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Micropollutants in water: thoughts on regulation

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Introduction

- **Micropollutants present many challenges – not least as much is not understood – they are ‘emerging’**
- **“Emerging pollutants” in what way?**
 - In understanding of sources, presence and pathways in the environment
 - In understanding of impacts (short, long-term) (acute, chronic), etc.
 - In entering the regulatory system

EU regulatory framework

- **Quality objectives (do what is needed to meet these)**
- **Product controls:**
 - Product licenses (stopping some products)
 - Market restrictions on products (controlling use)
 - Product quality (substances in products)
- **Emission controls**

Quality objectives: limits

- **EU water law now has two broad quality approaches:**
 - Ecological objectives (GES) – so address anything that affects this (incl. Substances)
 - Specific chemical standards (EQSD, GWD, etc.)
- **GES – hard to demonstrate micropollutants affect this**
- **EQS – current directives cover limited number of substances:**
 - Current debate on a ‘watch list’ of 10 substances shows difficulties of a long list
 - Requirement to monitor and/or assess attractive, but is costly

Product controls

- **REACH/CLP has the basis to assess and control substances covered within their scope**
- **Pesticide controls available – more scope for use**
- **Where alternatives available, take a precautionary approach to substitution principles (e.g. Cosmetics)**
- **Still many substances for which environmental testing not in place, but which are deliberately put into the environment – pharmaceuticals (human, veterinary)**

Emission controls: limits

- **Controls either:**
 - On limited number of specific pollutants
 - Framed so could catch more pollutants (e.g. IED), but number in permit conditions is limited
- **For micropollutants, problems for defining emission limits:**
 - Numbers are small (presents practical limits)
 - Determining numbers based on justified analysis

Final remarks

- **Is a comprehensive ‘regulatory’ framework for micropollutants possible?**
- **Or is there is regulatory landscape with ‘holes’**
- **Closing some gaps would address some problems, but far from all substances**