



Real effort to gain public trust

Basic research and global collaboration could mark beginning of new era

Will global collaboration and the Chemical Manufacturers Association's (CMA's) new \$100 million long-range health and environmental effects research initiative help turn the tide in the chemical industry's campaign for public trust?

This long-range initiative will include investigation of the basic mechanisms by which chemicals interact with human health and the environment. It's separate from CMA's voluntary testing of high-production volume (HPV) chemicals and separate from (but related to) the program for screening compounds for potential endocrine disruption effects.

The initial \$100 million investment will span five years.

According to Helge H. Wehmeier, President & CEO of Bayer Corp., and chairman of CMA's Board Research Committee, the health and environmental effects research initiative will contribute in a major way to knowledge, openness, mutual respect and public trust. Look at the opening of his speech June 3 before an audience of CEOs at the CMA Annual Meeting:

"My remarks are as short as my topic is important. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was 270 words and took three minutes. His job as speaker was that big ... dedicate a cemetery ... inspire the North ... win a war ... save a nation. I will aim for nine minutes.

"I have only to dedicate the beginning of a new era for the chemical industry. Although I believe that our passage from what was, to what will be, is as important to us as the Civil War was to the preservation of the United States. Because what we are working for is nothing short of the preservation of our franchise through the restoration of the public's trust in us.

"The era we are leaving began in 1962 with the publication of Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring.' That book changed everything, because the response to it was anything but silent. The chemical industry condemned it, loudly, as junk science. But our howls of protest were whimpers, compared to the public outcry against environmental impact and for new laws to stop it.

"Over the next 25 years, the chemical industry lost the trust of the people who shape popular opinion ... that drives public debate ... that ends in rules and laws ... which chemical manufacturers must obey. It is just that simple. It is just that important.

"What Thomas Jefferson said of the people, as keepers of the true powers of society, applies as much to governing a nation as regulating an industry. Jefferson said that if we think people do not know enough to act wisely, we should not resist their power to act, but give them better information to act upon. That is the essence of trust.

That is precisely what the long-range research initiative is designed to achieve. And that is precisely how it works to reverse the process that got into full swing with the publication of 'Silent Spring.'

"We have started to turn the tide in recent years, but we need to turn it completely and for good. Our long-range research will create more of the knowledge needed to ensure that health, environmental and safety regulations are scientifically sound and, therefore, rational and just ..."



Those strong words seem appropriate for what's happening. Open sharing of results and global collaboration in research efforts are key features of the initiative; with Europe and Japan expected to be significant contributors. Wehmeier foresees a "transparent governance" that will allow researchers to:

- Focus on the basic toxicological questions that are of greatest relevance to the chemical industry;
- Publish without prior approval of the sponsors;
- Avoid creating a competitive advantage for any company;
- Proceed in accordance with the highest ethical standards.

"There is no question in my mind," Wehmeier said, "that the leadership of the chemical industry understands that we do not want, we cannot abide and we shall not have ... anyone shade, steer or taint the outcomes of the research."

What a year! First the CMA Board embraces the vision of sustainable development in their enhanced Responsible Care® program (see June editorial, pg. 6), and then backs it up with long-range research of health and environmental effects.

As this new era unfolds, we can expect dialogue, controversy and debate—all healthy elements in building the bridge to public trust. It may take a decade, but the foundation is being laid.

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