

One example is the “ICCA Guidance on Chemical Risk Assessment” published in June 2010. Aimed at developing regions and SMEs, it is intended as a “living document” to be improved over time, based on feedback provided by user companies. It is just one element in a series of guidance documents developed to help Responsible Care companies fulfill their commitment to perform risk assessment under GPS, define safe use conditions and if necessary, implement risk management measures so that safe use conditions are met.

The guidance shows, step-by-step, how to gather the information needed in order to conduct the risk assessment and then explains how to perform it. Using this step-by-step process enables companies with limited experience and resources to master basic principles, and implement appropriate risk assessment and risk management. Thus, companies implementing the GPS system will see the hurdle of meeting complex international standards as much easier to overcome.

Members of the global Responsible Care network of national associations, which provides ICCA with an effective means to reach out to companies, also need support to fulfill their obligations under GPS. With this in mind, ICCA has begun to roll out a GPS implementation template and toolkit as an aid for associations offering a series of generic materials covering GPS communication and implementation.

Reporting to SAICM

Together with the Responsible Care Global Charter, GPS is ICCA's contribution to SAICM, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In June 2010 ICCA presented its first “Baseline Estimate Report” to the SAICM secretariat; referring to 20 key SAICM indicators which were adopted in May 2009, the report provides background regarding ICCA's reporting mechanism as well as a baseline estimate of progress to date.

By comparing and matching the results of its Responsible Care Global Charter and Global Product Strategy (GPS) initiatives, ICCA is able to monitor industry's status and report progress on the SAICM objectives. A total of 52 ICCA measures covering environmental and human health were selected and matched for impact, relevance and priority to the 20 SAICM indicators. A survey was developed which reflects four implementation stages of the 52 measures.

The data collection system is integrated into the ICCA's web-based Responsible Care reporting tool for national associations. In the future, trends will be identified to target additional activities as well as enabling ICCA to monitor progress in improving the sound management of chemicals.

Implementation in Europe

Preparations for the GPS roll-out in Europe started in 2009. The key difference compared to other regions is the fact that priority for substance assessments in Europe is set by the REACH timelines. Cefic has prepared an adjusted GPS implementation plan for associations and their member companies in the EU.

As GPS obligations are nearly fulfilled with a complete REACH dossier, a GPS safety summary can be prepared using the information in the REACH dossier. Although more and more GPS safety summaries are being published in Europe, the first major wave is expected for 2011, following the successful REACH registration of the respective substances.

Companies will then publish them on their websites and include them on the ICCA GPS portal which goes online in October 2010.

The aim is for safety summaries based on REACH dossiers to be available on the portal within one year of the registration deadline.

The Global Product Strategy is a capacity sharing exercise working towards:

- Increasing knowledge of the substance hazards.
- Reducing differences in the safe handling of chemical substances between developing, emerging and industrialized countries.
- Ensuring the correct handling and use of chemicals across the value chain and across geographical boundaries by providing relevant and reliable information.
- Improving transparency, by helping companies provide stakeholders with information about marketed chemicals in an easily understandable format: the GPS Safety Summary.

Under GPS companies are preparing risk assessments for substances in commerce by 2018 to support safe use throughout their lifecycle. In addition companies will provide access to information in a suitable format to co-producers and customers to increase public confidence.