

Perfluorinated chemicals – A global chemicals management issue in the need of global agreement?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs) have been in use since the 1950s as ingredients or intermediates of surfactants and surface protectors for assorted industrial and consumer applications. Some of the unique properties of PFASs that popularised their widespread use are also associated with environmental and human health concerns.

In May 2009, at the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, countries around the world adopted [Resolution II/5](#) for the management of perfluorinated chemicals and transition to safer alternatives. Also in 2009, some PFASs (perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, its salts and perfluorooctane sulfonyl fluoride) [were added to the Persistent Organic Pollutants List](#) of the Stockholm Convention to restrict their production and use.

With these global initiatives in place, many [industry and governments](#) have been moving away from the use of the highest risk PFASs. However, an [analysis](#) that works towards establishing a global emission inventory for PFASs by focusing on information from published reports regarding perfluoroalkyl carboxylic acids, also indicates that production of long-chain fluorinated chemistries has shifted from the US, Western Europe and Japan to the emerging economies in continental Asia. These new sources may more than offset the reductions obtained by the former major global manufacturers, who have been stepwise eliminating the production and use of these chemicals.

Are the current international initiatives working? Have we just shifted the problem? How we can move forward globally to more significant risk reduction from PFASs? Is it under a global convention for a larger group of substances? Is this the right tool? What about the alternatives that are being shifted to?

To discuss, debate, identify solutions, we welcome a panel of multi-stakeholder experts to the Helsinki Chemicals Forum:

- Ronald Bock, EMEA Risk Management Manager, Chemours, Switzerland
- Ian Cousins, Professor, Stockholm University, Sweden
- Johanna Peltola-Thies, Senior Scientific Officer, European Chemicals Agency
- Lena Vierke, Scientific Officer, German Environment Agency, Germany
- Mengjiao (Melissa) Wang, Research Scientist, Greenpeace International

Come hear the various perspectives. Ask your questions. Join the conversation.



Eeva Leinala
Principal Administrator
OECD

The Panel about Perfluorinated chemicals will take place on Thursday 26th May 2016 in Helsinki Chemicals Forum. You are also welcome to join the conversation on Twitter @ChemicalsForum