

REACH & CLP *Case story*

Chemical safety in Europe is improving drastically

REACH is a European Union law designed to enhance chemical safety in Europe and to improve chemical industry practices in the EU

The REACH process is currently at a crucial phase where companies manufacturing and importing chemical substances need to obtain information on the physicochemical, health and environmental properties of their substances, and to use the information to assess whether the handling and uses of these substances are safe, taking the whole value chain into consideration. This information needs to be sent to the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) in the form of a joint dossier no later than **30 November 2010** if the companies intend to be able to continue their business operations in Europe.

SUBSTANCES ARE INVESTIGATED IN SIEFs

One of the most important aspects of REACH – Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals – is to improve the protection of human health and the environment. All manufacturers and importers have to submit registration dossiers to ECHA, documenting data and assessments of the effects of their substances. Companies that intend to register the same substance have formed SIEFs (Substance Information Exchange Forum) to share information, avoid duplication of new studies and to agree on classification and labelling, if appropriate. As the 30 November 2010 deadline for submitting joint dossiers is approaching

fast, companies are working hard to evaluate existing data and to carry out new studies of substances, if necessary.

“The REACH registration process is revolutionary in terms of comprehensively understanding the overall chemical safety and gaining ►



REACH & CLP *Case story*

REACH requires that every manufacturer obtains and understands the safety information instead of copying or receiving it from somewhere else.

- ▶ knowledge of the effects of compounds on human and environmental health,” says Markus Richter, a chemist at Habich GmbH, a small Austrian company which produces several pigment products. Richter is currently involved in 9 SIEFs. He embraces the fact that thorough studies are currently carried out together through exchanging information. “The industry has used most of these substances for hundreds of years and, of course, several studies have been carried out, but REACH really compels chemical companies to study each substance extensively.”

Jan Tuinstra, a Senior Expert of Substance Registration at DSM's Life sciences cluster, recognises similarities in working with 40 SIEFs, of which DSM is in the lead in 7. “For example, the substances that I am working with are penicillin compounds on which we already have lots of information available and of which we have a long manufacturing experience. However, REACH requires that every manufacturer obtains and understands the safety information instead of copying or receiving it from somewhere else.” DSM is a large chemical company headquartered in the Netherlands with a variety of products covering nutrition, pharmaceuticals as well as base chemicals and materials.

REACH ASSURES SAFETY

While most of the substances have been used in the chemical industry for many years and extensive knowledge is already available, now every substance will have to be analysed for the first time in the chemical industry's history.

“REACH will definitely contribute to safe handling of chemicals and the safety of consumer products. Objective information will be available in the value chain thanks to REACH”, says Jan Tuinstra.

Markus Richter, representing pigment products widely use in pastes and paints, values the fact that manufacturers of products containing compounds, which are harmful for ▶



REACH & CLP *Case story*

Now we have the all the information that can be obtained, and we can reassure our customers that we know how to manufacture these products safely.

- ▶ health and environment when not properly controlled, have facts to deliver to their customers. “The industry has known for years that, for example, chromates are highly toxic. The new studies have not discovered anything that we did not know already. But now we have the all the information that can be obtained, and we can reassure our customers that we know how to manufacture these products safely”, Richter continues.

Both Richter and Tuinstra encourage all chemical companies to be active in SIEFs as the process of conducting studies and preparing dossiers will bring – even if the substances involved are well-known – valuable data for the industry to use in business operations.

Fast facts

REACH:

Regulation for Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals. Manufacturers and importers must have registered if volumes are:

- Phase-in substances over 1,000 tonnes/year in the ECHA system
- CMR / toxic substances (R50/53) of over 1 tonne/year.

Deadline: **1 December 2010.**

CLP:

European Regulation on Classification, Labelling and Packaging of chemical substances and mixtures.

Companies must provide labels that comply with the CLP Regulation.

Deadline: **1 December 2010 and by 1 June 2015, respectively.**

Produced for ECHA

Contact:

European Chemicals Agency
Annankatu 18, P.O. Box 400, FI-00121 Helsinki, Finland

Tel.: +358 9 6861 80
Fax +358 9 6861 8210
<http://echa.europe.eu>
press@echa.europe.eu