

Chemical Watch

US EPA says downstream users are critical to TSCA reform

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Downstream users play an important role in the government's efforts to revise its policies related to chemical safety, Bob Sussman, the Environmental Protection Agency's senior policy counsel said to a group of business and NGO leaders who met in Washington yesterday.

Downstream companies "occupy a unique position at the end of the value chain, where the rubber meets the road," Mr Sussman told the meeting participants. "Your voice is critical. . We want to encourage you to stay in the game and to help shape the end product," he said, referring to the draft documents being discussed in Congress to revise the Toxic Substances and Control Act (TSCA) (CW 16 April 2010).

Mr Sussman made his remarks at Business and NGO Forum on Safer Chemicals Policy Reform, a two-day meeting hosted by the Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families Coalition, the Business and NGO Working Group, and the American Sustainable Business Council. The forum was held as the "first step to recognise the needs of downstream users," according to the organisers.

"We are fortunate that we have had a robust discussion in the White House" about chemical policy reform, he said. "I think the President and the White House are very supportive of TSCA reform and we have agreement on a set of principles that will serve us well," he added.

Mr Sussman also reiterated for the group the guiding principles for TSCA reform outlined by EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson last September (CW 30 September 2009). He added that "industry should contribute its fair share" of the costs needed to implement the new requirements.

The agency has been "stymied" by confidential business information (CBI) policies, he said, adding that "EPA thinks this will be a part of TSCA reauthorisation."

"The jury is still out on how well REACH is functioning on a day-to-day basis," Mr Sussman continued. Nonetheless, the principles underlying REACH and the EPA's vision for TSCA reform are similar, he said. "As Congress drafts a new law I think there will be a lot of interest in REACH . and how we can make our law nimble," he added.

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