Ref: 71/5030/349

MONSANTO CITES ACTIONS TAKEN ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Monsanto, one of the world's largest producers of chemicals, plastics and man-made fibres, said today it was well aware of concern over possible environmental contamination by polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) an industrial chemical made by the company and others in Europe. The company began its own research programme in 1968 to properly identify and measure PCB in the environment. Steps have been taken to strictly control use of the chemical and where control is not possible to replace its use with other materials.

H. Norbert Dahlstrom, director of Monsanto's organic chemicals operations in Europe said : "We have and will continue to co-operate fully with governmental agencies investigating this problem and work closely with our customers. Monsanto has spent more than £400,000 in assisting with the identification of PCB's, determining where industrial losses occur; effectively monitoring their use and searching for substitute products where needed."

MONSANTO CITES ACTIONS TAKEN ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Monsanto's PCB programme was initially directed at proper identification and measurement of PCB in the environment, and throughout close co-operation has been maintained with the appropriate Government bodies. In the United Kingdom the company has established close liaison with the Central Scientific Unit for Environmental Pollution; the Natural Environment Research Council and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The specific results of Monsanto's work have been discussed and reviewed with officials of the Fisheries Laboratory, the Infestation Control Laboratory and the Monks Wood Experimental Station.

From March 1, 1971, Monsanto withdrew sales of PCB products in the United Kingdom to non-controllable applications. These are applications where it is not realistically possible to prevent leakage into the environment either as a result of the nature of processing techniques and end uses or diversity of usage. Such applications include paints, laquers, resins and oil additivies. For other uses, such as fire-resistant hydraulic fluids, where PCB cannot be strictly controlled, Monsanto has produced reformulated fluids using other fire resistant ingredients.

MONSANTO CITES ACTIONS TAKEN ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

The company has taken decisive action based on evidence that PCB is a persistent chemical and would continue to accumulate in the environment. Monsanto has also closely examined its PCB manufacturing units and installed new pollution abatement devices to ~~ensure negligible loss of PCB into~~ protect the environment.

PCB users have been alerted to the potential problem of environmental contamination and technical assistance has been offered to ensure their process is fully controlled to prevent leakage into the environment. PCB's can be disposed of by special high temperature incinerators which break down PCB's into harmless materials and this service which extends to actual collection of PCB wastes from the users' plant is now provided by Monsanto ~~free of charge~~ to all PCB users in the United Kingdom.

The principal market for PCB is in the electrical industry where the chemical performs a vital function as a cooling and heat transfer fluid used in enclosed systems. In this use PCB is completely sealed in metal containers or used in enclosed systems. It replaces combustible oil products which have, on many occasions, exploded and burned, causing death and injury to human life.

MONSANTO CITES ACTIONS TAKEN ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Safety regulations require the use of non-flammable fluids in certain electrical equipment and Monsanto intends to continue selling PCB for "closed systems". With rigid control over where the product goes, how it is handled and disposed of, the company believes the safety functions of the product can continue to serve society and the environment can be protected.

For further information
contact Steve Chantrell
01-222 5678