



New Substances Program Information Note 2006-xx

SCREENING ASSESSMENT OF LIVING ORGANISMS LISTED ON THE DOMESTIC SUBSTANCES LIST (DSL)

This information note is to inform manufacturers and importers of biotechnology products and other stakeholders that the New Substances Program of Environment Canada and Health Canada has initiated screening assessments for all living organisms listed on the Domestic Substances List (DSL), under Section 74(b) of CEPA, 1999. Currently, all living organisms on the DSL are micro-organisms. We would like to invite industrial stakeholders and other interested parties to contact us and take the opportunity to contribute in the development of this initiative.

Under Section 74(b) of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA 1999), the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Health are required to conduct screening assessments of all living organisms listed on the Domestic Substances List (DSL) to determine whether they are “toxic” or capable of becoming “toxic” as defined under the Act. A substance is considered “toxic” under CEPA 1999 if it is entering or may enter the environment in a quantity or concentration or under conditions that:

- (a) have or may have an immediate or long-term harmful effect on the environment or its biological diversity;
- (b) constitute or may constitute a danger to the environment on which life depends; or
- (c) constitute or may constitute a danger in Canada to human life or health.

What is the Domestic Substances List (DSL)?

The DSL is a compilation of all known substances, chemical and living organisms, that were present in Canadian commerce between 1984 and 1986 or that were added to the DSL in accordance with CEPA 1999. Under certain circumstances, the Minister of the Environment may amend the DSL by adding or deleting substances in accordance with CEPA 1999.

Which Living Organisms Are on the DSL?

The DSL currently contains 43 microbial strains and one complex microbial culture. The DSL can be consulted on the New Substances Website at www.ec.gc.ca/substances/nsb/.

What Is a Screening Assessment?

A screening assessment is a scientific evaluation of whether an existing substance is or may become harmful to human health or the environment. Living organisms on the DSL will be assessed according to their ability to persist and to survive within aquatic and terrestrial environments, their invasiveness, as well as their ability to elicit pathogenicity and/or toxicity to humans and to aquatic and terrestrial organisms (invertebrates and vertebrates).

Information used in the course of a screening assessment includes:

- Peer-reviewed scientific journals.
- Decisions of other domestic or international jurisdictions.
- Industry-supplied data on entry points into the environment.
- Laboratory and/or field studies through collaborations with partners in Government and academic institutions.

Who Is Conducting the Screening Assessment of Living Organisms on the DSL?

The New Substances Program of Environment Canada and Health Canada will perform the Screening Assessments for all the living organisms on the DSL.

What is the Timeline for Completing the Screening Assessment?

There is no mandated deadline for the completion of screening assessments of living organisms on the DSL. However, considering that these organisms are already being used in Canada, Environment Canada and Health Canada consider it a priority to proceed expeditiously with the assessment in order to determine if they pose any potential risks to the environment and human health.

How Can I Participate in this Initiative?

The New Substances Program of Environment Canada and Health Canada is planning to set up a Technical Expert Group to contribute to the development of this initiative. If you are interested in participating on this Group, or if you would like to contribute to this initiative on an individual basis, please provide your name and contact information at the address below before the end of February 2007. Please note that Environment Canada and Health Canada will make the final decision on participants to ensure effective functioning and balanced representation.

Contact Information

The New Substances Notification Information Line
Environment Canada
Place Vincent Massey, 14th Floor
Gatineau QC K1A 0H3
Telephone: (800) 567-1999 (Toll Free in Canada)
(819) 953-7156 (Outside of Canada)
Fax: (819) 953-7155
E-mail: nsn-infoline@ec.gc.ca

For additional information, documentation or updates on the screening assessment of living organisms on the DSL, please visit the New Substances Web Site at http://www.ec.gc.ca/substances/nsb/eng/index_e.htm.

Comments on this initiative are welcome at any time by mail, email or fax. We would appreciate receiving your first comments by the end of February 2007 in order to consider them for the initial phase of the project.

If you do not manufacture or import any of the living organisms listed on the DSL, you may wish to ignore this notice. Also, please let us know if you would like to have your company information removed from our distribution list.

Jacqueline Sitwell
Director
New Substances Assessment and Control Bureau
Health Canada

Bernard Madé
Director
New Substances Division
Environment Canada