

POPs-free initiative

To gather and disseminate information on POPs-free products and related alternatives and substitutes



Stockholm Convention

Background

The Stockholm Convention is an international environmental treaty that aims to protect human health and the environment from a group of chemicals, called on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), that remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically, accumulate in the fatty tissue of humans and wildlife, and have adverse effects to human health and the environment.

Objectives

The exchange of information on alternatives and substitutes to POPs is essential for the phase-out of production and use of POPs. Articles 9 and 10 of the Stockholm Convention call for such exchange, including by industry and professional users, and through a broad range of different means of communication.

POPs-free initiative

In order to assist Parties in meeting these obligations, the Secretariat launched in autumn 2010 an initiative to gain experience and first-hand information on the availability of POPs-free products and processes.

The initiative seeks to encourage manufacturers and retailers of consumer products, who have phased-out POPs, to provide information on POPs-free products, on possible alternatives and substitutes and processes for introducing such alternatives and substitutes.

Pilot results

In a pilot project, two entities have agreed on a voluntary basis, to test products through a laboratory hosted by the Environment Agency of Austria. The results of the analysis determined that the products of the two manufacturers are POPs-free.

The key criteria for being a POPs-free product was that such a product did not contain or consist of chemicals listed in Annex A, B or C of the Stockholm Convention. POPs-free was defined specifically for the pilot project and was not to be used as a definition outside of the project.

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The LiceMeister® comb

The National Pediculosis Association®, Inc., a non-profit organization from the United States, submitted the LiceMeister® comb. This combing tool is used instead of applying pesticides to the hair and scalp. Of particular relevance to the Convention, the LiceMeister® comb could be considered as an alternative to pharmaceutical applications containing lindane, listed under annex A of the Convention with a specific exemption.



The LiceMeister® comb. is an U.S. Food and Drug Administration cleared medical device to screen, detect and remove head lice and their eggs (nits).

Paxymer™

A flame retardant system, entitled Paxymer™ and developed by PP Polymer AB, a Swedish company, was tested as well. The system controls the burning process, limits the impact on mechanical and processing properties and does not contain brominated flame retardants and POPs listed in Annex A, B or C of the Convention.



Paxymer™ is a halogen-free flame retardant material that preserves polymeric properties of base polymer and is suitable for thermoplastics.

Additional information

Further information on the pilot project will be made available to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention (COP-5) in document UNEP/POPS/COP.5/INF/34. During COP-5, a side event on opportunities for POPs phasing-out will be held on Thursday 28 April 2011.

In light of positive feedback received from different stakeholders, the Secretariat will continue consultations with stakeholders on the identification of POPs-free products and information exchanges on POPs alternatives and substitutes.

Participation

Governments, companies, consumer associations and all other interested stakeholders are invited to contact the Secretariat to obtain further information and discuss opportunities for support, collaboration and participation in activities of the POPs-free initiative. Please contact hshubber@pops.int.