

PRESS RELEASE

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New survey from the Helsinki Chemicals Forum:

Scandals dominate media coverage of chemistry and consumers

A new media survey of consumer concerns over chemistry will be presented at the Helsinki Chemicals Forum on Friday 29th May. The study provides insight into media coverage of the chemical industry as it relates to consumers and consumer products. The analysis reveals a manifest lack of information by consumers concerning chemicals and their effects. The public emphasis seems to be on scandals related to consumer's lives. Many stakeholder groups are involved in this debate.

"We can't really avoid using chemicals in some form. Whether in foods, drinks, cosmetics, in the home or garden, but pervasive chemical industry is embedded in contemporary lifestyles, says **Hilfra Tandy**, editor of Chemical Matters and moderator for the Helsinki Chemicals Forum Chemistry and Consumers session. "This media-analysis reflects the difficulties consumers face in realistically assessing a cumulative impact of living in this chemical world. Contradictory claims from producers, the scientific community, regulatory authorities and consumer groups confuse rather than illuminate" she adds.

The survey indicates that media coverage of the chemical sector has increased steadily during the last few years. The period between March 2007 and March 2009 was specifically monitored, during which time there were numerous articles about phthalates, used to make plastics more flexible, pesticides, and melamine found in food in China. New regulations for the chemical industry, green environmental programmes by companies and chemical risk management were also widely discussed in the media.

Many stakeholder groups are involved in the debate over the chemical sector, including regulators and governments, science, health and environmental organisations, as well as producers and manufacturers. It seems that no single stakeholder group owns the chemical debate and that there are different debate leaders when it comes to different topics.

"This analysis seems to indicate that no one has convinced consumers with their communication efforts or arguments, however valid they may be, Ms Tandy says.

The analysis will be presented at the Chemistry and Consumers session of Helsinki Chemicals Forum on Friday 29th of May at 11-13. The analysis was conducted by Hill & Knowlton and Commetric. Articles published in major English language news sources and press (648 in all) were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively for the survey.

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