

Press Release No. 20/2012

Press Relation Officer: Martin Ittershagen

Deputy Press Relation Officer: Stephan Gabriel Haufe

PR-staff: Marc Rathmann, Martin Stallmann Office: Doreen Redlich, Uwe Weber

Telephone: 0340/2122, -6625, -2318, -2250, -2507, -2669, -2637

Address: Federal Environment Agency, P.O. box 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau

E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de

Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de

Facebook: www.facebook.com/umweltbundesamt.de



Joint press release from the Federal Environment Agency and the Federation of German Consumer Organisations

Scope of information about chemicals improved

Five years after REACH – positive balance despite obvious deficits

REACH, the European chemicals regulation, has made a positive impact in its first five years. The enterprises concerned have registered and submitted critical information to the European Chemicals Agency on some 5,500 chemicals. This will make it possible to continue to restrict the use of substances of very high concern in the future. "This clearly owes to the European chemicals regulation REACH; it provides the foundation for more effective regulation of chemicals", says Jochen Flasbarth, President of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA). However, the quality of the substance dossiers required of industry do not always fulfil requirements, as was shown in several spot checks. Flasbarth said, "The lack of data compromises one of the most important objectives of REACH – that is, to reliably assess the risks posed to mankind and the environment by chemicals." Consumers have hardly taken advantage of the right to information guaranteed by REACH. Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND) and UBA developed an online form to make information more accessible. The Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv) is calling for compulsory labelling on substances of very high concern. REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) legislation entered into force on 1 June 2007.

Five years onward the achievements to date can be seen as a success. Jochen Flasbarth says, "Some 28,000 dossiers that were filed to register more than 5,500 different substances prove that REACH is headed in the right direction." REACH makes available information about the most critical chemicals in EU – especially in respect of their impact on mankind and the environment. It has helped to identify more than 70 chemicals known as Substances of Very High Concern. In fact, 14 chemicals may no longer be used without authorisation as of 2014 and 2015. These chemicals include reprotoxic softeners, environmentally sensitive substances such as the flame retardant hexabromocyclododecane, or the fragrance musk xylene. Some 50 additional chemicals are subject to review by the Member States every year.

Despite all the progress the regulation has brought about, the Federal Environment Agency sees room for improvement. The substance dossiers often do not satisfy requirements, and spot checks have shown that the information provided by manufacturers and importers is sometimes vague in that known hazards either remain unidentified or are played down. The dossiers also do

not yet take sufficient account of nanomaterials, which can lead to an underestimation of risk. Furthermore, there are problems concerning the right to information on substances of very high concern. Consumers make only occasional use of their right, which is due to the long and drawn out procedure in which merchants and producers are only required to respond within 45 days. UBA is recommending additional measures and improvements for more effective implementation of REACH. It is appealing to industry to maintain a high quality standard in the chemicals registration dossiers. The regulatory authorities must provide better support to registrants, and the number of checks by these authorities must be increased. Measures must be instituted that make it possible to terminate registration in cases of serious shortcomings in the dossiers. UBA and BUND have posted an online form on their websites to improve consumers' access to information. It generates an automatic REACH query which is sent to merchants when the product bar code is entered. The service will soon be available as an app. The Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv) is calling upon producers for more transparency. "An obligatory label on packaging with clear identification of substances of very high concern would also be helpful. Consumers would then no longer be inconvenienced by sending enquiries to dealers," explained Chairman Gerd Billen.

More information is available on the Federal Environment Agency homepage at:

<http://www.reach-info.de/>

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/chemikalien-e/index.htm>

Dessau-Roßlau, 31 May 2012