

New Group Evaluates Chemical Control Legislation

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The European Union's proposed chemical control legislation, known as Reach, will prove time-consuming and hard to grasp in its entirety, but it's not unworkable. So says the chairman of a partnership of three arms of the European Commission (EC), EU member states and suppliers and users of chemicals — the latest group to investigate the proposals. The group, which was named Produce, has been formed to investigate the potential impact of Reach on the users of chemicals in consumer products. Produce is an acronym for "piloting Reach on downstream use and communication in Europe." The group confirms the strong need for guidance and sufficient tools to make Reach work. There was never any doubt that Reach would be a mammoth undertaking even after it was greatly simplified following industry protests. "Produce reveals that in practice working with Reach will be a challenge for downstream users big and small," says Produce steering group chairman Alexander de Roo. "The EC now has the Herculean task of providing easily accessible guidance, preferably as user-friendly tools." Produce proves, however, that Reach will succeed in forcing collaboration in many chemical supply chains. The project so far has involved downstream users of chemicals such as the makers of skin creams and detergents, among them manufacturers and importers, formulators and non-formulators. The thinking behind the scheme, however, is broadly applicable. It demonstrates, particularly, the importance of chemical product safety to retailers and the need to raise awareness. Companies selling directly to the general public are increasingly aware that they need more detailed information on the make-up of the products they sell. Reach will raise public awareness of chemicals so that producers and users of chemicals will have to respond.

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