

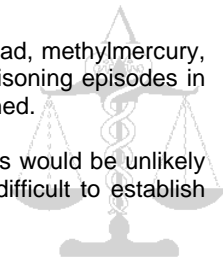
HESA News 14th Nov 2006

A silent pandemic: industrial chemicals are impairing the brain development of children worldwide

An article in *The Lancet* online warns of the possible neuro-developmental deficits resulting from exposures to chemicals. They identified 202 industrial chemicals for which there is evidence of neurotoxicity in adults and extrapolate from this to the possibility that they could influence brain development in childhood. Many effects would be sub-clinical.

Five chemicals on the list were known to have an effect on the developing brain - lead, methylmercury, arsenic, PCBs and toluene. In each case the effect on adults was known, then, poisoning episodes in children were noted and finally evidence of neuro-developmental deficit was researched.

[Editor's note: the full list of 202 chemicals will be available soon. Sub-clinical effects would be unlikely to lead to any compensation claim. Quantification of loss would be exceptionally difficult to establish even if harm was diagnosable and attributable.]



DEFRA 28th Sept 2006

Organic Statistics England

Organic farming presents potential liability issues with respect to protection of "organic" status. The proportion of organic farm land in England varies very significantly with region:

Organic and In-conversion Land (Jan 2006)

	In conversion	Organic	Total (ha)	Total agricultural area ⁽¹⁾ (ha)	% of total agricultural area
North East	6,643	29,296	35,939	584,373	6.2%
North West	3,236	18,858	22,094	905,086	2.4%
Yorkshire & Humberside	2,341	8,978	11,319	1,101,450	1.0%
East Midlands	2,434	13,172	15,606	1,226,476	1.3%
West Midlands	3,218	27,011	30,228	952,575	3.2%
Eastern	2,649	11,782	14,431	1,467,469	1.0%
South West	21,979	94,008	115,988	1,845,360	6.3%
South East (inc London)	10,723	35,250	45,973	1,195,601	3.8%
England	53,223	238,355	291,578	9,278,388	3.1%

⁽¹⁾ Excludes common grazing land.

The great majority (75%) of this was land used as pasture. 13% is for cereals and 4% for vegetables. Wales and Scotland have higher proportions; more of the land is used for pasture.

Estimate of Producers of Organic and In Conversion Livestock Numbers (2006)

	Livestock Numbers	% of total for livestock category
Cattle	214,276	2.1%
Sheep	691,000	1.9%
Pigs	29,995	0.6%
Poultry	3,439,548	1.9%
Goats	544	0.6%
Other Livestock	1,486	n/a

[Editor's Note: So far, controversy has been most public on the issue of contamination by GM plants.]