

## **Breast Cancer UK response to the Consultation on the draft Opinion of the Committee for Socio-Economic Analysis on the Annex XV dossier proposing restrictions on Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), its salts and PFOA-related substances**

16<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Breast Cancer UK is dedicated to the prevention of breast cancers by reducing public exposure to the carcinogenic, hazardous and hormone disrupting chemicals which are routinely found in the environment and everyday products.

Our concerns extend to the potential role of PFOA (Perfluorooctanoic acid) in increasing cancer risk, as outlined in the annex XV dossier. PFOA is an endocrine disrupting chemical which interferes with oestrogens<sup>i</sup>. A recent study found elevated serum PFOA levels were associated with increased breast cancer risk in genetically susceptible populations<sup>ii</sup>. Biomonitoring studies have shown it is widespread in human body fluids and tissues, as a result of environmental exposures<sup>iii</sup>. PFOA is classified as a Substance of Very High Concern (SVHC). It is persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic and may cause severe and irreversible adverse effects on the environment and human health. In October 2015, PFOA was nominated for listing on the UN's Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants<sup>iv</sup>.

Breast Cancer UK welcomes the conclusion of the SEAC and the committee for risk assessment (RAC) that action should be taken on the restriction of PFOA, its salts, and PFOA-related substances. As mentioned in the dossier, PFOA is ubiquitous in the environment including air, water, soil, sediment, biota and in humans. We agree that a risk management option covering all emission sources of PFOA and substances that degrade to PFOA, including those from imports, is needed.

We disagree with several proposed changes to the annex XV dossier included in the SEAC opinion. Specifically; we do not agree with the proposal to increase allowable concentrations of PFOA from 2ppb to 25ppb, and in some instances 1000ppb. Furthermore, we disagree with the derogation to some industries, especially on the basis that they “don't use much” PFOA or PFOA related substances. Our arguments are outlined as follows.

### Proposal to increase the maximum allowable concentrations of PFOA as constituents/mixtures/articles from less than 2ppb to less than 25ppb, and of one or a combination of PFOA-related substances from less than 2ppb to 1000ppb

We have significant concerns relating to the proposal to increase maximum allowable concentrations. We accept that a maximum concentration of 2ppb may be unrealistic to achieve, due to lack of reliable analytical methods and other arguments outlined under “Concentration limits applied to PFOA and PFOA-related substances” in the SEAC opinion. However, we do not believe the RAC or SEAC have provided justification as to why this limit has increased so drastically since the original RAC report was published. Allowing such an increase is likely

to encourage substitutions with other perfluorinated and polyfluorinated substances (often contaminated with PFOA) which models predict may also be persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic and so result in further environmental contamination<sup>v</sup>. A lower level of permissible PFOA and PFOA-related substances may encourage more investment in the use of non-toxic replacements, some of which are already available<sup>vi</sup> and consequently reduce environmental pollution.

### Derogations

We accept the derogation of firefighting foam (FFF) which contains PFOA substances already on the market, based on a potential inability to fight fires due to financial constraints, however we disagree strongly that any new FFF which contains up to 1000ppb should be allowed. FFF containing PFOA has been linked to ground water contamination incidents such as those at RAAF bases in New South Wales, Australia where historically PFOA was used<sup>vii</sup>. The severity of the contamination caused the Environment Protection Authority to issue warnings to residents advising them to stop eating local seafood, and locally produced eggs and milk. A maximum allowable level below 1000ppb will provide less incentive to find alternative FFF and further environmental pollution. A particular concern noted in the opinion was the ability to fight fires at airports, yet it was stated that alternatives do currently exist and are being used. The argument suggesting a possible lack of availability is weak, especially if the period for changeover is extended from 18 months to 3 years.

We do not accept the derogation for photographic coatings applied to films, papers or printing plates, nor to the manufacture, placing on the market and use of substances and mixtures needed to produce them. We also question the need for derogation for photolithography in semi-conductor industries. Derogations will not help support global elimination of PFOA and decreases incentive for industry to develop non-toxic replacements. The argument that “this sector is responsible for a very low share of total emission of PFOA and PFOA-related substance” is not justifiable, especially for non-essential purposes such as use in one particular brand of printer cartridge.

Finally, we are concerned about derogation for recycling and second-hand articles as this will contribute further to environmental pollution and prevent global elimination.

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<sup>i</sup> Sonthithai et al. (2015) Journal of Applied Toxicology 2015, Aug 3 DOI 10.1002/jat.3210

<sup>ii</sup> Ghisari et al. (2014) Environmental Health 2014, 13(1):19

<sup>iii</sup> Vierke et al. (2012) Environmental Sciences Europe 2012, 24:16

<sup>iv</sup> Global chemical experts take science to action by moving towards phase out of toxic chemicals.

<http://chm.pops.int/Implementation/PublicAwareness/PressReleases/OutcomesofPOPRC11/tabid/4692/Default.aspx> last accessed 14.11.15

<sup>v</sup> Gomis et al. (2015). Science of the Total Environment. 505:981-91.

<sup>vi</sup> Substitution support portfolio

[http://www.subsport.eu/case-stories?search=PFOA&sektor=0&Function=0&prozess=0&cslimit=15&type=case\\_studies](http://www.subsport.eu/case-stories?search=PFOA&sektor=0&Function=0&prozess=0&cslimit=15&type=case_studies) last accessed 14.11.15

<sup>vii</sup> ABC news sept 16 2015. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-16/nsw-govt-announces-two-reviews-into-williamtown27s-toxic-raaf-/6780756> last accessed 14.11.15