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Implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)- Project ID #: JR03-03-0809

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Canada 



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Goal/Objective

To exchange information among countries regarding GHS implementation issues, mechanisms and timing, in order to achieve a harmonized process among NAFTA countries and implement the GHS as it relates to pesticides in a coordinated manner.

Project Description/Procedure

To develop a system for information sharing and exchange regarding GHS outreach and implementation activities undertaken by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Comisión Intersecretarial para el Control del Proceso y Uso de Plaguicidas, Fertilizantes y Sustancias Tóxicas (CICOPLAFEST). These exchanges will promote harmonized approaches to the GHS.

Issues and challenges relating to GHS implementation that are identified/addressed in one country will be shared with the other NAFTA countries with a view toward developing common approaches.

Implementation timelines within each country will be discussed, with the goal of achieving harmonized implementation schedules.

Background/Rationale

The GHS was adopted by consensus by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2003 and is the product of more than a decade of tripartite international negotiations. NAFTA countries have been involved in the development of the GHS since the beginning of the negotiating process and joined in the consensus. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety set a goal for GHS implementation by



countries to the extent possible by 2008. (To date, the transport sector is ahead of the other sectors in implementation and implementation planning, but work is ongoing in the workplace and consumer chemical sectors as well.)

It is anticipated that, when implemented on a global basis, the GHS will:

- a) enhance protection of human health and the environment worldwide;
- b) reduce the need for duplicative testing and evaluation of chemicals; and
- c) facilitate international trade.

These objectives will be achieved by promoting greater consistency in regulatory requirements, providing a common and coherent approach to classifying hazards as well as communicating hazard information on labels and safety data sheets.

The GHS includes the following elements:

- a) harmonized criteria for classifying substances and mixtures according to their health, environmental (aquatic) and physical hazards;
- b) certain standardized label elements (pictograms, signal words and hazard statements for each hazard class and category) and guidance with respect to other information that should be provided on labels (e.g., product and supplier identifiers); and
- c) standardized format and contents for safety data sheets.

Due to the level of trade among NAFTA countries, a harmonized approach toward implementation of the GHS in North America is of particular importance in order for NAFTA countries to reap the benefits of harmonization, including enhanced protection of human health and the environment. Greater consistency in pesticide label requirements should also reduce potential for consumer and worker confusion resulting from different hazard information on labels of similar products in different countries.

Web Information

More detailed information relating to the GHS and national implementation issues is available on the Web.

1. For the GHS text and international documents:
www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/ghs_welcome_e.html
2. For the EPA White Paper, comparison document and Questions and Answers:
www.epa.gov/oppfead1/international/globalharmon.htm
3. For Canadian implementation activities:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/intactiv/ghs-sgh/index_e.html



Workplan

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	TIMEFRAME
Harmonize the implementation mechanism and timing of the GHS among NAFTA countries	NAFTA parties continued to exchange information on status of GHS in respective sector/country, issues identified and implementation strategies/considerations, with a view toward developing common approaches.	November 2003 Done and ongoing
	The PMRA provided information on the GHS workshop held in Toronto (October 15, 2003).	November 2003
	The EPA shared White Paper outlining initial thinking on how GHS might be implemented for pesticides.	Discussed at July TWG executive board meeting. Public comment period opened August 25 and closed on December 6, 2004.
	The PMRA conducted stakeholder conference calls, with NAFTA partners as invited, non-participating observers.	May–June 2004
	Conference calls to review progress, discuss results of PMRA stakeholder calls and comments received on EPA White Paper.	Fall and winter 2004–2005
	The PMRA released Classification Discussion Document to its stakeholder working group and to the EPA.	April 2005
	Update provided to NAFTA TWG Executive Board. Contact names for Mexico updated.	June 2005
	The EPA and the PMRA developed a comparison document to summarize current similarities and differences in proposed GHS approaches.	December 2005
		The EPA plans and conducts 1.5 day stakeholder public meeting with PMRA's participation
	The EPA initiates GHS pilot label project with registrant, with potential for NAFTA/GHS label.	Ongoing. EPA has provided product numbers with PMRA for products registered in both countries. Agencies



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		plan to share and compare results in terms of proposed GHS classifications and label elements.
Implement the GHS in harmony within NAFTA		To be determined.