

Preface

Currently, chemicals distributed in Japan, of which there are several tens of thousand types even when focusing only on the chemicals produced in industry, are applied in various fields, and are essential in our daily lives. However, these chemicals may adversely affect human health and the ecosystem depending on the manner of production, use, and disposal; for example, dioxin and PCBs are causing serious social problems.

Moreover, to tackle the environmental problems caused by these chemicals today, it is necessary to consider long-term exposure to various chemicals, the amount of which is low, via several environmental media including, air, water, and soil. However, the degree and mechanism of the effect of such exposure on humans and the ecosystem have many aspects that are yet to be clarified in the current situation.

To respond to such a situation, the possibility of chemicals adversely affecting human health and the ecosystem through environmental pollution has been treated as an “environmental risk.” It is necessary to achieve an overall decrease in environmental risk from the viewpoint of prevention as well as to steadily advance the scientific evaluation of environmental risk.

The Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOE) has surveyed the presence of chemicals in the general environment and the results of which have been published since FY 1974.

In this report, the results of the Environmental Survey and Monitoring of Chemicals conducted in FY 2008 are summarized after the assessment by the 15th Special Committee for the Assessment of Chemicals, Division of Environmental Health, Central Environment Council, conducted in March 2010.

We sincerely appreciate the cooperation of the many test and research organisations and researchers who conducted the surveys described in this book. We hope that all those related to or interested in this field can make use of this book as basic material for evaluating the “environmental risk” of chemicals, with the aim toward environmental preservation.

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