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Chemicals Initiatives 2022-25

The Danish Government, Denmark's Liberal Party, the Danish People's Party, the Socialist People's Party, the Danish Social-Liberal Party, the Danish Red-Green Alliance, the Conservative People's Party, The New Right, Liberal Alliance, Independent Greens, The Alternative and The Christian Democrats have agreed on ambitious initiatives for the chemicals area over the next four years.

Chemicals are everywhere in our lives, and they play a fundamental role in most of our activities, because they are part of virtually everything around us. Chemicals are both the problem and the solution. For while the production and consumption of harmful chemicals affect our health and the environment, stand in the way of the circular economy, and damage the climate and biodiversity; chemicals are also the principal elements in low-emission and zero-emission technologies as well as in energy-efficient and resource-efficient technologies, materials and products.

So, when we are dealing with harmful chemicals, we are also addressing today's major issues.

Chemicals are part of virtually all of the products we use, and they are a vital part of our lives - both now and in the future. Quite simply, chemicals make it possible to live the life we want, and to transition our economy to a more sustainable future, provided we use chemicals wisely. However, 84% of Europeans are concerned about the effects of chemicals in everyday products on human health and 90% are worried about their effects on the environment. At the same time, global production and trade with chemical substances and products are increasing, and population screenings reveal ever more harmful chemicals in the human body and in the blood.

The goal of the Government and the parties to the agreement is to prevent and minimise the occurrence of harmful substances in the environment and people.

The Government and the parties to the agreement have therefore agreed on the following vision: to work towards a toxic-free environment, where chemicals are produced and used in such a way as to protect the environment, biodiversity, and current and future generations against harmful chemicals, with support for the transition to production and use of safe and sustainable chemicals. As a means to achieving this vision, the Government and the parties to the agreement have agreed to strive for a decision on a definition of safe and sustainable chemicals by 2025, and to phase out the most harmful chemicals in consumer products by no later than 2025 as part of implementation of the EU Chemicals Strategy. As soon as possible, and by no later than spring 2023, the Government will present to the parties to the agreement the overall principles that the government will work for when the definition of safe and sustainable chemicals is to be established by the EU.

The Government and the parties to the agreement will work to realise the vision above, and in doing so, they will respect food, groundwater and drinking water, indoor climate, occupational health and safety, air quality, the Water Framework Directive and the marine strategy.

1. Responsible green chemistry in a sustainable world

Chemicals must be regulated in the EU and the UN. With the EU Chemicals Strategy, the Commission recognises that the direction for chemicals policy, for which Denmark has been fighting for many years, is essential to protect people and the environment against harmful chemicals. Implementation of the EU Chemicals Strategy will have top priority for the next four years. Setting a Danish fingerprint on the negotiations to ensure that future EU regulations meet the visions will require considerable effort. Implementation is likely to entail a need to amend practically speaking all Union legislation on the chemicals area with respect to consumer products, and in the years to come the focus of Danish work will shift away from specific chemicals regulation for this reason alone. Chemicals in food are generally well-regulated, but to help enterprises to meet their responsibilities to keep food safe and to make monitoring easier and more uniform, there is a need for more detailed regulations and knowledge.

The Chemicals Strategy will be implemented in the same period as covered by Chemicals Initiatives 2022-2025. Chemicals Initiatives 2022-2025 is therefore the central tool in ensuring that key Danish issues and priorities are included in future chemicals regulation and policy. Focus areas are:

- All harmful chemicals must be removed from consumer products.
- Children, other vulnerable groups and employees must be better protected.
- Make ‘no data (on chemicals), no market’ a reality.
- Develop a sustainability concept for chemicals.
- The global market demands strong global chemicals regulation and management.
- Stricter regulation of food contact materials and chemical contaminants in food products.

2. A toxic-free environment, safe food, safe Danish workplaces and safe consumers - managing harmful chemicals

We are exposed to harmful chemicals at work and simply by living our lives in modern society, and the environment is impacted by our use of chemicals. We and our children should be able to live safely and healthily without being exposed to harmful chemicals, and together we must take care of our environment. Securing wellbeing and welfare for everyone must not be at the expense of safety with regard to harmful chemicals. We must maintain a high level of protection and make sure that harmful chemical substances and products are managed so that they do not put us at risk. We must influence common EU regulations to accelerate processes, and so that key Danish issues, for example allergies and endocrine disruptors, remain high on the agenda.

We must take account of the cocktail effects of chemicals in all relevant legislation, including in the EU general chemicals regulation (REACH), and of e.g. toys, chemical contaminants in food, food contact materials, electronic equipment, detergents and cosmetics, because there are chemicals in everything around us. Under the current agreement, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries has developed a “cocktail calculator”, a new tool that makes it possible to calculate the impact of many chemicals at one time. The initiatives in this new agreement will continue this work by ensuring that risk assessments of individual chemicals take into account that we are exposed to many chemicals from different sources, and by introducing an additional safety factor for cocktail effects when necessary; initially in the EU’s general chemicals regulation: REACH.

We must restrict the use of the most harmful substances in consumer products. An automatic restriction on further substances in consumer products must be introduced as soon as possible. And only uses essential for society must be allowed. The restriction must apply to all sectors, e.g. food contact materials, toys, cosmetics, textiles, etc. The restriction must be extended to cover endocrine disruptors and the substances most hazardous to the environment. Furthermore, the restriction must later be extended to include substances that are harmful to the immune and nervous systems. Until this is in place, the substances must be regulated in accordance with a group approach instead of individually.

We must lead the way, so that a restriction on all fluorinated substances in all non-essential uses becomes a reality in the EU. And we must take initiative to commence work that can lead to regulation to reduce skin allergies, not only in Denmark, but throughout the entire EU, and that can provide major socio-economic benefits as a consequence of fewer cases of allergies.

Chemicals regulations must be revised when new knowledge comes to light about the harmful effects of chemicals on the environment and health. We must continue both to share our knowledge and to work with other countries to regulate harmful chemicals, e.g. so that we prevent chemicals from becoming a barrier to recycling and so that we ensure coordination across sectors.

Innovation by enterprises makes it possible to phase out harmful chemicals and develop more sustainable use of chemicals in the future. This transition will be encouraged and supported through a number of activities under the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, and through the PARC partnership under Horizon, Danish researchers will help develop safe and sustainable chemicals so that products are designed sustainably from the start and can be included in the circular economy, and so that harmful chemicals are not included in the cycle. The Environmental Technology Development and Demonstration Program (MUDP) will contribute to specific development projects that also support innovative contributions in the chemicals area from Danish enterprises. The MUDP strategy for 2020-2023 stresses that there is a need for technological development that promotes the phase out of harmful chemicals and can reduce the exposure of humans and the environment to harmful chemicals, both with regard to individual chemical substances and groups of substances, for example those that accumulate in nature, carcinogenic substances or endocrine disruptors.

Continued Danish focus on reducing the risk from harmful chemicals has made Denmark a front-runner in the EU. Denmark is also at the forefront on the global stage when common global agreements are concluded and amended. Production and trade with chemicals and products is a global cycle. Denmark is working for strong global chemicals regulation and to secure global sustainable consumption, production and management of chemicals throughout their entire lifecycle. Products on the Danish market must be safe, regardless of whether they are manufactured in the EU or globally, and transboundary pollution must be limited as much as possible.

It must also be safe for consumers to shop online. One in four Danes is expected to shop more online in 2021, and e-commerce abroad by Danish consumers rose every year up to the coronavirus crisis. Therefore, further increases in e-commerce from abroad are expected in the future. Several studies indicate that products which are traded on foreign online platforms very often do not comply with EU requirements for products. Therefore, we must inform Danish consumers, so they know about the risks linked to shopping on foreign online platforms. We must make sure that, as far as possible, legislation applies for producers, importers and online platforms so that products are safe, and the products on these platforms must be inspected for illegal chemicals.

We must be close to Danes when we communicate about harmful chemicals in food, consumer products, at the workplace, or in the environment, because Danes must feel safe and confident in their everyday life without harmful chemicals. We must angle information so that we do not scare

consumers, but rather help them to the most appropriate behaviour to avoid harmful chemicals. Mapping and risk assessment of harmful chemicals in consumer products, and information campaigns about chemicals in products are all elements that must be given priority in Chemicals Initiatives 2022-2025. We must help and advise enterprises to manage chemicals. It must be easy to obtain the knowledge required to make healthy choices in everyday life, and we must constantly be better at exploiting new channels of communication where this makes most sense, e.g. by increased use of webinars.

Furthermore, of course we must take special care of the most vulnerable, i.e. children, pregnant women and their unborn babies.

Consumers in general must feel safe, and particularly pregnant women and children.

The Danish Consumer Council TÆNK Kemi is the independent watchdog for the chemicals area that the parties to the agreement agree is to be part of a consolidated consumer effort under Chemicals Initiatives 2022-2025. Therefore, work by TÆNK Kemi is to be enhanced with a grant of DKK 18.4 million over the next four years. The aim of this funding is for TÆNK Kemi to continue its good work on chemicals in consumer products. The project description 2022-25 for the Danish Consumer Council TÆNK Kemi must be approved by the parties to the agreement, and the project description is to stipulate guidelines for the work by TÆNK Kemi over the four years, including for:

- combining TÆNK Kemi's comprehensive and relevant surveys and tests of consumer goods and the Danish EPA's consumer programme,
- transferring copies of test reports from laboratory analyses to the Danish EPA,
- improving the *Kemiluppen* app, including extension with new product groups and more widespread use, and
- implementing two major information campaigns targeting consumers, each of DKK 1 mill. Proposals for campaign topics must be approved by the Ministry of Environment and submitted to the parties to the agreement for information.

3. A solid scientific foundation - reliable, relevant and competent groundwork for a responsible and fair chemicals policy

There are still huge gaps in our knowledge about the hazards of the chemicals we use, and how and where they are used. We do not know enough about the majority of the chemicals being used. Therefore we lack knowledge about the risks of using them. Fortunately, we are constantly gaining more knowledge about chemicals and how they affect us. This is partly due to immense efforts in the EU in which, through work on the two major regulations, REACH and the CLP, the chemicals we use are being identified and assessed.

A solid scientific foundation is a precondition for authorities to be able to make decisions to benefit society. Denmark is a frontrunner in forging the necessary scientific foundation for a responsible chemicals policy. Because it is important and because we can. We know that the Danish contribution in the chemicals area means more fit and healthy people and a cleaner environment. We also know that a fair chemicals policy means healthy workplaces and Danish enterprises fit for competition.

Danish knowledge must form the foundation of EU regulation. There are still huge gaps in our knowledge about how chemical substances can influence our health and the environment. Therefore, there is a need for continued research, development and knowledge-building about chemical substances, their effects, and the risks associated with their use. Among other things, new environment quality standards must be set for surface water and old environment quality standards must be reassessed. It is important to prioritise research and knowledge-building, as these provide the basis for protecting Danes and the environment against harmful chemicals and they are part of the regulatory work. Therefore, we must continue to place high priority on the Centre on Endocrine Disruptors, the

National Allergy Research Centre and research into chemical substances in food at the National Food Institute, and we must develop and optimise testing methods that can identify the harmful chemicals.

Research into chemicals, including biomonitoring, takes place at many research institutions in Denmark and in research projects that involve cooperation and co-funding outside Denmark as well, for example through the common EU research programme, Horizon, and the new Partnership for the Assessment of Risk from Chemicals (PARC) under Horizon.

The parties to the agreement agree to continue biomonitoring in the forthcoming period, and on a new initiative to

- 1) Get an overview of existing biomonitoring studies in Denmark, including an overview of which substances have been measured, and what the results show.
- 2) Synthesise knowledge from the European biomonitoring programme, HBM4EU, as it is likely that biomonitoring data from other EU Member States can be used as a good indicator for the exposure of the Danish population to chemical substances.
- 3) Recommend follow-up work to clarify the following:
 - a. Do the results imply that the authorities should follow up on specified chemical substances in order to reduce the exposure of the population to these?
 - b. Do the results imply that further biomonitoring should be initiated of specific chemical substances? If so, will the initiation of biomonitoring be included in prioritisation of work in future work programmes under the EU PARC research programme, which includes a number of Danish research institutions, including Rigshospitalet and Aarhus University.

An important precondition for all regulation, supervision and guidance on chemicals in food -is solid risk assessments based on knowledge about toxicity and exposure. Danish enterprises, consumers and authorities must have direct access to the latest research in the chemicals field in order to provide the best possible foundation to ensure the health and safety of consumers.

4. Enforcement – competent supervision and potent and fair sanctions

Transgressions of food and chemicals regulations expose people and the environment to harmful chemicals and lead to unfair competition for enterprises that comply with the regulations, including with regard to imports from countries outside the EU. Ignoring the regulations must never pay. Common international regulation globally and in the EU, and strong enforcement of the regulations is the prerequisite for a fair and responsible chemicals policy. The Chemical Inspection Service has therefore been upgraded in the past year, and with the Chemicals Initiatives 2022-2025, resources for the Chemical Inspection Service have in total been increased.

It is crucial that the regulation we implement for the chemicals area is actually complied with, and that producers and importers of chemical substances meet the requirements to know about how harmful their substances are.

Compliance with the regulations is also paramount for trade on the internet and in particular e-commerce on platforms based outside the EU, because e-commerce today constitutes a risk for consumers and exacerbates distortions in competition. Effective supervision and inspection are important because Danes should be confident that the chemicals policy we adopt also works in society. This is why we have strengthened supervision and inspection of chemicals. This is also why we are now publishing the results of inspections, so that consumers can see where the regulations are not being observed. And this is why we now block websites, if they repeatedly sell products that constitute a serious risk. Enterprises must know that ignoring the regulations can never pay. It must not be possible to obtain market leverage by evading the regulations. This applies for Danish enterprises, and

for countries inside and outside the EU whose products Denmark imports. We will not accept that Danish enterprises lose out in unequal competition in which consumers and the environment have to pay the price. Law-abiding enterprises must not be placed in a worse position because they comply with the regulations.

We will strengthen inspection where the risks are greatest, and make sure that inspection achieves the greatest impact. We will cooperate with the European supervision authorities so that supervision initiatives are coordinated widely throughout the EU.

Inspection of chemical substances in food products is included in supervision of food enterprises. Inspection of chemical substances in food products will be carried out by inspecting whether food enterprises' self-checks include relevant points on undesirable chemical substances in food products and by conducting inspection projects that analyse chemical substances in food and food contact material. Supervision and guidance of food enterprises must be validated so that regulatory compliance by Danish food enterprises is even better.

The Chemical Inspection Service must carry out consistent enforcement with emphasis on potent and fair sanctions. Potent, because ignoring the regulations must never pay. And because Danes must know that we maintain a responsible chemicals policy in Denmark. Fair, because both citizens and enterprises must know that if the regulations are violated, they will be enforced with emphasis on due process and proportionality.

The parties to the agreement will meet every year to follow up on the agreement. A short status report will be drawn up annually.