

The environmental quality objective and the nine interim targets

One of 16 environmental quality objectives

A non-toxic environment is one of 16 environmental quality objectives adopted by the Swedish Parliament. The Swedish Chemicals Inspectorate is the responsible agency for this objective. Environmental quality objectives define the aim of the environmental work, while interim targets indicate scope and time perspectives for concrete environmental measures. A progress report is to be submitted to the Parliament every year.

A Non-Toxic Environment - the environmental quality objective

"The environment must be free from man-made or extracted compounds and metals that represent a threat to human health or biological diversity."

The outcome within a generation for this environmental quality objective should include the following:

- The concentrations of substances that naturally occur in the environment are close to the background concentrations.
- The levels of foreign substances in the environment are close to zero and their impact on the ecosystems are negligible.
- All fish in the seas, lakes and watercourses in Sweden are fit for human consumption with regard to the contents of foreign substances.
- Overall exposure in the working environment, the natural environment and the indoor environment to particularly dangerous substances is close to zero and, as regards other chemical substances, to levels that are not harmful to human health.
- Polluted areas have been investigated and cleaned up where necessary.

Interim targets for A Non-Toxic Environment

Knowledge and information

Interim target 1

By 2010 data will be available on the properties of all deliberately manufactured or extracted chemical substances handled on the market.

For substances handled in larger volumes and for other substances which, for example after initial general tests, are assessed as being particularly dangerous, information on their properties will be available earlier than 2010. The same information requirements will apply to both new and existing substances.

In addition, by 2020 data will as far as possible be available on the properties of all unintentionally produced and extracted chemical substances.

Interim target 2

By 2010 finished products will carry health and environmental information on any dangerous substances they contain.

Phase-out of particularly hazardous substances

Interim target 3

Newly manufactured finished products will as far as possible be free from:

- new organic substances that are persistent and bioaccumulating, new substances that are carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic, and mercury, as soon as possible, but no later than 2007;
- other carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic substances, and endocrine disrupting substances or highly allergenic substances by 2010, if the products that contain them are intended to be used in such a way that they will enter natural cycles;
- other organic substances that are persistent and bioaccumulating, and cadmium and lead, by 2010.

Nor will these substances be used in production processes unless the company can prove that human health and the environment will not be harmed. Already available finished products containing substances with the properties listed above, or mercury, cadmium or lead, will be handled in such a way that the substances in question are not released to the environment.

The spread to Sweden by air or water of substances covered by this interim target will decrease continuously.

This interim target applies to substances that are man-made or extracted from the natural environment. It also applies to substances giving rise to substances with the above properties, including those formed unintentionally.

Risk reduction

Interim target 4

Health and environmental risks associated with the manufacture and use of chemical substances will be reduced continuously up to 2010, as measured by indicators and ratios to be established by the competent authorities. Over the same period, the occurrence and use of chemical substances which impede recycling of materials will decrease. This target applies to substances not covered by interim target 3.

Environmental quality indicators

Interim target 5

By 2010 guideline values will be established by the competent authorities for at least 100 selected chemical substances not covered by interim target 3.

Polluted areas

Interim target 6

Studies will have been carried out and, where necessary, appropriate action will have been taken by the end of 2010 at all contaminated sites that pose an acute risk on direct exposure, and at contaminated sites that threaten important water sources or valuable natural environments, today or in the near future.

Interim target 7

Between 2005 and 2010, measures will be implemented at a sufficiently large portion of the prioritized contaminated sites to ensure that the environmental problem as a whole can be solved by 2050 at the latest.

Dioxins in food

Interim target 8

By 2010 clear action programmes will have been established to bring about a continuous decrease in levels in food of dioxins harmful to humans.

Cadmium

Interim target 9

By 2015 the dietary and occupational exposure of the population to cadmium will be at a level that is safe from a long-term public health point of view.