
IFCS Forum V
Plenary Information/Discussion Session on Tools and Approaches for
Applying Precaution in the Context of Chemicals Safety
Information Request for Background Paper
Structured Questionnaire

Background Information

Country: REPUBLIC of BELARUS

Ministry/Agency/Institute/Organization: REPUBLICAN SCIENTIFIC PRACTICAL
CENTER of HYGIENE

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Please submit completed questionnaire by 20 July 2006 to:

IFCS Secretariat
Email: ifcs@who.int
Fax: +41 22 791 4875

Please note: Unless you indicate otherwise in your response, these submissions will be posted on the IFCS website.

Please provide any links or additional supporting materials that provide additional information on particular policies, tools, or activities.

National chemicals policy or management:

1. How is the concept of precaution explicitly or implicitly (in terms of decision-making under conditions of uncertainty) incorporated in national chemicals policy or management in your country/organization?

Please check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| In the country constitution? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In legislation? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In agency/ministry/organization policy? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| In specific guidance documents for risk assessment or risk management? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Applied in specific cases but no particular policy? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not applied at all? | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please provide greater detail (1 para).

Precaution is implicitly incorporated in the following policy documents: the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the National Action Plan “Children and Environment”, and the National Action Plan “Efficient use of Natural Resources and Environment Protection”.

The Sanitary norms and regulations have some specific rules as the precaution approach for certain the chemicals (For example: some chemical food additives are prohibited for children’s food, although these are allowed for food for adults).

An example in a guidance document showing the precaution approach concerns the requirements for pesticides registration and permission to use: in case we found that the documents of risk of pesticides given by producer do not include the standards for the working place, the permission is given just for one year even if we have all required information of risk assessment and risk management.

Tools and approaches for applying precaution:

2. What are some of the key tools and approaches used by your country/organization in applying precaution (or making decisions in circumstances of uncertainty) in the context of chemicals safety?

a. Is there a defined approach to applying precaution or decision-making under uncertainty?

Yes ? No

If yes, can you outline the elements of that approach or provide references to it?

Usually experts base a decision on available information, experience, documents, etc. and taking precautionary approach as one of the main principles.

b. Is precaution integrated in other decision-making processes, tools and approaches such as;

Please check all that apply.

- Data collection?
- Prioritization of substances for risk management actions
- Uncertainty characterization?
- Socio-economic analysis (e.g., social impact, proportionality/cost-benefit assessment, trade concern)?
- Risk assessment and risk management options?
- Screening, comparison of alternatives, informed substitution?
- Stakeholder and Public involvement?
- Other

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

Additional information is available on web-sites – www.rspch.by; www.chemsafety.by

c. How are gaps in knowledge addressed?

Please check all that apply.

- Though conservative risk assessment assumptions
- Through safety factors
- Through modeling techniques
- Through an assumption that lack of information is indication of potential harm
- Through requesting additional research
- Gaps are not addressed

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

The main condition to apply precaution is the existence of initial information of chemicals properties. In case the initial information indicate that the chemical could have harmful effect we agreed to assume that lack of information indicate potential harm: use is permitted only when the chemical is supposed to be used not very intensively: small amounts, very few factories, or otherwise additional studies are initiated or additional research is initiated

3. Please provide details of a particular case (or example) where precaution was applied (or decisions made in the face of uncertainty) in the context of chemicals management?

a. What stimulated/initiated the precaution process/action?

Please check all that apply.

- Government concern over hazards and/or exposures
- Stakeholder concerns over the particular threat
- International policy requirements/pressures
- Negative impacts/experience(s) from not acting on a previous chemical risk
- Other

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

International policy requirements are the strongest stimulator to apply precaution action.

b. What process was used to make the decision? (please briefly describe the process or tools used to make the decision)

Usually the process develops according to the following steps:

- Initial data collection of potential harmful effect
- Ground the need for precaution application and inform main stakeholders;
- Collect additional information including epidemiological, toxicological researches, existing experience etc.
- Ground the decision on national level;
- Decision is expressed in document (order, rules etc.)

c. Were there positive or negative impacts of this process/action?

Please check all that apply.

- | <u>Positive</u> | | <u>Negative</u> | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ecological or Health benefits | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Ecological or health impacts | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Economic benefit | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Economic impacts | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Improved government/industry image | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Substitutes/alternatives did not work | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improved government/public morale | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Negative public reaction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improvements to scientific tools/decision processes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other? | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

Precaution application has positive impacts for ecology and health. From economic point of view the effect will be positive in case the benefits for health and environment are bigger than funds which were used to apply precaution measures or negative in the opposite situation. The needs for additional information stimulate science (medicine, ecology, chemistry etc.) development.

d. Were there any unintended consequences from this process/action?

Positive – please describe

1. Health and environment protection from indirect effects of other chemicals
2. Development of awareness of the precaution approach with all stakeholders

Negative - please describe

Consequences for economy if the precaution application was unjustified
For example: Unjustified full ban of methanol admixture (because of technology of production) in some household chemicals cause the suspension of production and economical negative profit

4. Are there any particular cases in your country/organization where precaution was not applied (decisions not made in the face of uncertain chemical risks) resulting in adverse impacts?

Yes No

If yes, briefly describe if and how decision-making processes have been modified as a result.

Absence of strict limitation of methanol in mixtures in some household chemicals and several cases of poisonings as a consequence

5. Does your government have processes in place to re-examine decisions made based on precaution or made in the face of uncertainty as additional data are available?

Yes No

If yes, briefly describe the process and how this process may be used to modify decisions, decision-making process, or tools.

Based on epidemiological and toxicological investigations stricter limitation and banning maybe decided upon as e.g. was the case with the methanol in mixture in different household chemicals.

Lessons Learned from applying precaution in chemicals management

6. What are some of the biggest challenges to your country's (organization's) application of precaution in the context of chemicals management or in chemicals management decision-making in the face of uncertainty?

Please check all that apply.

- Scientific capacity
- Lack of scientific information
- Legal challenges
- Technical challenges
- Financial challenges
- Trade Challenges
- Other?

For those checked boxes, please briefly indicate what were the implications of these barriers and how have they been addressed or if not yet addressed, how could they be addressed?

Scientific capacity building and scientific information collection are a necessary elements to give a basis for precaution application e.g. with regard to synthesis of new chemicals, biotechnology development, assess the risk and impact etc.

The industry and agriculture face technical challenges to implement precaution.

A legal base is one of the main tools to promote and stimulate the process.

Are these challenges also applicable to decision-making and actions regarding established risks?

Yes No

7. What are the most important needs of your country or organization for more effectively applying precaution (or making decisions in the face of uncertainty) and overcoming barriers in chemicals management decision-making?

Please check all that apply.

- o Data on chemical toxicity/risks
- o Tools for prioritization
- o Tools for risk assessment
- o Decision-making tools/frameworks
- o Technical assistance in risk assessment processes
- o Technical assistance in risk management processes
- o Financial support for implementation

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- International dialogue
 - Information sharing to facilitate understanding of the issues
 - Other

For those boxes checked, please briefly provide greater detail or links to additional information.

1. There is a lack of data on toxic chemicals and the risks they pose
2. There is a lack of knowledge and experience in risk assessment techniques
3. There is too little experience in risk management
4. There are insufficient funds for implementation
5. sharing the information, especially practical one, in international dialogue both bilateral and multilateral is very fruitful.
6. Although there is a chemical website where information sharing on such issues are facilitated, it is still quite insufficient

8. Briefly describe your perceptions as to some of the concerns regarding application of precaution in the context of chemicals safety?
Please briefly provide details or links to additional information.

There are very limited amount of chemicals, which are completely friendly to human being and environment. In addition information on harmful effect of chemicals is also limited. That's why precaution application in any context is one of the main principles to prevent adverse effect of chemicals.

9. Do you have any additional information on tools and approaches for applying precaution that would be helpful to inform discussion?
Please provide any additional materials or web links

www.rspch.by; www.chemsafety.by; www.rcheph.by

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