Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee (HSAC)

Consideration of a proposal to list chlorinated paraffins with carbon chain lengths in the range C_{14-17} and chlorination levels ≥45% chlorine by weight to the Stockholm Convention as a Persistent Organic Pollutant.

29th Meeting, February 2021

Commission

Defra is considering submitting a proposal, on behalf of the UK, to list carbon chain lengths in the range C14-17 and chlorination levels ≥45% chlorine by weight to the United Nations Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). This would initiate a four-year global assessment, which could lead to a ban on the manufacture and use of these chemicals, potentially from 2026.

We request that HSAC members review the proposal (see Supporting Document 1) and confirm whether:

1. HSAC believes that chlorinated paraffins with carbon chain lengths in the range C_{14-17} and chlorination levels ≥45% chlorine by weight meet the screening criteria set out in Annex D of the Stockholm Convention (Supporting Document 2).

2. HSAC considers there are any weaknesses to the proposal that require further consideration.

Oral feedback is requested, unless there are substantial points, where written comments are preferred.

Delivery

The committee will be asked to consider the proposal in advance of the 29th Meeting on 3rd February 2021. The committee is requested to provide its views in response to the two questions in the meeting itself. Any written comments provided by email in advance of the meeting are also welcomed.

Background

Chlorinated paraffins with carbon chain lengths in the range C_{14-17} and chlorination levels ≥45% chlorine by weight

Since the mid-1990s the UK has led the scientific assessment of chlorinated paraffins. This is a group of substances used since the 1930s in industrial processes and as plasticisers and/or flame retardants in plastics, rubber, paints, and adhesives. UK scientists authored the Risk Assessment Report that led to restriction of a sub-group called short chained chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs) in 2000 under the predecessor to the EU REACH regulation. These SCCPs were listed under the Stockholm Convention in 2017 and are therefore banned.

Increasing attention is now being given to chlorinated paraffins with medium chains 14-17, which are used in similar applications, including as a substitute for SCCPs. The Environment Agency (EA) led EU work on this substance and the EU has since initiated the processes that will likely lead to restriction under EU REACH, potentially by 2023.

The EA has concluded that these constituents of medium chain chlorinated paraffins meet the relevant screening criteria for proposal as a POP. Evidence shows they are toxic, persistent and accumulate in living organisms. They have been found in Arctic air and biota (including mussels, fish, seabirds, seals, whales and polar bears), the Antarctic and remote regions of the Tibetan plateau, indicating long range transport. The EA has used the information and evidence available to prepare a draft of a proposal for submission to the POPs Review Committee (POPRC), the scientific review committee of the Stockholm Convention.

Annex D of the Stockholm Convention sets out the criteria for submitting a proposal to list a substance as a POP and the information needed to support that. This is the basis of the document we are asking you to review.

This would be the first time that the UK has submitted a listing proposal as a Party in its own right as an independent sovereign nation following our Exit from the European Union. The Stockholm review process is science led, with proposals based on the properties of the substance. There will be further opportunities to comment on the scientific basis (and later the socio/economic impacts) for a listing if the Stockholm Convention scientific review committee accept the proposal.

In accordance with the POPs regulation we have published a notice on Gov.UK, at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chlorinated-paraffins-with-carbon-chain-lengths-in-the-range-c14-17 asking interested parties if they have any comments on this.

Policy linkage

Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan commits the Government to managing exposure to chemicals, including by substantially increasing the amount of persistent organic pollutant material being destroyed or irreversibly transformed by 2030, to make sure there are negligible emissions to the environment. Working to restrict POPs substances, internationally, is the best way to manage the risk posed to the environment and human health, given that POPs can be transported by air, water or migratory species across international borders.

Supporting Documents

1. Proposal to list "Chlorinated paraffins with carbon chain lengths in the range C14-17 1 and chlorination levels ≥45% chlorine by weight" in Annex A, B or C to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

2. Annex D Information Requirements and Screening Criteria. Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. http://chm.pops.int/Portals/0/download.aspx?d=UNEP-POPS-COP-CONVTEXT-D.En.pdf