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Industry demonstrates responsibility with new risk management initiatives

**Get a grip on nanotechnology risks with voluntary measures:
Safety standard and Code of Conduct secure consumer acceptance**

St. Gallen, Switzerland. Nanotechnology will increasingly be used in many industries. Many manufacturing processes, packaging devices and consumer products can no longer be thought of without their help. With this development come increased requirements for the protection of workers, consumers and the environment against the potential risks of nanomaterials. At the same time there are few legal regulations that could serve as a guideline for companies. At a press conference in the context of the 4th NanoRegulation Conference from September 16-17 in St.Gallen, representatives from industry and retailing presented new approaches for the handling of those risks. The focus was on industry responsibility and voluntary measures.

As additives in food and packaging products, as tissue in textiles or as an appliance in production processes: the beneficial properties of nanomaterials are being used already today and penetrate the daily life and workplace across the population. Due to a lack of scientific data on the dangerousness of such substances, there are hardly any established legal standards or regulations for activities in this area.

Regulation still at the outset

As Dr. Christoph Meili, CEO of the Innovation Society Ltd. and co-organiser of the NanoRegulation Conference pointed out, the discussion surrounding regulation of nanotechnologies is still at an early stage. On the one hand, there are intensive efforts to build the scientific basis that is indispensable for legislative actions. On the other hand, even the basic question of shared definitions are not resolved. The activities are only isolated and selective and there is little co-ordination on the international level.

For companies producing and selling nanomaterials it is a very difficult situation because the uncertain legal framework leads to a variety of liability and reputation risks. Responsible companies and associations therefore do not want to wait any longer for official rules and regulations and instead want to develop their own standards on a voluntary and responsible basis. In the context of the 4th International NanoRegulation Conference these approaches were discussed with international representatives of regulators and consumer groups.

Worldwide first Code of Conduct for Retailers

According to Dr. Thomas Gude from the Swiss Retailer's Association (IG DHS), those considerations were key to the decision to develop the first Code of Conduct worldwide for nanomaterials in consumer products. With this document Charles Vögele, Coop, Denner, Migros and Manor committed themselves to far-reaching transparency towards the consumers. All suppliers of those companies, that jointly represent more than 50% of the country's retailing turnover, have to disclose their use of nanomaterials and provide evidence of their safety and harmlessness. For Gude, "this is a decisive step in the direction of improved public acceptance of nanotechnology and is exemplary for other industries". Ultimately, many industrial products end up on the shelves of retailers.

Worldwide first Nano Risk Management Standard with new foundations

This view is shared by Gerhard Klein, Head of Risk Management at TÜV SÜD Industrie Service GmbH. More and more companies want to have a good overview of their processes and make sure that the nanomaterials used by the company do not pose a threat to workers, consumers or the environment. With a risk management and monitoring system specifically developed for

nanotechnology by TÜV SÜD and the Innovation Society, organisations like producers, manufacturers and retailers now have a suitable instrument at their disposal. Also in the context of the NanoRegulation Conference, the new certification foundations for this CENARIOS® standard were presented. As Klein stated, "with the decision to apply for such a certificate, suppliers can communicate their responsible action to the outside world and fulfil the requirements of the IG DHS Code of Conduct".

NanoRegulation Conference as a platform for industry and authorities

The NanoRegulation Conference is held for the fourth time in the context of the 6th NanoEurope Fair and Conference and the focus this year is on the topic of "Voluntary Measures in Nano Risk Governance". In addition to the IG DHS Code of Conduct and the CENARIOS® standard, many related initiatives from Switzerland, Europe and the U.S. will be presented. Decision-makers from companies, associations, authorities and consumer groups discussed ways to better co-ordinate those activities on an international level in order to lay the basis for a sustainable and effective regulation of nanotechnology related risks.

Further information on the NanoRegulation conference can be found under www.nanoeurope.com => English => Congress => NanoRegulation

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