



BizNGO.ORG

FOR SAFER CHEMICALS AND SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

The Business-NGO Working Group promotes the creation and adoption of safer chemicals and sustainable materials in a way that supports market transitions to a healthy economy, healthy environment, and healthy people.

About the Business-NGO Working Group



I have been a big proponent of cross-sector dialogue for years and believe that when businesses, NGOs and governmental agencies can work together, more innovative and creative solutions can emerge. My pet peeve with such dialogues is that they often are all talk and no action... With a current focus on implementation and policy reform, the BizNGO is a group worth paying attention to.

Deborah Fleisher
Triple Pundit
December 2009

The Business-NGO Working Group (BizNGO) is a unique collaboration of representatives from leading companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Launched in 2006 by Clean Production Action (www.cleanproduction.org), BizNGO brings leaders from the business and advocacy communities together to collaborate in promoting the use of safer chemicals in our economy. The BizNGO is about more than merely exchanging ideas—it is a working group that delivers products.

Company participants in BizNGO include downstream users of chemicals from the electronics, health care, retail, buildings and cleaning product sectors and the group's representation continues to expand. NGO participants are among the leading market-based campaign groups, including Health Care Without Harm, Electronics Take Back Coalition, Healthy Building Network and the Investor Environmental Health Network.

What Makes BizNGO Unique

Business leaders greatly value dialoguing with NGOs. As Michael Passoff, Senior Program Director for As You Sow stated: "NGO's such as Clean Production Action and the BizNGO group have been useful in working cooperatively with corporations to set benchmarks and policies that are more realistic based on both the current science and the risk to shareholders.... In fact, I would say that the NGOs are doing a better job of pointing companies to safer products than the industry trade associations are."

The Working Group gives us the tools to make more informed substitution choices and is a safe haven where we can have a dialogue and begin to implement these things in our supply chain.

Roger McFadden
Vice President, Senior Scientist, Staples

NGOs are often at the forefront of identifying the next chemical of concern. The business-NGO dialogue helps companies understand the trends in human and environmental health concerns with chemicals and the rationale for these concerns—providing manufacturers

with an early warning process. The cross sectoral representation of NGO groups working on market campaigns allows business representatives to clearly understand the priorities of the environmental health movement in their work to advance safer chemicals and products in the economy.

In return the NGO participants value the insights that companies have on the challenges and opportunities that businesses face in demanding more information from their supply chain and incorporating safer chemicals and materials into their products. This brings much value added to the work of both companies and the advocacy community.

The working group also facilitates rich business-to-business conversations across industry sectors. BizNGO representation ranges from chemical formulators to original equipment manufacturers to institutional purchasers. Such B2B communication of chemical-level information down the supply chain to article manufacturers and institutional buyers is critical for making informed decisions on the health and environmental impacts of the products used by consumers. In particular BizNGO has been active in voicing the needs of downstream users in chemicals policy initiatives at the state and federal levels.

The BizNGO focus on sustainable materials as well as chemicals and policy covers a wide remit that does not exist elsewhere. This cross-fertilization of ideas and project work plus our burgeoning work to advance effective public policy makes us unique from other groups.



BizNGO Impact **The Guiding Principles** **for Chemicals Policy**

In 2008, we released the *BizNGO Guiding Principles for Chemicals Policy*—a set of aspirational principles designed to proactively guide internal business decisions on how to integrate safer chemicals into their products

as well as company support for government policy initiatives that advance safer chemicals in the economy. To date 22 businesses and health care organizations have endorsed the principles, including: Catholic Healthcare West, Construction Specialties, Hewlett Packard, Kaiser Permanente, Method, Novation, Premier, Seventh Generation, Staples and Whole Foods Market. The group is now finalizing a “how-to guide” to help companies chart success in implementing the principles. This Implementation Guide specifies best practices for product manufacturers and purchasers and gives clear benchmarks for charting progress over time.



Bio-based Specifications **for Food Service Ware**

In 2009, the BizNGO co-launched the “BioSpecs”—environmentally preferable purchasing specifications for biobased and compostable food service ware—with the Sustainable Biomaterials Collaborative.

The goal of the BioSpecs

is to better explain why food service ware produced from biobased polymers are not necessarily “green” unless they embody other sustainability criteria. These BioSpecs were the result of two years of intense collaboration—we surveyed manufacturers of bio-based products, vetted the criteria with manufacturers and users and launched the beta version of the BioSpecs at the International Biopolymers Symposium in 2009. The Sustainable Biomaterials Collaborative is now using the BioSpecs to identify environmentally preferable food service ware to inform purchasing decisions by hospitals, governments and retailers such as Whole Foods. The BizNGO is currently working on defining the criteria for sustainable materials with a specific focus on developing specifications for sustainable plastics.



Representing the voice **of Down Stream Users** **in federal and state** **chemicals policy reform**

Beginning in 2010, the BizNGO extended the voice of downstream users to government policy initiatives—including the California Green Chemistry Initiative and reform of the federal Toxic

Substances Control Act (TSCA). BizNGO submitted comments on both federal and state chemicals reform initiatives. BizNGO participants presented at Congressional briefings and hearings, and met with members of Congress and the U.S. EPA. The current work to reform TSCA allowed BizNGO to amplify the voice of downstream users of chemicals who often lack information about chemicals in their products. BizNGO took an important strategic decision to focus on: the lack of chemical ingredient disclosure across the supply chain, the need for comprehensive hazard data as well as the need for safer alternatives.

Our efforts were successful in getting language on chemical ingredient disclosure across the supply change written into House Bill HR 5820—The Toxic Chemicals Safety Act of 2010. Our publications showed how leveling the playing

field by requiring existing chemicals to meet the same testing requirements as new chemicals could lower business expenses and risk; increase trust among consumers, employees, communities and investors; and improve transparency throughout the supply chain.

As Howard Williams of Construction Specialties testified on July 29, 2010 at the House Hearing on HR 5820: "Identifying the chemical composition of our products is a costly and time-consuming process."... Although this is

"a profitable and responsible thing to do," he explained, gathering ingredient information "needlessly delays product development and places an indirect cost burden on the consumer."

Similarly in California, BizNGO submitted written and oral comments to ensure the California Green Chemistry Initiative establishes a public input section on alternatives assessment and ensures the use of comparative hazard assessment tools to better identify safer substitutes for hazardous chemicals.

Downstream users play an important role in the government's efforts to revise its policies related to chemical safety.... You occupy a unique position at the end of the value chain, where the rubber meets the road. Your voice is critical. We want to encourage you to stay in the game and to help shape the end product.

Bob Sussman, Senior Policy Counsel, U.S. EPA
referring to the draft documents being discussed in Congress to revise TSCA



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