

Code of Conduct

Nanotechnologies

1. Preamble

The Code of Conduct has been drawn up by the Swiss retailer's association IG DHS¹ in order to take account of the growing importance of nanotechnologies in consumer products.

The Code of Conduct defines the position of IG DHS members in respect of manufacturers and suppliers and serves as the basis for informing consumers with the aim of ensuring maximum transparency.

The members of IG DHS are actively involved in discussions with other interest groups.

The lack of specific legal rulings for nanomaterials and the uncertainty associated with the assessment of their possible risks mean that the precautionary principle needs to be applied in order to protect the health of consumers and the environment from possible harmful effects. On the other hand, the numerous potential advantages and benefits offered by nanotechnologies need to be exploited in the best possible way.

This document adopts the working definition cited in the basic report of the Swiss Action Plan on "Synthetic Nanomaterials"², according to which nanotechnology is concerned with structures between 1 and 100 nm that offer added functionality and are manufactured or manipulated in a targeted manner.

2. Obligations of IG DHS members

2.1. Personal responsibility

Product safety is the top priority. Only those products which, according to the latest scientific and technical findings, are considered to be harmless to humans, animals and the environment during manufacture and correct use, may be included in the product range.

If new findings indicate that certain materials or substances must be classified as unsuitable for use in certain areas, IG DHS members shall immediately take the necessary measures.

2.2. Procurement of information

The members of IG DHS are responsible for requesting information about nanotechnologies from their manufacturers and suppliers.

IG DHS members must actively inform themselves about current developments concerning legal rulings and the latest scientific findings concerning nanotechnologies.

¹ in collaboration with Innovationsgesellschaft mbH, St.Gallen.

² Meili C., Widmer M., Husmann F., Gehr P., Blank F., Riediker M., Schmid K., Stark W., Limbach L. 2007: Basic report on the Action Plan "Risk assessment and risk management of synthetic nanomaterials" (in German). Umwelt-Wissen, no. 0721. Federal Office for the Environment and Federal Office of Public Health, Berne. 284 pages.

If it emerges that nanotechnological components or effects have been used in products but this fact has not been communicated, the manufactures and suppliers will be proactively approached for information by IG DHS members.

2.3. Information for consumers

The retail trade is responsible for informing consumers openly about products that incorporate nanotechnology.

The retail trade shall ensure that products described as employing nanotechnologies actually contain components and/or modes of action corresponding to these technologies.

3. Requirements for manufacturers and suppliers

3.1. Company-specific requirements

The IG DHS requires manufacturers and suppliers to give appropriate consideration to, and document, the aspect of nanotechnology in their risk management.

The IG DHS requires nanospecific aspects to be taken into account in respect of occupational health and safety during production, storage and transport.

3.2. Product-specific requirements

The IG DHS requires manufacturers and suppliers to disclose and forward decision-relevant product data throughout the production and distribution chain.

For the purposes of product assessment, IG DHS members shall request the following minimum information from their manufacturers and suppliers:

- Benefit or added value of the "nano-product" compared to the conventional product
- Evidence of the nanospecific effects and/or modes of action
- Technical specifications (physical-chemical data, e.g. size, structure, etc.)
- Risk potential for humans, animals and the environment (toxicology, ecotoxicology, degradability, disposal, etc.)

Any new health-related or environmentally relevant findings on products that come to light must be communicated quickly and openly by manufacturers and suppliers to the respective IG DHS members.

4. Guarantee

The following IG DHS members undertake to implement this Code of Conduct:

