



The UK removed the REACH Interim principles and plans to align its SVHC list with the EU

On February 24, 2026, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published a policy document entitled "Approach to the UK REACH candidate list of substances of very high concern". As of 24 February 2026, the 2021 interim principles no longer apply. This marks a significant step forward for the UK in the management of chemical safety!

➤ Background: What are the "Interim Principles"?

Following the UK's formal exit from the EU in 2021, to ensure a smooth transition in chemical management, DEFRA, in conjunction with the Scottish and Welsh governments, formulated "Interim Principles" to guide which new substances can be added to the UK REACH SVHC candidate list. In the old policy released in 2021, DEFRA established three interim access principles:

1. Including Substances of Very High Concern (SVHCs) on the candidate list aims to encourage the substitution of particularly hazardous substances with other substances;
2. A substance should not be proposed for inclusion on the candidate list unless it is a suitable candidate for the authorized list;
3. The appropriate approach to inclusion on the candidate list should be determined using a Regulatory Management Approach Analysis (RMOA) based on the evidence gathered.

The practical effects of the "Interim Principles": Although the regulation initially adopted all substances from the EU's candidate list, in the following years, due to limitations in independent regulatory resources and assessment processes, the UK REACH SVHC list was updated significantly slower than the EU's, leading to a gradual regulatory difference between the two jurisdictions. Companies facing the EU + UK dual list system experienced continuously rising costs in compliance, supply chain, and testing.

➤ Key points of the new policy:

1. Enhanced EU Collaboration: All new SVHCs added to the EU after January 1, 2021, will be reviewed one by one and incorporated into the UK list in due course, significantly reducing the complexity of compliance in UK-EU cross-border trade and reducing the cost of dual certification for companies;
2. Retention of Local Control Rights: The HSE (Health and Safety Executive) can independently propose new SVHCs that meet the UK's local environment and health needs, in accordance with Article 57 of UK REACH. Proposals must complete evidence documentation and public consultation according to Article





59;

3. Clear Alternative Orientation: One of the core objectives of including SVHCs in the candidate list is to promote low-risk alternatives, encouraging companies to gradually phase out carcinogenic, mutagenic, reproductive toxic, and persistent bioaccumulative substances, provided it is technically and economically feasible;

4. Clearer List Flow: Substances in the candidate list will be assessed and incorporated into the authorized list (Annex 14) according to the established process. Once included, if no exemption or special authorization is granted, their use will be prohibited after the designated "sunset date," with progressively stronger control measures.

Original link: [Approach to the UK REACH candidate list of substances of very high concern](#)

HCT SOLUTION:

DEFRA's new SVHC policy signifies that the UK is establishing a chemical risk assessment system independent of the EU. For companies serving both the EU and UK markets, dual compliance will become the new normal. Companies are advised to closely monitor the substance profiles published by the HSE Advisory Centre and participate in public consultations promptly to ensure compliance during this period of regulatory change.

