

Carcinogenicity Potency Estimation Methods

1. The mandate initially given by the UN Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS for the biennium 2003-2004 was to start examining methods for carcinogenicity potency estimation. In December 2004, the Sub-Committee agreed that the work should be completed in 2006, and a scientific issue paper should be submitted in 2005.
2. The OECD Expert Group on Carcinogenicity started working on this issue in the beginning of 2004. A draft description of existing carcinogenicity potency estimation methods used in different countries/region was proposed by Norway experts, and comments were requested at an early stage.
3. There was no agreement, at the February 2005 Task Force Meeting, on providing the UN SCEGHS with the draft description of methods, and it was stressed that more work is needed to describe the strengths and weaknesses, domain of applicability, and the type of expertise required to use the methods. However, no country supplemented or proposed to supplement the draft description proposed by Norway. Taking note that not all countries are willing to pursue the work on this issue, the Task Force agreed, in February 2005, on only providing the UN SCEGHS with a very short status report.
4. At the UN SCEGHS that was held on 11-13 July 2005, the OECD Secretariat presented a short status report on carcinogenicity potency estimation methods (see Document UN/SCEGHS/9/INF.4) and requested the advice of the Sub-Committee on whether or not the work should be continued.
5. Several delegations considered that, due to difficulty in agreeing on the use of potency estimation methods, the work should be discontinued for the time being. The Sub-Committee finally decided to ask the OECD to come to a conclusion on this issue and to present a report at the December session.

Conclusion

Considering that for the time being,

- (i) there is no agreement on whether potency estimation methods should be used for deriving specific concentration limits for certain carcinogenic mixtures, or only for risk assessment,
- (ii) providing a description of carcinogenicity potency estimation methods with strengths and weaknesses, domain of applicability and type of expertise potency would require a substantial amount of work from carcinogenicity experts, which would only be justified if an agreement on using potency estimation methods for deriving specific concentration limits for certain carcinogenic mixtures seems possible,

the work on carcinogenicity potency estimation methods should be discontinued for the time being and a decision on whether or not to restart it should be taken later.