

## Legislation

### EC to cut nitrates contamination in "vulnerable zones"

The European Commission has issued a draft Directive to protect surface and groundwaters in "vulnerable zones" from contamination by direct or indirect nitrates inputs.

The proposal would oblige member states to designate vulnerable zones within two years of the Directive's adoption. All land draining directly or indirectly into waters meeting a number of criteria, if no remedial action was taken, would have to be designated.

The criteria are surface waters intended for drinking which "could" contain more than 50mg/l of nitrates, groundwaters for drinking which "contain" or "could contain" over 50mg/l nitrate and all surface waters "which are found to be eutrophic or which in a short time may become eutrophic" if no action is taken. The 50mg/l standard is identical to that in the 1980 Directive on drinking water and is an absolute standard.

A series of measures would have to be taken within four years to limit discharges of nitrates into vulnerable zones. Applications of livestock manure could not exceed amounts produced by a prescribed maximum number of animals per hectare. Provision is made for applications to Brussels for longer compliance periods "where special circumstances" require.

Member states would also have to introduce rules specifying periods when application of livestock manures is banned and conditions in which it is restricted, laying down separation distances between watercourses and manure spreading areas and imposing construction and capacity standards for manure stores.

For applications of inorganic fertilisers, member states would have to set maximum application rates based on nitrogen uptake by specific crops amounts of nitrogen in soils. The rules would also have to specify periods when fertiliser applications are banned.

**From: ENDS Report, March 1989.**

### Europe to control sea outfalls

The European Commission (EC) is to issue draft legislation setting minimum treatment standards for sewage effluent. The proposal is expected to specify that sewage works serving a population equivalent of 2,000 or more and discharging into fresh waters should be subject to settlement and biological treatment or its equivalent. The same would apply to discharges into especially sensitive areas, which are likely to be defined at EC level. These would probably have to have some form of tertiary treatment, including nutrient removal. All member states are likely to be obliged to draw up programmes to meet these requirements. A compliance deadline of the year 2,000 is likely to be proposed.

The European Commission is believed to be considering designating the entire North Sea coast as a sensitive area. Denmark, West Germany, Belgium and probably the Netherlands may support such a proposal, but the United Kingdom can be expected to object strongly.

Another key issue is whether the Commission will attempt to define discharge as well as treatment standards. Discharge limits would help to achieve a more complete harmonisation. Negotiations, which are certain to be difficult, would be made more complicated by matters such as the sampling, analysis and compliance regimes as well as the numerical values themselves.

**From: ENDS Report, March 1989**

### More dangerous substances listed

The European parliament has adopted a draft Directive seeking to add 1,2 dichloroethane (EDC), trichlorobenzene (TCB), trichloroethylene (TRI) and perchloroethylene (PER), to a list of 17 dangerous substances contained in a 1986 Directive. EDC is an important intermediate substance used in the manufacture of plastics in Europe's 34 manufacturing plants. The chemical is toxic and has been shown to have a carcinogenic and mutagenic effect when taken orally. TCB is an

organo-chlorine compound used in the textile industry. It is bioaccumulative, toxic and persistent.

The other two chemicals, TRI and PER, are not as dangerous and were the major sticking point when ministers discussed the draft package of measures in early March. Nevertheless, TRI and PER, used in dry-cleaning and as a degreasing agent, are toxic, carcinogenic and mutagenic.

**From: Europe Environment number 317**

### Euro-limits set on chromium

The European Commission is ready to include the limits for chromium in the 1986 Directive on heavy metal limits in sewage sludge destined for agricultural use. The 1986 directive fixes limits on the amount of cadmium, copper, nickel, lead, zinc and mercury which may be contained in sewage

sludge due for disposal on farmland and in the soil itself, as well as setting limits for the quantities of heavy metals which may be added each year to farmland. Until now limits for chromium were missing from this Directive because of insufficient data.

**From: ENDS Report, March 1989**

### Portugal reinforces pollution police

Portugal is increasing its efforts to conform with European Community Directives on pollution. The recently established inspection agency Inspeção do Ambiente will soon be backed by stricter legislation which will pay attention to water pollution.

Part of the new legislation will

introduce compensation into Portuguese pollution law. This will oblige companies to offset the cost to local communities if they are adversely affected by pollution, even if this falls within legal limits.

**From: Waste Management Today, March 1989**