



Businesses asked to declare use of nanomaterials

[25.06.2009]

The Norwegian Pollution Control Authority (SFT) establishes a scheme for Norwegian businesses to report their use of nanomaterials in chemical products. This is in line with recommendations from the Norwegian Board of Technology.

– So far, we have lacked oversight of nanomaterials on the Norwegian market. The SFT's initiative will enable the protection of workers, consumers and the environment, says Tore Tennøe, director at the Board of Technology.

Information about nanomaterials in chemical products will be incorporated as a separate topic in declarations to the Norwegian Product Register, administered by the SFT.

– The Product Register is a promising tool towards safe handling of nanomaterials. If a nanomaterial is identified as problematic, the Register will enable us to identify where it is being used and take proper action, says Tennøe.

A progressive initiative

– The Product Register's initiative promises to be an example even internationally, says Tennøe. He refers to the EU REACH-regulation which includes a commitment to register chemical substances, and which in principle also applies to nanomaterials. However, this targets substances as they are produced or imported. The new initiative will supplement REACH with a focus on how substances are marketed and used in real life – in the form of chemical products.

Certain challenges remain, however, especially concerning what to declare.

Anything to declare?

– The scheme is not strictly mandatory. This is an obvious weakness, though it has its reasons, says Tennøe.

First, it is unclear what should be regarded a nanomaterial. One example is nanoparticles manufactured from natural minerals. A company can then assume that the nanoparticles are equal to the mother substance, and do not reward special attention or a new entry to the Product Register.

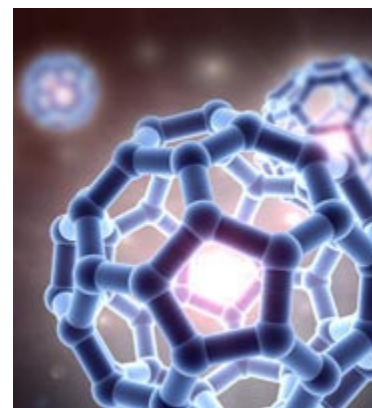
– The reality may be that the particle nature implies new properties, but we fear that these may pass unnoticed, Tennøe explains.

A legal commitment to declare a product arises only if a significant risk has been identified. Few nanomaterials will qualify under this criterion in the short term.

– This does not mean an absence of risk, but rather that there are so many knowledge gaps with respect to the behaviour and effects of nanoparticles, that they may not attract the attention they deserve, Tennøe warns.

Limitations in REACH

Tennøe again looks to REACH to explain these weaknesses and possible solutions. – The Norwegian initiative depends heavily on REACH. It is REACH



C60-fulleren, et aktuelt nanoprodukt
Foto: 3Dmedia.com

that sets the criteria for risk assessment, and thereby for collecting evidence. If a nanoparticle is picked up by risk assessment, this can generate the knowledge we need to handle them safely, including whether they reward an entry in the product registry.

Numerous reports have pointed to limitations in REACH with respect to nanoparticles, especially whether such particles will be identified as new substances and thus trigger risk assessment. Further, the commitments under REACH apply to substances produced or imported above a threshold of one ton. – Such mass-based thresholds might not be appropriate, warns Tennøe.

The Norwegian Board of Tehcnology advocates a mandatory scheme as soon as it is feasible. However, there are good reasons for industry to embrace the initiative right away. – The Product Register has proved a good partner for industry to monitor activities and help them handle products safely, says Tennøe.

To improve success, the Board of Technology recommends that the SFT signals already now an intention that the scheme will be mandatory. Further, the scheme should be accompanied by guidelines and advice. In addition it is necessary to speed up the efforts to generate basic knowledge about nanoparticles to learn how they should be handled.

Recommendations from the Board of Technology

In 2008 the Norwegian Board of Technology established an [expert group](#) to identify steps to improve knowledge and control of nanomaterials. An unofficial excerpt of the report, including recommendations from the expert group, can be seen [here](#).

See the entire report, in Norwegian: [Nanomaterialer, risiko og regulering](#).

Read more about [The Product Registry at the SFT's site](#).

Read more about REACH and nanomaterials in this [note](#) from the EU Comission.

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