

Developing a New Zealand Strategy for Emerging Contaminants Issues

Workshop : 13th October 2009

Landcare Research, Plant and Food Research, ESR, SCION

Our society is developing and using a multitude of chemicals that play a role in maintaining our lifestyle. A wide range of these new chemicals are persistent and can enter the environment from a variety of sources such as municipal sewage treatment plants and non-point sources like agricultural and storm water runoffs. Therefore, wildlife and humans can be exposed to a broad range of mixtures of contaminants. The challenge is to understand and manage the potential risks of these chemicals, and combinations of chemicals, to our unique ecosystems while maximising the intended positive outcomes of their use.

This workshop aimed at raising the issue around the risk of new emerging contaminants such as endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs). Key experts from the USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand provided international and local perspectives of the current state of the research and the PowerPoint presentations can be accessed at http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/news/event_details.asp?Ev_ID=999

The intention at this workshop was to set a platform from which to develop a cohesive research and policy strategy on emerging contaminants for New Zealand. Some of the key points that were discussed were the establishment of a Special Interest Group (SIG) on emerging contaminants and opportunities for international research collaboration and information-sharing partnerships with UK and Australian scientists.

The workshop was jointly organised and sponsored by ESR, Landcare Research, Plant and Food Research and Scion.

Attendance

Attendees included representatives for the following regional councils
Auckland, Canterbury, Wellington, Hawkes Bay, Otago, Taranaki.

Other attendees included

AGCARM, Assure Quality, DoC, ERMA, Federated Farmers, Food Safety Authority, Federated Farmers, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, NIWA, Opus Consultants, Sustainability Council, Zespri, Universities of Otago, Canterbury and Massey.

Invitations were sent to all regional councils and the SWIM group plus a wide range of stakeholders including Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, DairyNZ Fonterra, Iwi, Water companies, Environmental consultancies, Agricultural and Forestry research and industry groups, MFAT and the Health sector. A high level of interest was noted - and those who could not attend expressed interest in the issue and in updates on research progress for potential future involvement.

Next Steps

A number of initiatives to further NZ-based investigation of emerging contaminants issues at regional and national level are in progress. Collaboration with Australia, UK and USA is taking place at a science level and conferences in 2010 will focus on this issue and present further opportunities to work together.

For more information

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