

# Regulation Alone May Not Get Companies to Switch to “Safer” Chemicals



One way to drive change in workplaces is through the imposition of requirements through the OHS and other laws. But regulation may not always be the best or most effective way to get companies to adopt new approaches.

For example, [REACH](#), the Regulation for Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals, is a European Union (EU) law that's designed to streamline and improve the regulation of chemicals in Europe.

One of the impacts of this regulation is that it's driving industry to find and use substitutes for hazardous chemicals, according to [a new study](#) conducted by researchers from the University of Massachusetts, Lowell Centre for Sustainable Production. The goal of the study, which was commissioned by the [European Chemicals Agency](#) (ECHA), was to identify specific priorities that ECHA and other public authorities could support to advance substitution programs and practices among members of the EU.

The study found, among other things, that although REACH was a particularly key driver of substitution for hazardous chemicals, product safety regulations, OHS laws and market pressures were also important drivers. But regulatory requirements alone may be insufficient to ensure that

effective substitution occurs.

To accelerate [identifying very hazardous substances and substituting them with safer alternatives](#), the study recommends improving the analysis of safer alternatives and education on substitution, as well as stimulating collaboration within supply chains.

Specifically, the researchers recommend:

- Expanding government 'green' procurement programs to include chemical substitution in addition to addressing other important sustainability issues. For example, ECHA could explore the development of a 'safer chemical ingredient' listing program utilizing REACH data and third party certification to identify safer alternatives for different functional classes of chemicals
- Develop networks of experts ' academics, consultants, and government research institutes ' to support government authorities and industry in both the assessment and adoption of safer substitutes.

There are many reasons why companies should identify and switch to safer alternatives to any hazardous chemicals that their workers may use or be exposed to in the workplace, including protecting worker health and safety, creating safer products for the environment and consumers, and reducing costs.

Learn how you can reduce workers' exposure to hazardous chemicals by taking [seven steps to switch to safer chemicals](#).