

SAFETY OF CLINGFILM IN QUESTION

Local and international experts dismiss claims of dangerous chemicals

Johannesburg, 24th July 2018. The Southern African Vinyls Association (SAVA), the industry body of the Southern African vinyl industry and representing the country's major local clingfilm producers, has dismissed recently published claims by local researchers that clingfilm commonly sold in South Africa contains high levels of chemicals which pose health risks to humans.

Plasticisers are commonly used to produce clingfilm, with the main food-grade plasticisers being Di-(2-Ethylhexyl) Adipate (DEHA), Acetyltributyl Citrate (ATBC) and Epoxidised Soya Bean Oil (ESBO). The local study alleges that certain health risks are associated with the use of DEHA. SAVA and other international bodies such as Vinyl Council Australia and the European Council of Vinyl Manufacturers (ECVM), however, emphasize that PVC products are safe to use and do not pose any risks to human health. They contend that the researchers have made questionable use of outdated information to arrive at misleading conclusions.

"The concerns raised by the publication of de Jager et al. were thoroughly investigated already years ago and still to date there is no scientific evidence that DEHA is carcinogenic to humans nor toxic to reproduction or an endocrine disruptor", says Alistair Calder, Chairman of SAVA. According to Calder, the European Commission has approved the use of DEHA based on an in-depth evaluation which was undertaken by an expert group reporting to the European Food Safety Authority.

"These findings on DEHA included the data on liver effects and were also evaluated by the EU's former Scientific Committee on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment (CSTEE) which stated that the CSTEE considers the hepatocarcinogenic response of DEHA in mice to be a dose-thresholded phenomenon. Because of this, and the differences in sensitivity between humans and rodents towards peroxisome proliferators, exposure of children to DEHA are orders of magnitude below those doses which induce liver tumours in mice, and therefore does not raise any concern," Calder says.

All the data on DEHA, including any new study results which became available after the EFSA or CSTEE evaluations, are available on the ECHA's REACH (The European Chemicals Regulations) website.

Furthermore, SAVA argues that the local study relies on a metabolic pathway that was shown to be not applicable to humans as far back as 1998. As a result of these findings, the European Food Safety Authority withdrew the need to conduct further research relating to this pathway to cancer in 2008.

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Dr Rainer Otter, toxicologist and chair of the scientific working group of European Plasticisers, a sector group of The European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC), confirms that there is also no evidence that DEHA is an endocrine disruptor. Through his involvement in evaluating the safety of DEHA under REACH (The European Chemicals Regulations), Dr Otter routinely reviews all relevant research on plasticizers, and in that context, he evaluated the publication by de Jager et al. and said that he found it to be “a flawed publication suffering from several deficiencies, which lets me conclude that this publication is of low reliability”.

“PVC is used for very good reasons: performance, durability, safety and affordability. Because its main markets are in durable applications, the worldwide use of PVC is increasing at a healthy pace. The vinyl industry takes great pride in its products. There is an immense amount of knowledge and science that have gone into PVC production and development. Considerable thought and action is given to environmental sustainability, worker and consumer health and safety. We have adapted to change and have made no compromises towards delivering a safe material to the market. We have also proved vinyl is sustainable through various global initiatives. To be flippant about a responsible industry with a very safe product that employs millions, and serves billions, is indicative of inadequate research or playing to the gallery,” Calder concludes.

For more information, visit www.savinyls.co.za

References:

- De Jager et al. (2018). Endocrine disrupting chemicals in commercially available cling film brands in South Africa. Human and Ecological Risk Assessment: An International Journal. DOI: 10.1080/10807039.2018.1471659
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