

VCI overview on "endocrine active substances" – introduction and table of contents

Date: June 28, 2013

Since the middle of the 1990s, the issue “chemical substances with endocrine effects” has attracted a lot of attention from the scientific community, the authorities, industry, and organizations active in the field of environmental protection. The media have also picked up the subject and reports published all over the world have carried headlines such as “Fertility crisis”, “Men are disappearing from the world” or “Attack on manliness”. The subject matter of the articles in each case was the assumed causal relationship between contamination of the environment and of humans by environmental chemicals, observed or suspected negative trends in relation to diseases of the reproductive systems of humans and animals, and the influence of chemical compounds on hormonal control systems. Since then, a lot of new information has become available.

[The VCI overview on “endocrine active substances” \(114 pages, in English\)](#) examines the current state of scientific knowledge through discussion of the following issues:

- definition of “endocrine active substances” and “endocrine disrupters”,
- basis of the evaluation,
- background to the substances under discussion and to the question of which hormone systems are under discussion in association with endocrine activity as well as the possible accumulation of endocrine active substances in organisms,
- examples of the potencies of estrogenic substances are described.

In separate sections, the human and environmental aspects are examined in more detail, e.g. the possible hazard to humans or the environment is assessed. In this process, test methods, test strategies, and evaluation concepts are explained.

More general matters, such as what is known about combination effects and the question of adverse effects in the low-dose range are also discussed, as is the subject of the validity and quality of scientific studies.

In the last section, regulatory aspects are discussed, e.g. the question of the need for a separate hazard category and prioritization and evaluation studies for candidate substances.

The VCI overview is intended to make a relevant contribution to the scientific and objective discussion of endocrine active substances. To this end, regular updating of the document to reflect the current state of the discussion is envisaged.

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