

# A North American Agenda for Chemicals Management

The Sound Management of Chemicals program has moved from a chemical-by-chemical approach to a more responsive agenda, which uses trilateral strategies that focus cooperation through the following four areas of work:

## 1. Establish a foundation for chemicals management across North America

The development of comparable tools, data and expertise for the assessment and management of chemical substances will enhance regional capacity for the safe production, transport, use and disposal of chemicals in North America.

An early initiative in this area involves supporting Mexico's effort to develop an inventory of industrial chemicals.

## 2. Develop and implement a sustainable regional approach for monitoring toxic substances in humans and the environment

Data on the presence of chemicals in humans and the environment can be used to evaluate and assess the performance of the Sound Management of Chemicals program's work within North America and set priorities for future action. It can also help identify the impacts of chemical sources outside North America.

This area of work builds on the Sound Management of Chemicals program experience in environmental monitoring and assessment. It includes a renewed commitment to supporting a sustainable approach for Mexico's national monitoring program (PRONAME). This activity also supports Mexico in meeting its obligations under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

## 3. Reduce or eliminate the risk from chemicals of mutual concern in North America

Work in this area includes completing implementation of action plans for mercury and lindane. In addition, a strategy will be developed to identify actions required to address issues of mutual concern for dioxins, furans and hexachlorobenzene. The strategy will seek synergies among ongoing domestic work and international commitments, such as the Stockholm Convention.

Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), a group of chemicals primarily used as flame retardants in electronics, building materials and fabrics, have also been identified under the Sound Management of Chemicals program as chemicals of mutual concern. Initial trilateral efforts will focus on collaboration with Mexico to assess its needs with regard to this chemical group.

## 4. Improve environmental performance of sectors

Work in this priority area focuses on identifying and addressing unique challenges in the management of chemicals and opportunities in specific industrial sectors. Initial work in this area builds on current efforts in the health care sector for mercury and will also emphasize opportunities to link to specific initiatives of other Commission for Environmental Cooperation programs.



Through the Commission for Environmental Cooperation Sound Management of Chemicals program, Canada, Mexico and the United States, in collaboration with experts and the public, share in a regional approach to strengthen the management of chemical substances in North America.

Since its implementation in 1995, the program has made a significant contribution to protecting human health and the North American environment by helping to reduce or eliminate the use of substances of mutual concern such as DDT, chlordane, and mercury.

## A Renewed Program of Work: Global Leadership through Regional Cooperation

Under the direction of the Council of Ministers and in consultation with experts and the public, the Sound Management of Chemicals program has developed a plan focused on four areas of work that promote alignment with other key regional and global commitments, such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development goal of “aiming to achieve, by 2020, that chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.”

The Ministers of the Environment from Canada, Mexico and the United States also reiterated the importance of the Sound Management of Chemicals program during their annual meeting in June 2008.

## Getting Involved

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation places a high priority on providing opportunities for expert, public and stakeholder involvement in the Sound Management of Chemicals program. Stakeholders are invited to undertake activities to support the four areas of work.

A wide range of stakeholders, including industry, business, trade unions, environmental nongovernmental organizations, organizations of women, indigenous organizations and tribes, academic institutions, local and federal governments, are engaged as partners in the Sound Management of Chemicals program, attend public meetings and provide valuable input to ongoing work.

If you would like to learn more about the Sound Management of Chemicals program or become involved in its work, please visit <http://www.cec.org/smoc> or contact us directly by one of the means noted below.

### About the CEC

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation is an international organization created by Canada, Mexico and the United States under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation.

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation was established to address regional environmental concerns, help prevent potential trade and environmental conflicts, and to promote the effective enforcement of environmental law. The Agreement complements the environmental provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement.



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## THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS IN NORTH AMERICA

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) Sound Management of Chemicals program is a trilateral initiative to reduce the risks of industrial chemicals to human health and the environment in North America.



Chemicals are used in everyday consumer products such as clothes, furniture, automobiles, electronics, and toys and play an important role in our quality of life. However, if poorly managed, some chemicals can be harmful to our health and our environment.

Since chemicals move across national boundaries in air, water, sediment as well as in traded goods, international cooperation is important to managing chemicals effectively. As major producers and consumers of chemicals, Canada, Mexico and the United States have an important role to play in the sound management of chemicals nationally, regionally and globally.