

## Asian authorities research best policy options for chemicals management

First Asian Helsinki Chemicals Forum hears open and broad debate

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A number of government officials from across Asia are working with authorities in other jurisdictions to try to identify approaches to managing chemical risks that can be applied in their countries, according to the [report<sup>1</sup>](#) on the first Asian Helsinki Chemicals Forum.

Three topics were debated by more than 130 attendees at the meeting, in Shanghai, China in October:

how to [measure the performance<sup>2</sup>](#) of different chemical management systems;

plastics and circularity – from pollution to a value-based proposition for all; and the quality of, and access to, data on chemicals.

With Asian representatives highly represented on both the panels and in the audience, the content and conclusions provide an important regional perspective. Many panellists and delegates welcomed the opportunity to discuss and debate the issues with a wide range of other stakeholders – from regulators and authorities, to industry and NGOs. The discussion was open, broad and effective.

Both government and industry panellists said several times that solutions to chemicals management issues require all stakeholders to work together – no single company, industry or government could solve the problems faced singlehandedly. There seemed to be a growing



acceptance by a number of authorities in Asia that they need to work with stakeholders to develop and implement controls effectively.

Several speakers from countries that have progressed further on their chemical management journeys flagged up the value of assessing what's worked and what has been more problematic. They said authorities thinking about implementing chemical regulations could learn important lessons from REACH and other chemical regulations.

From the examples given, it was also clear that Asian authorities can act relatively quickly to tackle significant problems. This was evident in the panel discussion on plastics and circularity, where Thailand outlined its ambitious and comprehensive approach to plastics waste. Similarly, in the panel on performance measurement, delegates heard about the China Compulsory Certification (CCC) programme, which was set up to eliminate noncompliant products being sold through e-commerce.

As more Asian countries develop and implement chemicals management legislation, access to reliable data will clearly be (and already is) under the spotlight. One panellist commented: "We built a nice house, but we've kept the key", meaning that there is a lot of data being generated, but access is restricted. It was mentioned that ideally, an international treaty to share information between all users should be established.

The report, prepared by Chemical Watch, intends to be a balanced and accessible reflection of the debate.



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