmental monitoring and regulation. Within this group, benzo[a] pyrene (BaP) holds unique significance as the only compound classified in Group 1A (carcinogenic to humans) by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), serving as a critical marker for PAH toxicity across environmental matrices. The remaining PAHs are classified as either Group 2A (probably carcinogenic to humans) or Group 2B (possibly carcinogenic to humans). The assessment of human health impacts is complicated by occupational exposure patterns, which often involve exposure to complex mixtures of multiple PAHs and other carcinogenic compounds. This complexity poses significant challenges in isolating and attributing specific carcinogenic effects to individual components [51|61|71|8].

Food supply chain contamination represents a primary route of human exposure to PAHs, with up to 70% of total PAH exposure in non-smoking individuals attributable to food consumption. The complexity of this exposure pathway is highlighted by data from the American Academy of Pediatrics, indicating that over 10,000 chemicals are present in modern food supplies [9][10][11]. The concentrations of PAHs in food products vary significantly, influenced by multiple factors, including cooking methodology, preservation techniques, storage conditions, and individual dietary patterns [12][13][11][14][15][16].

High-temperature cooking methods, including grilling, frying, roasting, and smoking processes, generate additional PAHs through the incomplete combustion of organic materials, particularly fats and proteins [13][14][17]. Furthermore, environmental matrices represent additional contamination sources for food. The lipophilic characteristics of these pollutants facilitate their bioaccumulation, raising concerns regarding animal-derived food products due to biomagnification through the food chain [18][19][20][17].

On the other hand, PAH contamination in food products can be further exacerbated by migration from packaging materials during the storage or transportation phases, increasing their concentration in food products[21]. This multi-pathway contamination profile underscores the importance of implementing comprehensive monitoring protocols and developing targeted mitigation strategies to reduce human exposure to these compounds[51][21][6].

International regulatory oversight of PAHs in food products is primarily governed by Codex Alimentarius, a collaborative initiative between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). This framework establishes Maximum Limits (MLs) for BaP across specific food categories, including fish, meats, and smoked goods [22]. The European Union (EU) has also implemented additional comprehensive regulations through Regulation (EU) 2023/915, which establishes MLs for both individual benzo[a] pyrene and a defined combination of four PAH compounds (PAH4): benzo[a] pyrene, benza[a] anthracene, benzo[b] fluoranthene, and chrysene. These regulations specifically address PAH contamination in processed food products, including smoked, roasted, grilled, and dried foods, as well as oils and fats [6] (EU, 2023).

The Brazilian regulatory framework for PAH control shows notable limitations in scope and implementation. The Brazilian National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA), through Resolution RDC No. 722/2022, has established regulatory parameters for various food contaminants. However, PAH monitoring remains restricted, with limits established solely for benzo[a] pyrene in olive pomace and olive pit oils—products with minimal market presence in Brazil. While ANVISA's recognition of 16 priority PAHs indicates emerging awareness, this has not translated into comprehensive monitoring protocols. Despite partial alignment with international standards (Codex Alimentarius Commission and European Food Safety Authority – EFSA), current oversight mechanisms remain insufficient for effective PAH contamination control in the food supply chain [5][23].

The present article systematically reviews PAH contamination in Brazilian food products through a comprehensive analysis of peer-reviewed literature published between 2014 and 2024, specifically focusing on regional distribution patterns and contamination levels. The research methodology integrates quantitative assessment of PAH concentrations, analysis of consumption patterns, and evidence-based evaluation of carcinogenic risk factors compared to established international regulatory standards. This review is structured to achieve three primary objectives: (1) to identify critical gaps in existing PAH monitoring frameworks and research protocols, (2) to prioritize areas for future research through a systematic evaluation of current evidence, and (3) to develop data-driven recommendations for regulatory agencies aimed at mitigating PAH exposure within the Brazilian food supply chain.

## 2. Search strategy

The systematic literature review utilized four major scientific databases: Scopus (<a href="https://www.scopus.com">https://www.scopus.com</a>), ScienceDirect (<a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com">https://www.sciencedirect.com</a>), PubMed (<a href="https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov">https://www.sciencedirect.com</a>), and Web of Science (<a href="https://www.webofscience.com">https://www.webofscience.com</a>). The search protocol encompassed publications from 2014 to 2024 to ensure comprehensive coverage of recent research developments and was based on PRISMA guidelines. Search strategies included the use of the following keywords in the Boolean operator "OR" such as - "PAH", "Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons", "Polyaromatic hydrocarbons", "High molecular weight PAHs (HMW-PAHs)", "Low molecular weight PAHs (LMW-PAHs)" and the specific PAH name (i.e., Naphthalene, Fluorene, Phenanthrene, Anthracene, Benzo[a] pyrene). These keywords were combined using the Boolean operator "AND" with "food samples," "low-water food," "high-water food," "animal-origin food," "processed food," and the specific food name + Brazil, Brazilian regions, or specific Brazilian states.

The article selection followed strict methodological criteria to ensure data quality and analytical consistency: i) a description of the food samples used in the study and their geographical location within the Brazilian territory; ii) an adequate analytical method and quality control for the analysis. The systematic evaluation excluded conference proceedings, review articles, and non-English language publications to maintain methodological uniformity and facilitate comparative analysis. A flowchart, demonstrated in Figure 1, was created to summarize the search strategy.

## 3. Human health risk characterization

Non-carcinogenic (HQ) and carcinogenic (CRisk) risks were estimated to assess potential human health impacts. The risk calculations incorporated standardized consumption data from the Brazilian Family Budget Research (Pesquisa de Orçamentos Familiares - POF) conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [24]. The assessment protocol utilized was to reference an adult body weight of 70 kg and assumed chemical stability during the food preparation and consumption. The following equations were used for risk quantification [25]. Assuming no chemical alteration during cooking and consumption:

$$EDI = rac{(C.IR)}{BW}$$
 $HQ = rac{EDI}{RfD}$ 
 $HI = \sum HQ$ 

CRisk = EDI.oSF

Where:

- EDI: Estimated Daily Intake
- C: Average PAH concentration in food (mg/kg)
- IR: Ingestion Rate
- BW: Body Weight (70 kg)
- HO: Hazard Quotient
- · RfD: Reference oral dose (mg/kg/day)
- HI: Hazard Index
- · CRisk: Cancer risk
- oSF: Oral Slope factor (mg/kg·day).

The risk assessment methodology used the highest and the available median PAH concentrations from each food category to define upper-limit and normal exposure scenarios, ensuring conservative estimates for evaluating human health risks. The health risk was also evaluated in normal situations, considering the median values of the sum of all PAHs in the calculations. For the summation of PAH concentrations in food samples, three distinct values were calculated:

(1) the total concentration of all detected compounds, (2) the cumulative concentration of compounds with a defined Reference Dose (RfD), and (3) the cumulative concentration of compounds with an Oral Slope Factor (oSF). This approach provides a robust framework for assessing the potential health impacts of dietary PAH exposure.

Risk assessment thresholds were established according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency [26] guidelines, which define HI values exceeding 1.0 as indicative of potential chronic systemic effects. For carcinogenic risk, CRisk values above  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  indicate elevated cancer risk from continuous exposure. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides additional risk interpretation guidance [27], with CRisk values between  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  and  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  suggesting increased susceptibility within tolerable ranges.

#### 4. Results

Initial database screening identified 70 publications, which were reduced to 47 after excluding duplicate data across different databases, with 36 studies meeting the established inclusion criteria for comprehensive analysis. Table 2 shows all available articles from the Brazilian regions (North, Northeast, Midwest, South, and Southeast). Quantitative analysis revealed a significant regional disparity in research output, with 20 publications in the Southeast region (55.6% of eligible studies), as depicted in Figure 2. This disproportionate regional distribution reflects established patterns in research funding allocation and institutional capacity, factors analyzed in detail in subsequent sections.

Analysis of PAH concentrations across food categories, compared against Regulation (EU) 2023/915 standards, revealed significant exceedances in multiple food matrices, particularly cocoa beans, chocolate, oils, tea, and fishery products. Quantitative assessment of toasted cocoa beans found BaP concentrations exceeding regulatory thresholds (5.0 µg/kg) in two independent studies. Belo et al. [28] reported a maximum BaP concentration of 9.06 µg/kg, while Abballe et al. [29] found levels as high as 22.2 µg/kg. Notably, the estimated median concentrations in the latter study also exceeded the threshold, reaching 11.1 µg/kg. In turn, Guizellini et al. [30] reported high PAH concentrations in chocolate samples, with both individual BaP levels and cumulative PAH4 (Benzo[a] pyrene, Chrysene, Benzo[b] fluoranthene, and Benzo[a] anthracene) concentrations surpassing established regulatory limits.

Analysis of vegetable oils revealed significant PAH contamination relative to regulatory limits. Brazilian legislation (through ANVISA) specifies a maximum BaP concentration of 2.0  $\mu$ g/kg for olive pomace and olive pit oils. Tfouni et al. [31] reported BaP concentrations reaching 25.51  $\mu$ g/kg, exceeding the regulatory threshold by approximately twelve-fold. European Union standards similarly establish a 2.0  $\mu$ g/kg limit for BaP and 10  $\mu$ g/kg for cumulative PAH4 concentrations. While some samples exhibited BaP concentrations surpassing the PAH4 cumulative limit, comprehensive interpretation was constrained by incomplete BaP data [32], highlighting a methodological limitation in contamination assessment.

The assessment of seafood and fishery products revealed substantial PAH contamination according to European Union regulatory thresholds (2.0  $\mu$ g/kg BaP for smoked fishery products and 5.0  $\mu$ g/kg for bivalve mollusks). Santiago et al. [33], Ramos et al. [34], and Souza et al. [35] reported cumulative concentrations of 16 IARC-regulated PAHs, with maximum levels reaching 988.76  $\mu$ g/kg in certain samples. Moreover, Massone et al. [36] reported even higher contamination levels, with cumulative concentrations for the sum of 37 PAHs reaching 4074.0  $\mu$ g/kg in fishery products. While these measurements reflect broader PAH profiles than EU-regulated PAH4 compounds, the reported concentrations significantly exceed acceptable thresholds. This highlights potential public health risks, underscoring the urgent need for improved monitoring protocols and expanded research efforts in this field.

PAH concentrations in food categories are currently exempt from regulatory oversight, creating a potential for exposure risk. For example, Rocha et al.  $\frac{[37]}{}$  reported striking concentrations of PAHs in coalho cheese, with BaP concentrations reaching 149.4  $\mu$ g/kg and 139.5  $\mu$ g/kg of DahA, the latter being classified as probably carcinogenic to humans by the IARC. Similarly, Silva et al.  $\frac{[38]}{}$  highlighted concerning levels of the total PAH4 group in salami, with a maximum concentration of 33.84  $\mu$ g/kg. These quantitative findings demonstrate substantial contamination in unregulated food matrices.

Current PAH regulations, including EU standards for high-risk food matrices, provide essential monitoring parameters but exhibit significant limitations in fully assessing exposure. A critical analysis identifies two key challenges: limited coverage of diverse food categories and the absence of standardized analytical protocols. In the Brazilian context, these limitations are evident, as most food products analyzed in the past decade fall outside EU regulatory classifications, hindering accurate exposure assessments for local dietary patterns. Methodological inconsistencies in PAH compound selection further compromise data quality, particularly when studies exclude benzo[a] pyrene. These systematic gaps in standardization reduce both inter-study comparability and the reliability of risk assessments, underscoring the need for harmonized analytical protocols and a focus on priority PAH compounds to improve future research quality and relevance.

The research examines various analytical approaches for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) detection across Brazilian studies. Researchers commonly employed solid-liquid extraction or modified QuEChERS methodology for initial sample preparation, followed by purification via solid-phase extraction (SPE) or chromatographic columns using silica gel. The extraction process typically utilized low-polarity solvents such as hexane or dichloromethane. For instrumental analysis, researchers primarily employed either gas chromatography with mass spectrometry (GC-MS) or high-performance liquid chromatography with fluorescence detection (HPLC-FLD), both recognized for their detection capabilities with these compounds. Recent technological advancements have introduced more refined techniques, including GC-MS/MS, HPLC-MS/MS, and supercritical fluid chromatography (SFC), offering enhanced selectivity and sensitivity. The European Union suggests detection limits below 0.3 ng/g and quantification limits under 0.9 ng/g for the four primary PAHs in foodstuffs, with acceptable recovery percentages ranging from 50-120% to ensure measurement reliability.

The lack of unified methodological approaches across Brazilian research facilities has resulted in significant variation in analytical performance, particularly regarding the spectrum of PAHs quantified (ranging from just the four EU-priority compounds to comprehensive panels of 16 EPA-designated or 37 different PAHs in certain investigations). This methodological diversity complicates comparative analysis and comprehensive risk evaluation. Future investigations

should emphasize protocol standardization, validation across multiple laboratories, and comprehensive reporting of quality assurance parameters, including recovery rates, repeatability, and matrix interference effects. A significant challenge remains the absence of consistent, validated analytical procedures for PAH determination in Brazilian food matrices. Several studies fail to document recovery percentages, detection/quantification limits, or reference material verification, potentially affecting the comparability and accuracy of reported PAH measurements. Alignment with international benchmarks established by the EU and ISO would enhance data reliability and strengthen regulatory frameworks.

## 4.1. Role of Disparities in Research Infrastructure Across the States

The geographical distribution of PAH research in Brazil shows significant regional concentration, with predominant research output from the South and Southeast regions, correlating with the density of urban centers and academic institutions  $\frac{[39]}{}$ . This regional disparity reflects institutional infrastructure patterns, as these areas host the most prominent universities and research facilities. Analysis of food product contamination requires consideration of both production geography and consumption patterns. While agricultural activities span the country's diverse regions, generating varied food matrices for analysis, research capacity remains geographically concentrated. This dichotomy is exemplified by studies of regional foods like jambu (a Brazilian leafy) in the North, where local agricultural practices and dietary patterns intersect with research capabilities. The observed research distribution primarily stems from historical patterns in funding allocation and institutional resource distribution  $\frac{[40]}{}$ .

Brazil's research infrastructure operates through a complex network of funding sources, with public academic institutions serving as primary research centers. Three major public organizations dominate the research funding landscape: the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq - Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Tecnol\u0063gico e Cient\u00edfico), the Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES - Centro de Aperfei\u00e7oamento de N\u00edvel Superior), and the S\u00e3o Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP - Funda\u00e7\u00e3o de Amparo \u00e0 Pesquisa do Estado de S\u00e3o Paulo). Quantitative analysis of research output from 2011-2018 demonstrates their significance, with publication counts of 122,967, 70,048, and 56,667, respectively (41). This publication distribution underscores the critical role of public funding in Brazilian scientific research. Research project execution requires substantial resource allocation beyond investigator expertise, encompassing infrastructure, personnel, and material costs, highlighting the fundamental importance of institutional funding support (42)(43).

This discrepancy can greatly impact on the data obtained from each study. Determination of organic compounds is a challenging task, as the available methods vary in terms of analytical performance, sensitivity to different PAH, technical demands and such [44]. The different scenarios in Brazil when comes to funding and research profiles make each laboratory almost unique with its capabilities and equipments. Each analytical method differs in sensitivity, accuracy and reliability, and when detecting pollutants as PAHs, the presence of numerous isomers within the 16 regulated compounds can further complicate detection and separation [44][45]. Additionally, the lack of standardized methodologies has resulted in limited interlaboratory studies, which further complicates the geographical consistency of research data [46][39].

Brazilian public funding agencies face significant operational constraints due to recent budget reductions. These financial limitations have impacted research continuity, reflecting a broader challenge among emerging nations where research potential exists, but resource limitations constrain scientific advancement [52][53][54]. Due to substantial infrastructure requirements, the impact is particularly pronounced in analytical chemistry and toxicological research [55][56]. Critical instrumentation, such as chromatography-mass spectrometry systems, requires significant capital investment, limiting institutional research capacity. For emerging economies, equipment importation introduces additional cost barriers. Operational considerations, including consumables, maintenance requirements, and specialized personnel training, further compound these financial challenges, creating significant obstacles for high-impact research implementation [56][55].

Assessment of scientific funding reductions in Brazil reveals cumulative losses of US\$ 14 billion between 2014 and 2021. This significant decline in research support was documented during a formal review by the Economic Development, Industry, and Commerce Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, specifically addressing national science and technology funding status [52]. CAPES, operating under the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC - Minist\u00e9rio da Educa\u00e7\u00e30 e Cultura), experienced substantial budget reductions between 2015-2017, with funding decreasing by approximately US\$ 166 million [58].

This significant reduction impacted scholarship allocation and researcher recruitment, creating additional barriers to scientific advancement under increasingly resource-constrained conditions[59].

The relationship between chemical analysis and governmental regulations encompasses multiple critical intersections, influencing both research methodology and practical applications [60][61][62][63] (Papadakis et al., 2017). The standards and guidelines made by governmental agencies to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and safety of their results, which are strongly inculcated in quality control, assurance, traceability, and documentation, depend on data found in meaningful research. Environmental safety regulations address critical operational parameters in hazardous chemical management through standardized handling protocols, secure storage requirements, and regulated disposal procedures. Integrating these quality assurance systems with systematic pollutant monitoring methods enables consistent evaluation of environmental contaminants while maintaining methodological rigor and data reliability. [62] [63][64] (Papadakis et al. 2017).

#### 4.2. Food regulation in Brazil and PAH studies

Brazilian food legislation is based on national laws and international agreements. These practices are overseen by the Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency (ANVISA)<sup>[65]</sup>. Despite Brazil's participation in the CODEX Alimentarius Commission's international standardization efforts, implementation barriers persist. The universal application of standardized food safety, quality assurance, and trade protocols often fails to accommodate nation-specific regulatory requirements and implementation capabilities<sup>[66][67]</sup>. Regions with limited regulatory enforcement capacity or inadequate exposure monitoring systems face elevated risks from chronic PAH exposure, highlighting the critical gap between standardized requirements and practical implementation capabilities<sup>[68][69]</sup>.

Food safety hazards include variable toxicological impacts correlated with specific agricultural practices and processing methodologies. Thus, PAH contamination exhibits an association with high-temperature food preparation protocols, including grilling, smoking, toasting, roasting, and frying processes, which facilitate compound formation through thermal degradation pathways [70][71]. The potential health risks of long-term PAH exposure should be more widely recognized, as prolonged contact can increase the risk of developing cancer, as well as problems with the bladder, liver, and skin<sup>[72]</sup>.

Brazil maintains significant agricultural production capacity due to favorable climatic conditions and extensive arable land resources, establishing its position as Latin America's largest economy and globally ranking as the second-largest agricultural exporter. Quantitative analysis from the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (APEX, 2018) highlights Brazil's prominent role in specific agricultural sectors, particularly in soy, poultry production, and citrus juice processing. However, the country's extensive territorial dimensions generate distinct regional economic and cultural patterns influencing agricultural development trajectories. These regional variations manifest through unique cultural practices and economic structures, creating both opportunities and challenges for systematic agricultural advancement [73][74][75][76][77].

Brazil has a productive agricultural area of more than 72 million hectares, with an estimated total volume of 284.4 million tons of grain products in the 2021/2022 harvest period, representing a 12.5% increase from previous harvest cycles. In December 2021, Brazil\u2019s production of cereals, pulses, and oil seeds reached approximately 253.2 million tons. The production distribution was as follows: soybeans contributed 53.3%, corn 34.7%, and rice 4.6%, making them the primary contributors. Regional production distribution analysis reveals systematic geographical variation: the Midwest region dominates with 46% of total production, followed by the South (30.4%), Southeast (9.7%), Northeast (9.1%), and North (4.8%) regions [76].

The extensive scale of Brazilian agricultural production introduces significant complexities in implementing effective food safety protocols and hazardous contaminant controls. Current monitoring systems demonstrate two critical limitations: insufficient data on regional consumption patterns and inadequate characterization of PAH contamination levels across diverse food matrices. Even though international legislation was built to be a universal metric for limits of different pollutants in food, its consumption levels reflect and consequently benefit developed countries more than emerging ones. The sixteen priority PAHs guidelines were based on studies from regulatory agencies, such as the US.EPA, and the European Union (EU). However, comprehensive analysis of this variability remains constrained by limited systematic investigation across different geographical and agricultural contexts [78][79] (Zhang et al., 2021).

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE - Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estat\u00edstica) released data on the national consumption patterns through the 2017-2018 (Family Budget Survey). Generally, coffee was the most consumed food by the population (78.1%), followed by rice (76.1%) and beans (60%). The Brazilian consumption patterns strongly correlate with household economic parameters, exhibiting significant heterogeneity across geographical regions. Data released by the Department of National Household Sample Survey (PNAD - Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domic\u00edlios) reveals that at least 27.6% of Brazilian households are affected by food insecurity, with the North and Northeast regions being the most affected. These findings underscore systematic regional variation in dietary practices and food security status across Brazil's diverse geographical regions [24] (PNAD, 2023).

Over the past decade, only a few food groups have been studied for PAH levels, with most of the research concentrated in Brazil's South and Southeast regions. This systematic research pattern reflects dual constraints: regional consumption characteristics and methodological limitations in contamination assessment

protocols. A critical examination of processing methodology impacts on PAH contamination levels demonstrates the need for standardized analytical approaches across geographical regions, particularly given the variable food processing methods employed throughout Brazil's diverse territories [80] (Zhang et al., 2021).

The dietary intake of PAHs represents a significant route of human exposure [14][81][82]. However, the distribution of the PAH studies across different food classes is uneven, creating gaps in understanding the real risk posed by these contaminants. This limitation becomes particularly relevant considering primary Brazilian dietary components (rice, beans, coffee), which remain underrepresented in current analytical investigations [24].

In general, processed foods possess higher levels of PAHs, particularly in matrices subjected to thermal processing, smoke exposure, and incomplete combustion conditions (e.g., smoked foods, barbecued foods, fried foods, and processed meats)[83][84]. Despite several studies on these food groups over the past decade, many focus on beverages, and in this review, the studies analyzed used market samples. However, it may lead to an underestimated risk of this exposure. Grilling, particularly over charcoal, is common for preparing meats. This method exposes food directly to combustion byproducts, leading to higher PAH formation due to fat dripping onto hot surfaces and incomplete combustion of organic material. Similarly, roasting—frequently used for coffee, nuts, and some meats—can contribute to PAH accumulation, depending on temperature and duration. Frying, another prevalent cooking method, may also enhance PAH levels, especially when oils are reused or exposed to high temperatures for extended periods [84][71].

While relevant, these studies do not offer sufficient legislation and risk assessment data. In the present review, we found that products of animal origin showed the highest levels of PAHs, indicating a need for more studies on that issue, mainly applied to processed food. Massone et al.  $\frac{1361}{1361}$  reported concentrations of 4074.0 µg/kg for the sum of 37 PAHs in sardine samples, while  $\frac{1351}{1361}$  found levels as high as 988.76 µg/kg in some mussels for the sum of 16 PAHs. These elevated concentrations reflect bioaccumulation mechanisms through aquatic food chains, particularly in fish species (Shi et al., 2024).

Although these mechanisms of PAH contamination do not significantly impact fruits and vegetables, studies on these food groups are crucial to fully understanding their risks. Overall, the available data are insufficient to make substantial progress in PAH-related legislation. Given the importance of these cooking practices in Brazilian cuisine, more comprehensive and targeted studies are necessary to assess human health risks and accurately inform policy decisions. Additionally, raising consumer awareness and promoting safer cooking methods could help mitigate exposure to these contaminants.

## 5. Human health risk characterization

Among the 16 regulated PAHs, the most notable is BaP, one of the most extensively studied PAHs recognized for their potent carcinogenic properties. It is classified as Group 1, carcinogenic to humans, by the IARC[85][86][87]. Other compounds possess variable carcinogenic potential: dibenz[a, h] anthracene (DahA), classified as probably carcinogenic to humans in Group 2A[86], benzo[b] fluoranthene (BbF), benzo[k] fluoranthene (BkF), indeno[1,2,3-cd] pyrene (Ind) and chrysene (Chr) are classified as possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B)[86][88][89][90].

Despite their environmental prevalence, current research offers limited characterization of the toxicological effects of low molecular weight PAHs. However, they may still pose risks. For example, naphthalene has been a concern in environmental and occupational exposures due to its harmful and carcinogenic effects [91][92]. More recent research suggests that studies of LMW PAHs act as co-carcinogens, particularly in human lung epithelial cell lines [93]. It indicates that even PAHs with LMW, which might have been considered less harmful in the past, can contribute to cancer development, especially when combined with other carcinogenic agents. It highlights the need for further research and the development of effective strategies to reduce exposure to PAHs.

The present review aimed to assess the risk of exposure to PAHs through the most consumed food groups by the Brazilian population, using the data available in the IBGE study as a reference. For the main goal of this review, some papers on cocoa beans and other foods will be excluded, for which there are no available data regarding their consumption in the country. Based on the risk and danger of naphthalene and benzo[a] pyrene and the summation of all PAHs, the Hazard Quotient (or Index) and Cancer Risk were assessed using available data. The Tables included in the *supplementary information* present the risk assessment based on the median values of naphthalene, benzo[a] pyrene, and the total of all PAHs in each study. For studies that did not provide median or mean values, an estimated value was calculated using the available minimum and maximum concentration ranges from the articles listed in Table 2.

In Tables 3, 4, 5, S1, S2, and S3, the bold values indicate a significant risk, where the Hazard Index (HI) exceeds 1, signifying a health risk (HI > 1), and the cancer risk (CRisk) exceeds  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  (CRisk >  $1 \times 10^{-5}$ ). Underlined numbers indicate CRisk values between  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  and  $1 \times 10^{-6}$ , which could mean a risk. NE means that the values were not estimated.

Unfortunately, current research shows significant gaps in naphthalene contamination profiles across food matrices, with quantitative data limited to rice grains and cachaça (a Brazilian liquor) samples. Although this lack of data is problematic, rice has shown a cancer risk higher than the acceptable limit at the highest concentration detected ( $8.02 \times 10^{-3}$ ) and at the estimated median concentration as well ( $4.01 \times 10^{-3}$ ), while cachaça had a value indicating potential risk in both calculations shown in Tables 3 and S1 ( $5.04 \times 10^{-6}$  and  $2.51 \times 10^{-6}$  respectfully). All samples had an HQ below the limits. Naphthalene levels in food

should be generally low unless the food has been exposed to fire or smoke [91][94]. Naphthalene concentrations in various non-fish food items range from detection limits to higher levels in smoked or charred foods [95][96][97].

Based on slope factor analysis, naphthalene has a lower carcinogenic potency than benzo[a] pyrene, but chronic environmental exposure warrants systematic investigation due to potential cumulative health impacts. Recent studies have shown that relatively LMW PAHs, such as naphthalene, could also be detected in raw materials, especially in tuber and starchy vegetable samples. Its processing increased relatively high and low molecular weight PAHs in the samples, even in the baked or electric-roasted items[14][98]. These systematic findings underscore critical research priorities: comprehensive profiling of naphthalene contamination patterns, quantitative assessment of processing impacts, analysis of cumulative exposure effects, and investigation of high molecular weight

Cancer risk assessment for BaP revealed elevated risk profiles using for the calculation of the highest value of BaP found in each study across four distinct food matrices: tea  $(3.73 \times 10^{-2})$ , cheese  $(1.24 \times 10^{-2})$ , chocolate  $(2.23 \times 10^{-4})$ , and vegetable oil  $(4.05 \times 10^{-3})$ . This is plausible due to the drying processes of grains and leaves involved in producing tea, chocolate, and oil, which can potentially generate more PAHs [99][100][101][102]. The cheese samples analyzed in the study were cooked using charcoal, which could lead to the aggregation of more PAHs in the food. These samples, along with chocolate, soybean grains, and cachaça, also exhibited high risk in the hazard quotient assessment, indicating a slight but potential danger.

Overestimating risks in food consumption can be problematic in risk assessment, potentially leading to false allegations and the creation of alarming profiles that do not reflect reality. Increasing evidence suggests that risk calculations should be based on bioaccessible concentrations rather than the total concentrations  $\frac{[103][104]}{100}$ . The lack of data on human exposure to pollutants considering bioaccessibility remains scarce, and total concentrations are still commonly used for assessments  $\frac{[105][106][107]}{100}$ . Despite these limitations, even the median values reported and estimated in the studies included in this review may still indicate a level of risk. As shown in Table S2, the cancer risk associated with the same food groups remains high, with tea (1.95 x  $10^{-2}$ ), cheese (1.20 x  $10^{-2}$ ), chocolate (1.23 x  $10^{-4}$ ), and vegetable oil (2.05 x  $10^{-3}$ ).

Humans are daily exposed to multiple environmental pollutants, contributing to cumulative cancer risk profiles. Current research reveals significant methodological gaps in understanding the synergistic interactions between PAHs and other environmental contaminants, as well as between different PAH compounds [108][109] (Mauderly et al., 2009). The estimated upper limit and median values for CRisk and HI, considering the risk summation of all the PAH concentrations available for each food group, are shown in Table 5 and S3. Currently, there are several PAHs classified for their slope factors, including naphthalene, benzo[a] pyrene, benzo[b] fluoranthene, benzo[k] fluoranthene, chrysene, dibenz[a, h] anthracene, and indeno[1,2,3-cd]. However, only a few of them were detailed in the collected data. A comprehensive analysis of PAH contamination data across 16 food groups using the upper limit concentration found (Table 4) reveals systematic exceedance of acceptable cancer risk thresholds through cumulative PAH exposure. Data regarding the summation of PAHs present a cancer risk above the acceptable limits. The cancer risk calculations using the median values of PAHs with slope factors in the study (Table S3) also indicated a high risk across all food matrices.

In general, to the best of our knowledge, Brazil shows limited data in the literature on the risk assessment of human exposure to PAHs, considering the risk estimate by food and/or water ingestion, air inhalation, and total body burden of the pollutant. In addition, there are many exposure sources/pathways to these ubiquitous chemicals, and when considering only one source, the risk of human exposure may be underestimated. Different food groups may be susceptible to contamination with PAHs. Guizellini et al. [30] demonstrate a low potential health risk of PAH exposure by chocolate ingestion. Andrade et al. [110] evaluated the levels and the risk of PAHs in sediment from Northeast Brazil since these pollutants in sediments and water bodies have shown significant risks to human health. The findings showed that BaP exceeded 90%, followed by DahA, contributing 8% of the average risk. It demonstrates that the levels of these priority PAHs represent a threshold for carcinogenic and mutagenic properties in humans. Franco et al. [1111] calculated the CRisk using the PAH levels in street dust (SD) from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The results indicated the CRisk values were similar considering ingestion and dermal contact to SD, and the inhalation was a negligible exposure pathway.

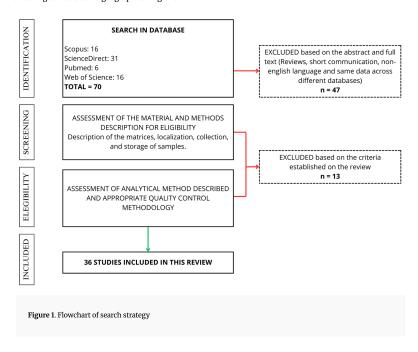
Souza et al. [4] performed the risk characterization of vulnerable groups exposed to PAHs, including Brazilian infants, children, and pregnant women, and considered the body burden of their metabolites. The HQ and CRisk values depend on the PAH levels in the human body; therefore, the greater the body load of PAHs, the greater the risk. The results showed the hazard index (HI – the sum of all hazard quotients calculated by the group) higher than 1 for pregnant women and children, with a greater influence of BaP on the results. Besides, the CRisk values were higher than 1 × 10–4 for BaP and negligible for naphthalene (lower than 10–6). Cesila et al. [112] also reported the risk assessment of Brazilian pregnant women, indicating a HI of 1.4 and a CRisk above 10–4 for BaP, which may pose a potential risk to this vulnerable group. Galindo et al. [113] evaluated the PAH levels in Brazilian breastmilk and the risk to infants through a margin of exposure calculation. In this study, due to the high concentration of PAHs and high human milk consumption, infants may have higher exposure margins to these chemical compounds than adults.

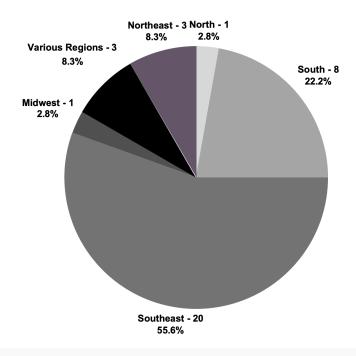
Although this represents an extreme scenario, based on the maximum concentration of each PAH reported in various studies, these findings warn of potential health risks and highlight the urgent need for stricter regulatory measures and further research. Systematic assessment of PAH exposure demonstrates significant cumulative risk potential through combined dietary and environmental pathways, with documented potential for lifetime health impacts [114]. Despite this, regulatory standards for PAHs in food have significant limitations in addressing complex, real-world exposure scenarios: variable standards across jurisdictions, insufficient coverage of exposure pathways, limited integration of cumulative risk assessment, and inadequate monitoring protocols. Moreover, quantitative risk analysis indicates the necessity for systematic intervention strategies and critical implementation requirements: enhanced monitoring systems for food matrices, comprehensive public education initiatives, strengthened regulatory oversight mechanisms, and integrated exposure assessment protocols. It underscores the critical importance of implementing systematic risk mitigation strategies through coordinated regulatory and public health initiatives.

## 6. Future trends and perspectives

In recent years, Brazil has experienced substantial population growth, which has driven the expansion of the chemical and food industries. Current population exposure to various pollution pathways, particularly through dietary routes, is raising significant public health concerns that necessitate coordinated intervention strategies from both the government and society. To mitigate these issues, future actions could include promoting and investing in research on foodborne pollutants in Brazil and other emerging countries. A systematic research approach would enable the development of region-specific regulatory frameworks tailored to local agricultural practices, dietary habits, and exposure scenarios. This research should focus on multiple exposure pathways, such as comprehensive exposure assessments incorporating atmospheric quality parameters in urban areas, systematic evaluations of compound interactions and synergistic effects, quantitative analyses of occupational exposure patterns, and investigations into correlations between environmental contamination levels and endogenous biomarkers.

Building and enhancing research infrastructure for environmental pollutant monitoring is essential for regional development. Such investments would generate crucial data to inform regulatory decision-making, foster international collaborations among developing nations, and establish robust frameworks for evidence-based policy formulation. A systematic approach to research and monitoring would strengthen analytical capabilities and ensure standardized protocols for pollutant monitoring across diverse geographical regions.





 $\textbf{Figure 2.} \ \textbf{Distribution of PAH studies on food samples across different Brazilian regions.}$ 

РАН	Abbreviation	Molar mass (g/mol)	Number of benzenic rings	LMW/HMW	Carcinogenic risk*
Naphthalene	Nap	128.17	2	LMW	2B
Acenaphthylene	Acy	152.18	2	LMW	3
Acenaphtene	Ace	154.21	2	LMW	3
Fluorene	Flu	166.22	2	LMW	3
Anthracene	Ant	178.23	3	LMW	2B
Phenanthrene	Phe	178.23	3	LMW	3
Fluoranthene	Flt	202.26	3	LMW	3
Pyrene	Pyr	202.25	4	HMW	3
Chrysene	Cry	228.28	4	HMW	2B
Benzo[a] anthracene	BaA	228.28	4	HMW	2B
Benzo[a] pyrene	ВаР	252.31	5	HMW	1
Benzo[b] fluoranthene	BbK	252.31	4	HMW	2B
Benzo[k] fluoranthene	BbF	252.31	4	HMW	2B
Benzo[g, h, i] perylene	BghiP	276.33	6	HMW	3
Indeno(1,2,3-cd) pyrene	IndP	276.33	5	HMW	2B
Dibenzo[a, h] anthracene	DahA	278.35	5	HMW	2A

 $\textbf{Table 1.} \ Polycyclic \ aromatic \ hydrocarbons \ (PAH) \ proprieties \ and \ carcinogenic \ risk \ classification$ 

 $<sup>* \</sup> Carcinogenic \ risk \ classification \ by \ IARC-International \ Agency \ for \ Research \ on \ Cancer$ 

Region	PAH	Sample	n°	Median	LOD	LOQ	Minimun-Maximun	Reference
Various Brazilian regions	BaP	Cocoa Beans (ug/kg)	8	-	0.14	0.50	<lod* -="" 9.06<="" td=""><td>Belo et al.<sup>[28]</sup></td></lod*>	Belo et al. <sup>[28]</sup>
	BaA				0.20	0.75	<lod -="" 11.05<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Chr				0.31	0.75	<lod -="" 20.90<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BbF				0.14	0.75	<lod -="" 8.95<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BkF				0.29	0.75	<lod -="" 9.06<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	IcdP				0.01	0.75	<lod -="" 7.18<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	DahA				0.30	0.75	<lod -="" 4.06<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BghiP				0.28	0.75	<lod< td=""><td></td></lod<>	
Southeast	BaA	Vegetable oil blends (ug/kg)	36	-	0.16	0.30	0.43 - 8.82	Tfouni et al. <sup>[31]</sup>
	Chr				0.07	0.30	1.22 - 7.09	
	BjF				0.52	3.00	<lod -="" 5.85<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BbF				0.16	0.30	0.51 - 11.77	
	BkF				0.03	0.30	<lod -="" 5.53<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BaP				0.07	0.30	0.29 - 25.51	
	DalP				0.03	0.30	<lod -="" 0.32<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	DahA				0.04	0.30	<lod -="" 3.36<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	IcdP				0.19	3.00	<lod -="" 15.65<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	DaeP				0.10	0.30	<lod -="" 1.71<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	DaiP				0.06	0.30	<lod -="" 0.67<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	DahP				0.02	0.30	<lod< td=""><td></td></lod<>	
South	BaA	Soybens (Glycine max L.)	39	-	-	0.1	<loq** -="" 58.75<="" td=""><td>Garcia et al.<sup>[115]</sup></td></loq**>	Garcia et al. <sup>[115]</sup>
	Chr	(ug/kg)			ı	0.1	<loq -="" 103.89<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
	BbF				ı	0.1	<loq -="" 18.52<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
	BkF				-	0.1	<loq -="" 3.71<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
	BaP				-	0.1	<loq -="" 3.49<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
	DaiP				-	0.1	<loq -="" 8.06<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
Northeast	Nap	Guarana seeds (Paullinia	38	89.5	17.9	59.7	20.2 - 434	Junior et al. <sup>[116]</sup>
	Acy	cupana) (ug/kg)		39.88	15.7	52.4	<lod -="" 468<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	

 $\textbf{Table 2.} \ Levels \ of \ reported \ polycyclic \ aromatic \ hydrocarbons \ in \ different \ food \ samples \ from \ all \ brazilian \ regions \ in \ the \ last \ ten \ years.$ 

	Ace			75.5	8.33	27.7	31.3 - 334	
	Flu			113.9	15.3	51.1	34.5 - 384	
	Phe			62.1	18.3	61.1	<lod -="" 621<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Ant			15.24	2.68	8.92	<lod -="" 130<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Flt			20	12.2	40.5	6.18 - 78.3	
	Pyr			25.34	19.2	63.9	<lod -="" 329<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BaA			2.27	10.2	34.1	<lod -="" 22.7<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Chr			13.8	20.4	68.2	10.7 - 78.9	
Northeast	BaA	Cocoa beans (ug/kg)	77	-	0.08	0.30	<loq** -="" 30.6<="" td=""><td>[29]</td></loq**>	[29]
	Chr				0.19	0.30	<loq -="" 47<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
	BbF				0.11	0.30	<loq -="" 17.7<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
	BkF				0.08	0.30	<loq -="" 12.1<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
	ВаР				0.11	0.30	<loq -="" 22.2<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
	DaeP				0.07	0.30	<loq -="" 4.3<="" td=""><td></td></loq>	
Southeast	BaA	Tea (ug/kg)	10	27	0.3	0.5	3.8 - 44	Tfouni et al. (2017)
	Chr			54	0.3	0.5	8.7 - 84	
	BbF			21	0.3	0.5	4.1 - 35	
	BaP			14	0.2	0.5	2.3 - 54	
Southeast	Σ4PAHs (BaA, Chr, BbF, BaP)	Salami (ug/kg)	22	-	0.15 - 0.30***	0.50 - 1.00	<loq -="" 33.84<="" td=""><td>[38]</td></loq>	[38]
Southeast	Nap	Cachaça (ug/L)	5	-	0.061	0.206	<lod -="" 1.733<="" td=""><td>[117]</td></lod>	[117]
	Ace				0.081	0.272	<lod -="" 4.089<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Flu				0.186	0.622	. <lod -="" 12.638<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Phe				0.108	0.362	<lod -="" 0.692<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Ant				0.162	0.540	<lod< td=""><td></td></lod<>	
	Flt				0.072	0.242	<lod -="" 4,096<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Pyr				0.082	0.266	<lod -="" 1,823<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BaA				0.134	0.448	<lod -="" 1,059<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Acy				0.086	0.288	<lod -="" 0.799<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	ВаР				0.170	0.568	<lod -="" 0.447<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	

South	Nap	Rice grains (ug/kg)	16	-	0.29	0.86	<lod -="" 35.6<="" th=""><th>[118]</th></lod>	[118]
	Acy				0.32	0.97	<lod -="" 14.3<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Flu				0.20	0.52	<lod -="" 15.3<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Phe				0.14	0.37	<lod -="" 44.4<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Ant				0.16	0.41	<lod -="" 19.2<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Flt				0.11	0.28	<lod -="" 11.3<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Pyr				0.11	0.27	<lod -="" 9.2<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BaA				0.17	0.46	<lod -="" 1.5<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Chr				0.18	0.48	<lod -="" 4.9<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
Southeast	Nap	Cachaça (ug/L)	5	-	0.06	0.21	0.32 - 2.95	Barbosa et al. (2017)
	Ace				0.08	0.27	0.51 - 2.87	
	Flu				0.19	0.62	1.73 - 3.61	
	Phe				0.11	0.36	<lod -="" 0.63<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Ant				0.16	0.54	<lod< td=""><td></td></lod<>	
	Flt				0.07	0.24	0.24 - 3.14	
	Pyr				0.08	0.27	<lod -="" 4.57<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BaA				0.13	0.45	<lod -="" 5.26<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Acy				0.09	0.29	0.70 - 5.26	
	ВаР				0.17	0.57	<lod -="" 6.93<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
South	Flu	Corn grains (ug/kg)	22	-	-	4.00	<lod -="" 10.93<="" td=""><td><u>[119]</u></td></lod>	<u>[119]</u>
	Phe				-	1.20	<lod -="" 51.28<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Ant				-	2.30	<lod -="" 16.09<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Flt				ı	1.80	2.65 - 17.99	
	Pyr				1	1.40	3.28 - 17.96	
	BaA				1	1.30	<lod -="" 7.25<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Chr				-	1.00	<lod -="" 7.02<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Σ7PAHs (Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, Chr)				-	1.00 - 4.00	5.93 - 127.32	

South	Σ16PAHs (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF,	Rice (ug/kg)	6	-	-	1.0 - 5.0	1.0 - 7.0	[120]
	BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)							
South	Σ8PAHs (Flu, Phe, Ant, BaA, BbF, BkF, IcdP, DahA)	Honey (ug/kg)	13	-	0.3 - 3.0	1.0 - 10.0	1.4 - 23.3	<u>[121]</u>
South	Σ16PAHs (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF, BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)	Brown mussels (ug/kg)	15	-	007 - 0.29	0.82	37.8 - 169	<u>[33]</u>
Southeast	Σ14PAHs (Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF, BaP, IcdP, DahA)	Baby food (ug/kg)	50	-	0.05	0.1	<lod< td=""><td>[122]</td></lod<>	[122]
Southeast	Σ16PAHs (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF,	Mussels (Perna perna) and Oysters (Crassostrea rhizophorae) (ug/kg)	27 Oysters 27	-	-	-	88.38 - 138.62 96.94 - 988.76	Souza et al. (2023)
	BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)		Mussels					
South	Σ16PAHs (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF, BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)	Mussels (Perna perna) (ug/kg)	90	-	0,00001 - 0,00004	0,00114	38.96 - 243,59	[34]
Southeast	ВаР	Chocolate (ug/kg)	38	-	0.11	0.50	1.09 - 10.42	[30]
	Σ4PAHs (Chr, BaP, BaA, BbF)				0.11 - 0.57	0.50 - 1.00	8.38 - 41.58	

Southeast	Σ16PAHs (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF,	Cachaça stored in tanks (ug/L)	30	51.57	0.05 - 0.10	0.20 - 0.30	-	[123]
	BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)	Cachaça stored in glass jugs (ug/L)		6.07			-	
Midwest	Σ13PAHs (BaA, BbF,	Soybean grains (ug/kg)	22	3.14	-	-	1.76 - 5.06	[124]
	BjF, BkF, BaP, Chr,							
	DahA, DaeP, DahP, DaiP,							
	DalP, IcdP, 5MChr)							
Southeast	BaP	Coalho cheese (ug/kg)	30	_	0.003	0.008	140.7 - 149.4	[37]
	DahA				0.002	0.007	135.0 - 139.5	
Southeast	$\Sigma$ 17PAHs (BkF, Phe, Chr,	Whitemouth Croaker (ug/kg)	-	-	0,00004 -	İ	1.32 - 5.41	[125]
	IcdP, BaA, Ant, Flu, BaP,				0,0081			
	Flt, Pry, BghiP, DahA,							
	DalP, BbjF, Ace, Acy,							
	Nap)							
Southeast	Nap	Beer (ug/L)	26	-	0.025	0.085	<lod -="" 21.85<="" td=""><td>[126]</td></lod>	[126]
	Acy				0.0.18	0.062	<lod -="" 1.93<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Ace				0.014	0.046	<lod -="" 1.58<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Flu				0.012	0.042	<lod -="" 4.96<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Phe				0.003	0.013	<lod -="" 19.06<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Ant				0.003	0.011	<lod -="" 6.95<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Flt				0.003	0.010	<lod -="" 1.30<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Pyr				0.040	0.012	<lod -="" 1.48<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BaA				0.006	0.020	<lod -="" 3.04<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	Chr				0.013	0.043	<lod -="" 6.84<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	
	BbF				0.02	0.070	<lod -="" 16.05<="" td=""><td></td></lod>	

	BkF				0.013	0.044	<lod -<="" th=""><th></th></lod>	
Southeast	Σ10PAHs (Flt, Pyr, BaA, Chr, BbF, BkF, BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)	Roasted coffe (ug/kg)	24	-	0.03 - 0.18	0.11 - 0.59	1.0 - 11.29	[127]
Southeast	16PAHs (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF, BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)	Cachaça (ug/L)	29	-	0.01 - 0.08	0.02 - 0.22	1.96 - 52.0	[128]
Southeast	Σ13PAHs (BaA, Chr, 5MChr, BjF, BbF, BkF, BaP, DalP, DahA, IcdP,	Canola oil (ug/kg) Sunflower oil (ug/kg)	70	-	0.07 - 1.95	0.3 - 3.0	<lod -="" 31.7<br="">0.65 - 17.88</lod>	[32]
	DaeP, DaiP, DahP)	Corn oil (ug/kg)					2.61 - 38.23	
Southeast	ΣΊΘΡΑΗς (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF, BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)	Coffee brew (ug/L)	27	-	0.003 - 0.067	0.025 - 0.224	1.086 - 2.169	[129]
Southeast	BaA, BaP, BbF, BkF, BaP	Coffee (C, arabica) (ug/kg)	2	-	0.006 - 0.01	-	0.015 - 0.105	[130]
		Coffee (C. canephora) (ug/kg)					0.011 - 0.111	
Northeast	Σ37PAHs	Seafood (finfish and shellfish) (ug/kg)	194	-	-	-	8.71 - 418	[131]
North	Σ11PAHa (BaA, Chr, BbF, BkF, BaP, IcdP, DahA, DaiP, DalP, DaeP, DahP)	Jambu (ug/kg)	6	-	0.2 - 0.4	0.6 - 1.5	1.49 - 2.76	[40]

Southeast	Σ16PAHs (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF,	Soft drinks (ug/L)	34	-	0.1	0.20	0.20 - 1.82	Caldeirão et al. (2021)
	BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)							
Brazilian coast	ВаА	Seafood (Fish, Lobster, Mussel,	110	- 1	1.25	5.00	<loq -<br="">64.2</loq>	[ <u>132]</u>
	Chr	Oyster, Octopus) (ug/kg)			1.25	5.00	<loq -<br="">85.4</loq>	
	BbF				1.25	5.00	<loq -<br="">105</loq>	
	BkF				1.25	5.00	<loq -<br="">5.14</loq>	
	BaP				0.90	1.25	<loq -<br="">4.10</loq>	
	DahA				1.00	2.50	<loq -<br="">4.45</loq>	
	BghiP				1.00	5.00	<loq -<br="">7.15</loq>	
	IcdP				1.00	5.00	<loq -<br="">5.35</loq>	
	Σ4PAHs (BaA, Chr, BbF, BaP)				0.90 - 1.25	1.25 - 5.00	<loq -<br="">139</loq>	
South and Southeast	Σ37PAHs	Sardine muscle (ug/kg)	50	-	0.02 - 0.07	0.50	<loq -<br="">4074</loq>	<u>[36]</u>
Various brazilian regions	Σ16PAHs (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF, BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)	Toasted Guaraná seeds (ug/kg)	6	-	0.05 - 0.101	0.01 -	<lod -<br="">0.78</lod>	[133]
Southeast	Σ16PAHs (Nap, Ace, Acy, Chr, Flu, Phe, Ant, Flt, Pyr, BaA, BbF, BkF, BaP, IcdP, DahA, BghiP)	Cachaça (ug/L)	5	-	0.25	1.00	2.0 - 4.0	<u>[134]</u>

 $<sup>\</sup>hbox{*$Limit of Detection;} \hbox{$**$Elimit of Quantification;} \hbox{$***$Range of LOD or LOQ regarding the sum of a PAH group}$ 

Food sample	IR (g/day)	C (mg/kg)	EDI (mg/kg.bw.day)	EDI (ug/kg.bw.day)	HQ	CRisk	Reference
Vegetable oil	11.1	NA*	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Soybean	1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	=
Tea	48.4	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Processed meats	0.3	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Cachaça	1.7	0.00173	4.20E-05	4.20E-08	2.10E-06	5.04E-06	[77]
Rice grains	131.4	0.0356	6.68E-02	6.68E-05	3.34E-03	8.02E-03	[118]
Corn	16.6	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Honey	2.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	=
Seafood	0.7	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	=
Fish	13.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Chocolate	1.5	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Cheese	5.8	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Beer	34.7	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Jambu	3.4	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	=
Soda	67.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Coffee	163.2	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	=

 Table 3. Risk assessment, Hazard Quotient (or Index), and Cancer Risk of naphthalene, using available data in the review.

<sup>\*</sup>NA: not available; \*\*NE: not estimated.

Food sample	IR (g/day)	C (mg/kg)	EDI (mg/kg.bw.day)	EDI (ug/kg.bw.day)	HQ	CRisk	Reference
Vegetable oil	11.1	2.55E-02	4.05E-03	4.05E-06	1.35E+01	4,05E-03	[31]
Soybean	1	3.49E-03	4.99E-05	4.99E-08	1.66E-01	4,99E-05	[115]
Tea	48.4	5.40E-02	3.73E-02	3.73E-05	1.24E+02	3,73E-02	[135]
Processed meats	0.3	NA*	NE**	NE	NE	NE	-
Cachaça	1.7	4.47E-04	1.09E-05	1.09E-08	3.62E-02	1,09E-05	Barbosa et al. (2017)
Rice grains	131.4	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Corn	16.6	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	=
Honey	2.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Seafood	0.7	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Fish	13.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Chocolate	1.5	1.04E-02	2.23E-04	2.23E-07	7.44E-01	2,23E-04	[30]
Cheese	5.8	1.49E-01	1.24E-02	1.24E-05	4.13E+01	1,24E-02	[37]
Beer	34.7	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	
Jambu	3.4	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	
Soda	67.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE 0	
Coffee	163.2	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	

 $\textbf{Table 4.} \ \ \textbf{Risk assessment, Hazard Quotient (or Index), and Cancer Risk of benzo[a] \ pyrene, using available data in the review. \\$ 

<sup>\*</sup>NA: not available; \*\*NE: not estimated.

Food sample	IR (g/day)	C summation (mg/kg)	C of PAHs with RfD (mg/kg)	C of PAHs with CRisk (mg/kg)	EDI summation (ug/kg.bw.dia)	EDI of PAHs with RfD (ug/kg.bw.day)	EDI of compounds with CR (ug/kg.bw.day)	ΗΙΣ	CRisk	Reference
Vegetable oil	11.1	0.8628	0.02551	0.06574	1.37E-01	4.05E-03	1.04E-02	1,35E+01	3,76E-02	[ <u>31</u> ].
Soybean	1	0.19642	0.00349	0.18836	2.81E-03	4.99E-05	2.69E-03	1,66E-01	3,26E-03	[115]
Tea	48.4	0.217	0.058	0.217	1.50E-01	4.01E-02	1.50E-01	1,66E-01	1,80E-01	[135]
Processed meats	0.3	0.03384	0.03384	0.03384	1.45E-04	1.45E-04	1.45E-04	4,83E-01	1,74E-04	[38],
Cachaça	1.7	0.027376	0.024379	0.003239	6.65E-04	5.92E-04	7.87E-05	1,21E-03	9,60E-05	[117]
Rice grains	131.4	0.1557	0.0906	0.042	2.92E-01	1.70E-01	7.88E-02	3,39E-02	1,74E-02	Bertinette et al. (2017)
Corn	16.6	0.12732	0.06297	0.0252	3.02E-02	1.49E-02	5.98E-03	3,64E-02	6,04E- 04	[119]
Honey	2.1	0.0233	0.0233	0.0233	6.99E-04	6.99E-04	6.99E-04	2,06E-03	9,16E-04	Marcolin et al. (2022)
Seafood	0.7	0.98876	0.98876	0.98876	9.89E-03	9.89E-03	9.89E-03	2,02E-02	2,29E-02	<u>[4]</u>
Fish	13.1	4.074	4.074	4.074	7.62E-01	7.62E-01	7.62E-01	1,56E+00	2,92E+00	<u>[36]</u>
Chocolate	1.5	0.04158	0.01042	0.04158	8.91E-04	2.23E-04	8.91E-04	7,44E-01	1,07E-03	[30]
Cheese	5.8	0.2889	0.1494	0.1494	2.39E-02	1.24E-02	1.24E-02	4,13E+01	2,48E-02	Rocha et al. (2010).
Beer	34.7	0.07488	0.03776	0.0614	3.71E-02	1.87E-02	3.04E-02	3,82E-02	6,42E-03	[126]
Jambu	3.4	0.00276	0.00276	0.00276	1.34E-04	1.34E-04	1.34E-04	3.56E- 030	3,10E-04	[40]
Soda	67.1	0.00182	0.00182	0.00182	1.74E-03	1.74E-03	1.74E-03	3,56E-03	4,03E-03	Caldeirão et al. (2021)
Coffee	163.2	0.01129	0.01129	0.01129	2.63E-02	2.63E-02	2.63E-02	3,76E-01	6,08E-02	[127]

Table 5. Risk assessment, Hazard Quotient (or Index), and Cancer Risk of the sum of PAHs, using available data in the review.

<sup>\*</sup>NA: not available; \*\*NE: not estimated.

## **Supplementary Material**

Food sample	IR (g/day)	C (mg/kg)	EDI (mg/kg.bw.day)	EDI (ug/kg.bw.day)	HQ	CRisk	Reference
Vegetable oil	11.1	NA*	NE**	NE	NE	NE	-
Soybean	1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Tea	48.4	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Processed meats	0.3	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Cachaça	1.7	0.00086	2.09E-05	2.09E-08	1.04E-06	2.51E-06	[117]
Rice grains	131.4	0.0178	3.34E-02	3.34E-05	1.67E-03	4.01E-03	Bertinette et al. (2017)
Corn	16.6	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Honey	2.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Seafood	0.7	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Fish	13.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Chocolate	1.5	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Cheese	5.8	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Beer	34.7	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Jambu	3.4	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Soda	67.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-
Coffee	163.2	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-

Table S1. Risk assessment, Hazard Quotient (or Index), and Cancer Risk of naphthalene, using the available and estimated median data in this review.

<sup>\*</sup>NA: not available; \*\*NE: not estimated.

Food sample	IR (g/day)	C (mg/kg)	EDI (mg/kg.bw.day)	EDI (ug/kg.bw.day)	HQ	CRisk	Reference	
Vegetable oil	11.1	1.29E-02	2.05E-03	2.05E-06	6.82E+00	2.05E-03	[31]	
Soybean	1	1.74E-03	2.49E-08	2.49E-08	8.29E-02	2.49E-05	[115]	
Tea	48.4	2.28E-02	1.95E-02	1.95E-05	6.49E+01	1.95E-02	[135]	
Processed meats	0.3	NA*	NE**	NE	NE	NE	-	
Cachaça	1.7	4.47E-04	1.09E-05	1.09E-08	3.26E-02	1.09E-05	Barbosa et al. (2017)	
Rice grains	131.4	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-	
Corn	16.6	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-	
Honey	2.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-	
Seafood	0.7	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-	
Fish	13.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE	-	
Chocolate	1.5	5.75E-03	1.23E-04	1.23E-07	4.11E-01	1.23E-04	[30]	
Cheese	5.8	1.45E-01	1.20E-02	1.20E-05	4.01E+01	1.20E-02	[37]	
Beer	34.7	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE		
Jambu	3.4	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE		
Soda	67.1	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE		
Coffee	163.2	NA	NE	NE	NE	NE		

 $\textbf{Table S2}. \ Risk \ assessment, Hazard \ Quotient \ (or \ Index), and \ Cancer \ Risk \ of \ benzo[a] pyrene, using the available \ and \ estimated \ median \ data \ in this \ review.$ 

<sup>\*</sup>NA: not available; \*\*NE: not estimated.

Food sample	IR (g/day)	C summation (mg/kg)	C of PAHs with RfD (mg/kg)	C of PAHs with CRisk (mg/kg)	EDI summation (ug/kg.bw.dia)	EDI of PAHs with RfD (ug/kg.bw.day)	EDI of compounds with CR (ug/kg.bw.day)	1
Vegetable oil	11.1	0.04433	0.0129	0.04216	7.03E-03	2.05E-03	6.69E-03	6.8
Soybean	1	0.09809	0.00174	0.09406	1.40E-03	2.49E-05	1.34E-03	8.2
Tea	48.4	0.10135	0.02815	0.10135	7.01E-02	1.95E-02	7.01E-02	8.2
Processed meats	0.3	0.016912	0.01692	0.01692	7.25E-05	7.25E-05	7.25E-05	2.4
Cachaça	1.7	0.01363	0.01238	0.0016	3.31E-04	3.01E-04	3.89E-05	6.1
Rice grains	131.4	0.07785	0.0453	0.021	1.46E-01	8.50E-02	3.94E-02	1.7
Corn	16.6	0.06662	0.03444	0.00713	1.58E-02	8.17E-03	1.69E-03	1.9
Honey	2.1	0.01305	0.01305	0.01305	3.92E-04	3.92E-04	3.92E-04	1.1
Seafood	0.7	0.54285	0.54285	0.54285	5.43E-03	5.43E-03	5.43E-03	1.1
Fish	13.1	2.037	2.037	2.037	3.81E-01	3.81E-01	3.81E-01	7.7
Chocolate	1.5	0.02498	0.0575	0.02498	5.35E-04	1.23E-03	5.35E-04	4.1
Cheese	5.8	0.2823	0.14505	0.14505	2.34E-02	1.20E-02	1.20E-02	4,0
Beer	34.7	0.04931	0.01905	0.03069	2.44E-02	9.94E-02	1.52E-02	1.9
Jambu	3.4	0.00212	0.00212	0.00212	1.03E-04	1.03E-04	1.03E-04	3.4
Soda	67.1	0.00101	0.00101	0.00101	9.68E-04	9.68E-04	9.68E-04	1.9
Coffee	163.2	0.00614	0.00614	0.00614	1.43E-02	1.43E-02	1.43E-02	2.0

Table S3. Risk assessment, Hazard Quotient (or Index), and Cancer Risk of the sum of PAHs, using the available and estimated median data in this review.

## **Statements and Declarations**

## Credit author statement

- $\blacksquare \quad \text{Gabriel Henrique Savietto: Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Resources; Writing original draft.}$
- André Augusto Vilela Lima: Conceptualization; Investigation; Writing original draft.
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<sup>\*</sup>NA: not available; \*\*NE: not estimated.

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Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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#### **Declarations**

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