

## **Introduction**

Good Morning to all of you.

Today, this conference focuses on policy issues in relation to endocrine disruptors.

## **Something is going on with our hormones**

40 percent of the young Danish men have a low semen quality, many women have difficulties getting pregnant and up to 8 percent of the Danish children are now conceived through assisted fertilisation.

Moreover, an increasing amount of baby boys are born with genital malformations, girls develop breasts one year earlier than they did 15 years ago, and in Denmark we have one of the highest incidences of testicular cancer in the world.

We also face a significant increase in lifestyle diseases as obesity and diabetes.

All over Europe and in most of the western world we see similar trends – and the alarming message is that scientists point to the exposure to endocrine disruptors as one plausible cause.

## **Endocrine disruptors disturb foetal development**

They point to pregnancy and the exposure of the foetus in the womb as the most sensitive period – even impacting the next generations.

The public is concerned – just as scientists and politicians are.

All this must be taken very seriously.

## **Adverse effects in animals and humans**

We have seen serious reproductive effects in wild life animals and in laboratory animals exposed to endocrine disruptors. So why shouldn't the same happen in humans?

We have already seen tragic consequences of endocrine disruption in humans – after use of the pharmaceutical DES and the Seveso accident.

In Denmark we investigated greenhouse workers exposed to pesticides - some of them known as endocrine disruptors in animals - during very early pregnancy. We have now followed the children for 11 years.

And there were signs of endocrine disturbances:

- baby boys born with reproductive malformations
- boys at school age had smaller genitals
- and earlier breast development was seen in girls.

## **What have we achieved?**

Several global, regional and local policy actions have already been initiated to address this issue. During the last decade the activities under the current EU strategy on endocrine disruptors have given us a wealth of new insight.

### **Combination effects – tiny amounts everyday pile up**

Very important, we have learned that combined exposure to endocrine disruptors may lead to serious reproductive effects. And this even for doses that normally are considered safe for the single chemicals.

Danish studies of 2 year-olds and pregnant women have recently showed that real life exposure to a combination of endocrine disruptors from our daily life activities may constitute a health risk.

### **The EU must address challenges on endocrine disruptors**

It's obvious for the Presidency that there is a need to reduce the exposure of endocrine disruptors to human health and environment.

And for a proper risk assessment of chemicals, we should also take the combined exposure to endocrine disruptors into consideration.

### **Other challenges and green economy**

I'm fully aware that these days we must also face other challenges – not least the economical crisis. However, the cost of inaction in relation to endocrine disruptors may be very serious in the long term.

An obvious element in the Danish Presidency work towards a greener economy is protection of human health and environment against the use of problematic chemical substances.

In the global competition it's imperative that the European Union is on the foreside with sustainable use of chemicals.

Therefore, I was very happy for the support from my colleagues at the informal environment ministers meeting in April where we agreed that there is still work to do in relation to endocrine disruptors and combinations effects.

From my point of view our new insight calls for a revised strategy for endocrine disruptors that must be carefully synchronized with the 7th Environment Action Programme so that activities are firmly focused towards reaching the goal: reducing exposure to endocrine disruptors.

### **Conclusion**

Already now we have evidence to conclude that endocrine disruptors should be taken just as serious as other substances of very high concern, like carcinogens and PBTs (persistent, bio-accumulating and toxic substances).

I therefore urge the European Commission to make a new strategy for how to act cost-effectively in order to reduce human and environmental exposure to endocrine disruptors.

Further, I call for YOUR active support:

- that you as responsible industry evaluate the chemicals for endocrine disrupting potential before marketing
- that you as regulators include the new knowledge in the management of endocrine disrupting chemicals immediately
- and that you as NGO's insist on our constant attention to this challenge.

Have a good day.