

## **Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks**

**(SCHEER)**

### **Request for a scientific opinion on Anaerobic Biodegradation of Linear Alkylbenzene Sulphonates (LAS):**

#### **1. Background**

In order to decide whether further legislative action would be justified concerning the anaerobic biodegradation of surfactants (as indicated in Article 16(2) of the Detergents Regulation), the Commission forwards to SCHEER, as annex to this mandate, the study of University of Cadiz on the "Anaerobic Biodegradation of LAS" for evaluation and for an opinion on certain issues related to the anaerobic biodegradability of these Linear Alkylbenzene Sulphonates-LAS.

In the SCHER opinion (adopted in November 2005) some concerns were expressed:

- (a) about the terrestrial toxicity of LAS in combination with worst case environmental conditions;
- (b) about the relevance of single tests for evaluating anaerobic biodegradation compared to a combination of different testing conditions.

In its second opinion (adopted in November 2008), SCHER was concluding about the anaerobic biodegradability of LAS as follows:

- I. Despite most of the biodegradation studies show that LAS is poorly biodegradable under the anaerobic conditions of the laboratory test methods or in anaerobic digesters of sewage sludge, some findings suggest that partial anaerobic biodegradation of LAS is at least feasible and the environmental data seem to indicate that LAS has at least a potential for degradation under anaerobic conditions.
- II. However, further investigation is needed to confirm these results.

#### **2. Terms of reference**

In its opinion of 2005 confirmed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion of 2008, SCHER called for confirmatory data of the potential of LAS for degradation under anaerobic conditions.

DG Internal Market, Industry and Entrepreneurship and SMEs (GROW) therefore invites SCHEER, in the light of the results of the submitted study and of the latest scientific evidence, to evaluate the following statement:

- I. Linear Alkylbenzene Sulphonates-LAS shows potential for anaerobic biodegradation in both marine and freshwater environment, following the protocol OECD 308 as proposed by SCHER previously.

#### **3. Deadline**

Q1 of 2020 at the latest.