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OECD COUNTRIES BEGIN CO-OPERATIVE SAFETY TESTING ON CHEMICALS

• OECD Member countries have agreed to share out the work of testing a first group of 42 industrial chemicals produced in high volume. The decision, taken at a meeting of industry and government experts 12th-15th November 1990, follows an earlier decision, in April 1990, to collect information, evaluate it and carry out on a co-operative basis new testing, where necessary, on the High Production Volume (HPV) industrial chemicals for which only limited environmental and safety data are available. Agreement was reached on future work as follows:

- -- for five chemicals, the data available, mainly from industry files, was judged sufficient to allow an initial assessment of their hazard potential;
- -- for 37 others, specific testing will be undertaken in 1991, in most cases by industry. This will include extensive tests for health-related parameters such as genotoxic and reproductive effects and as well as environment risks;
- This co-operative OECD work relies heavily on the voluntary co-operation of chemical companies which are providing privately-held data, and are also undertaking the specific testing required. The long-term objective of the programme is to ensure that there is an evaluation of the potential hazards of each of the chemicals produced in high volume (HPV chemicals). Based on such an evaluation, national and, as appropriate, international action to reduce the risks of these chemicals will be undertaken when necessary.
- The programme is expected to address altogether some 1500 HPV chemicals which have been identified by Member countries as being produced in quantities exceeding 1000 tonnes per year. Work on the next group of about 100 priority HPV chemicals will begin in mid-1991. The OECD Business and Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC) and national chemical industry federations have been of great assistance in promoting the collection of data.
- The data compiled in this OECD Programme will be made available worldwide through the United Nations International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals and International Programme on Chemical Safety. Quite apart from the benefits brought to public health and the environment, the co-operative testing agreement will substantially alleviate the financial costs involved and will also take account of animal welfare, since countries will share the work and accept each other's testing results.

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