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Subject: Yeasts Discovered that Decompose PCB

In a recent report (MM-72-60) a description of MITI's ban on further use of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) by Japanese industry was given. Today the Japan Times reported that Professor Yoshio Sakagami of the Tokyo Institute of Technology has discovered two yeast-like "bugs" which decompose PCB. The two yeasts are:

1) Rhodotorula - a red yeast found in the soil in Ibaraki Prefecture

2) Pityrosporum - found in the soil of Higashi-Murayama.

Professor Sakagami has conducted tests on more than 1000 micro-organisms collected from all over Japan. In his experiments, he put the yeasts in solutions containing 2500 ppm of PCB and after 1 week found that the Rhodotorula had decomposed 40% of the PCB and the Pityrosporum about 30%.

The article states that the mechanism is as yet unknown as are the decomposition products. This could possibly allow MITI to reverse its ban if the decomposition products prove to be harmless.

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MJM/tn

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