

Environment Bill: Chemicals Regulation

Committee Stage briefing on the Environment Bill's provisions relating to REACH legislation.

October 2020

As the UK develops its own REACH regime, it must seek to be proactive and pre-emptive, and use regulation to prevent harm based on scientific evidence. It should regulate those substances that are known to be hazardous, and expect data to be generated for new substances whose safety is unknown. Doing so will be reliant on drawing on the wealth of scientific expertise available, while maintaining transparent and accountable processes.

The provisions in the Environment Bill present an opportunity to ensure that UK REACH reflects the evidence and allows for a regulatory environment which is fit for purpose. The Royal Society of Chemistry has done extensive work with our community on chemicals regulation in the UK, and propose the following amendments based on this expertise.

The Environment Bill should include measures to ensure appropriate scientific advice is sought within decision making frameworks. These decisions should be well evidenced and transparent, with clear accountability.

We would recommend the following amendments:

Amendment: Schedule 19, page 231, line 22, at end **insert** “and take account of all relevant scientific evidence and advice through the Agency’s science advice mechanisms”

Amendment: Schedule 19, page 231, line 30, at end **insert** “take account of all relevant scientific evidence and advice through the Agency’s science advice mechanisms, and”

Explanation: The Secretary of State and any relevant devolved authority must take into account relevant independent scientific advice when making decisions of this kind. This allows citizens to trust that regulation is based on sound evidence from independent sources.

Amendment: Schedule 19, page 231, line 31, at end **insert** “(4) The Secretary of State, or any relevant devolved authority, shall make transparent the reasons for all decisions taken under this regulation by publishing this information in the public domain”

Explanation: Transparency, consistency and accountability is essential in decision making of this nature, which allows the evidence used to be scrutinised and the Secretary of State, or any relevant devolved authority making regulation under this schedule, to be held to account.

Building trust in chemicals through transparent and well evidenced decision making leads to economic prosperity, and protection of the health, wellbeing and quality of life of citizens and wildlife.