

Wrap Up and Closing Keynote

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Mainstreaming of green chemistry is happening. The participation of many large corporations in the GC3 Innovators Roundtable is not just an intellectual exercise. There is a remarkable amount of activity throughout the supply chain.

To advance green chemistry, government needs to both “push” and “pull.” At the federal level, push is needed to reform TSCA. As an example of such a push, Clean Air Act regulations on ozone depletion effectively pushed corporations to innovate new products. As an example of “pull” activities, the EPA has identified a list of priority chemicals and is in the process of conducting risk assessments on them. The first reports on TCE, methylene chloride, and NMP will be completed this summer. EPA will work with companies to identify safer alternatives to these chemicals.

Pull is also coming from consumers who are demanding safe products. Retailers are working to meet this demand. EPA is supporting this pull through the Design for Environment program, which identifies products that contain safer chemicals. Interest in the DfE program is increasing. The EPA is working to design a new DfE label to better communicate the intent of the program to consumers.

In addition, EPA has created a safer ingredient list of 650 chemicals. It would like to add chemicals to this list but needs the help of the private sector to provide dossiers so that additional chemicals can be screened against the criteria and added.

The EPA is also working to identify the characteristics of a robust ecolabel. These criteria are outlined in EPA’s Green Guides. It is looking for a third party to evaluate existing ecolabels against these characteristics. Ecolabels that meet these criteria will be included on governmental preferred purchasing lists.

It is important that the green chemistry movement not get caught up on how to brand itself. The term “safe products” may translate better as a message than the term “green chemistry.” In addition, green chemistry has a significant role to play in addressing climate change. Those in climate change conversations see green chemistry as outside of the discussion. But addressing climate change is a green chemistry challenge and when thinking about how to mainstream green chemistry it is important to connect it to this work.

The green chemistry community has made tremendous progress. The diversity of stakeholders participating in the GC3 Roundtable indicates that it is not a fringe group. In fact, it is in the mainstream and is well poised to solve important global problems.