



# DETOX

C A M P A I G N

## SAFER CHEMICALS FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to have safer chemicals and a healthier future for wildlife and people.

A proposed EU law on chemicals - REACH - offers a chance to **identify and phase out the worst chemicals**. New markets for safer products, and increased trust, should make it good news for the chemical industry too.

Chemicals have brought enormous benefits to society, but some pose a threat to wildlife and humans. The chemical industry is inadequately regulated. **Wildlife and people are exposed to thousands of chemicals that lack basic safety information**. Chemicals are increasingly suspected of being linked to cancers, allergies and reproductive problems.

93%  
OF EUROPEANS  
BELIEVE  
THAT  
CHEMICALS  
NEGATIVELY  
AFFECT  
HEALTH

Eurobarometer 2003

### A CHEMICAL WORLD

Chemicals are one of the great innovations of the twentieth century, but they also pose problems.

There are three main problems:

- 1. Contamination** Chemicals are everywhere. Not just in products all around us, but in the remotest ecosystems and in the bodies of animals and humans. Babies are born with a chemical legacy passed on from their mothers in the womb.
- 2. Lack of safety information** Eighty-six per cent of the 2500 chemicals used in large quantities do not have enough safety information publicly available to do a basic safety assessment.
- 3. Harmful properties** WWF is particularly worried about three types of chemicals in use today:
  - a) Chemicals that do not break down naturally but accumulate in the bodies of wildlife and people,
  - b) Chemicals that interfere with the hormone systems of animals and people,
  - c) Chemicals that cause cancer, reproductive problems, and damage DNA.



**TOXIC CHEMICALS**  
A THREAT TO WILDLIFE AND HUMANS



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## REACH TO THE RESCUE

The proposed EU chemicals legislation - REACH - could make an important contribution to reducing the risk to wildlife and humans from chemicals by identifying and phasing out the most harmful ones. REACH also offers an opportunity to promote a sustainable, innovative and forward-looking chemical industry.

**The cost of REACH to the chemical industry is estimated by the European Commission to average 0.2 billion Euro a year for 11 years. In 2002 the top 50 European chemical companies earned 15 billion Euro in operating profit.**

**The cost of REACH to the chemical industry is less than 50 eurocents per year per EU citizen over the 11 years of phase in.** It is the same as the amount the European chemical industry spent in 1999 alone on environmental improvements relating to waste.

*“The REACH regulations are innovation friendly”* - Berkhout, Iizuka, Nightingale and Voss, University of Sussex Science & Technology Policy Research Unit for WWF, 2003

The benefits for the chemical industry of new markets for safer products, increased trust in chemicals, and reduced threat of liability lawsuits should be considerable. The European Commission estimates the health benefits of REACH in the order of 50 billion over a 30-year period. No one has yet expressed the environmental benefits in monetary terms.

*“We feel confident that REACH generates net benefits”* - Pearce and Koundouri, University College London, for WWF, 2003



SAFETY UNKNOWN

## REACH EXPLAINED

REACH stands for the Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of chemicals. It involves:

**Registration** - Chemical producers would be obliged to send a registration dossier containing safety data to a central chemicals agency for all chemicals produced in quantities above one tonne a year. Less information is required the lower the tonnage of chemicals produced, with very basic information required on 1-10 tonne chemicals, generally from non-animal tests.

**Evaluation** - Experts would evaluate safety data for higher volume chemicals and other chemicals of concern (following prioritisation).

**Authorisation** - Chemicals of very high concern would be phased out, and replaced by safer alternatives, unless industry can show “adequate control” of the risk from their use or that their “socio-economic” value outweighed the risks.

Under REACH chemicals of “very high concern” are: those that are carcinogens; mutagens; reproductive toxins; are persistent, bio-accumulative and toxic; very persistent and very bio-accumulative; or of similar concern, eg endocrine disrupters.

The timetable for implementing REACH gives industry many years to provide the safety data. REACH prioritises the most harmful chemicals and those produced in the largest quantities:

Number of years	Type of chemical
3	Carcinogenic, mutagenic or reproductive toxins
3	Produced in quantities above 1000 tonnes
6	Produced in quantities 100-1000 tonnes
11	Produced in quantities 1-100 tonnes

## SAFER CHEMICALS

F O R A H E A L T H I E R F U T U R E



## CITIZENS AND COMPANIES FOR REACH

Citizens and many major companies in Europe support REACH.

**Companies** supporting REACH include:

- Tetra Pak (the packaging giants);
- NCC (the construction company);
- Marks and Spencer, Boots (British retailers);
- Euro Coop (representing 3,200 cooperatives with more than 20 million members);
- Eureau (European Union of National Associations of Water Suppliers and Waste Water Services);
- The Co-operative Bank;
- The Swedish Construction Federation.

*“I am disappointed with Cefic, who I think have blocked discussion about REACH”*

Dave Duncan, R&D Director for chemical products, Unilever

**Trade unions** supporting REACH include:

- the German IG Bau; Ver.di and IG Metall;
- the British GMB; Amicus and T&G;
- the Spanish Instituto Sindical de Trabajo, Ambiente y Salud (ISTAS); and Confederation Comisiones Obreras;
- Lo-Sweden;
- SiD Denmark;
- United Steelworkers of America, Canadian Auto Workers;
- and Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions.

**Consumer and civil society groups** supporting REACH include:

- the European Public Health Alliance;
- BEUC (the European consumers organisation);
- Women in European for a Common Future;
- and the UK National Federation of Women’s Institutes.

Over 60 American NGOs support REACH including:

- The Breast Cancer Fund;
- Physicians for Social Responsibility;
- and the Sierra Club.

## ANIMAL TESTING

The contamination of wildlife and people with hundreds of chemicals that lack basic safety information constitutes a giant, uncontrolled experiment.

WWF believes that REACH will not lead to a significant increase in animal testing. Why?

1. Many chemicals belong to families or groups of substances that will not require separate testing.
2. REACH encourages (and in many cases forces) the chemical industry to share safety data - this will reduce the need for animal testing.
3. REACH will encourage the development of alternatives to animal testing, with many alternative methods already included in the text.

WWF believes chemical testing should rely on non-animal testing whenever possible, that all unnecessary animal testing should be avoided, and that more funds should be made available to develop further non-animal tests.

## CAUSES FOR CONCERN

**Examples of the impact of chemicals in use today**

- PFOs, a chemical contaminant found in many animals including dolphins and whales in the Mediterranean and in seals and sea eagles in the Baltic, is considered a carcinogen in animals by the US Environmental Protection Agency;
- It is estimated that hundreds of pet birds are killed by the fumes and particles emitted from Teflon-coated products each year;
- Exposure to BPA, a chemical used to make CDs and computer shells, has resulted in sex reversals in broad-snouted caiman, an alligator relative native to South America;
- High levels of brominated flame retardants have recently been discovered in the eggs of peregrine falcons. Laboratory studies show that some BFRs are highly toxic to crustaceans and suggest effects on pubertal development in rats and behavioural effects in mice.





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## STRENGTHENING REACH

WWF believes that the REACH regulation proposed by the European Commission is a "light" version that should do a lot more to protect people, wildlife and the environment. WWF regrets that the European Commission has weakened REACH - possibly due to intense lobbying from the chemical industry.

WWF is looking to the European Parliament and the European Union's Council of Ministers to make REACH more effective by:

- Closing the loophole that allows industry to continue to use chemicals of "very high concern" even when safer alternatives are available. The Authorisation system currently allows companies to continue to use chemicals of very high concern by arguing that their use will be "adequately controlled" even if safer alternatives are available.
- Making it obligatory to have only one registration per chemical, which would require mandatory consortia formation by industry. This will make companies share safety data and prevent duplicate animal testing.
- Making importers ensure that all the chemicals in the products they import are already registered in the EU, and are being used in accordance with any authorisations and restrictions, or alternatively to register the chemicals contained in them. This would ensure that imported goods meet the same safety standards as those produced within the European Union. The current proposal allows an importer to have unregistered chemicals in its products.
- Ensuring that the new Chemicals Agency acts as an effective institution to co-ordinate the REACH process, in which Member State expertise on chemicals must be acknowledged and developed. This will help in creating effective enforcement, and will make sure that the Agency does not become too close to any stakeholder.

## CONTAMINATION

Chemicals accumulate in people as well as in wildlife. A cocktail of highly toxic man-made chemicals was found in every single person tested in a UK-wide blood survey commissioned by WWF. The survey, carried out in association with The Co-operative Bank and National Federation of Women's Institutes, tested the blood of 155 volunteers for 77 chemicals. It revealed that chemicals such as DDT, which have been banned for decades and which are associated with a range of health problems, continue to contaminate people today. Other chemicals with similar properties, and which are still in use, were also found in high levels. The survey also found seven per cent of people tested to be contaminated with "flame retardants": chemicals used to prevent fire in everyday products such as cars and TVs.



*French MEP Harlem Désir taking part in WWF's Chemicals Check Up - aimed at showing the extent of contamination by potentially harmful chemicals. (Photo News Agency)*

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WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

**SAFER CHEMICALS**  
FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE