



International Year of
CHEMISTRY
2011

Director General of the Chemical
Industry Federation:

“Every Year Is a Year of Chemistry”

■ **Chemistry and the chemical industry are continuously present in our lives. A major employer, the Finnish chemical industry has pursued environmental thinking and sustainable development for years.**

Timo Leppä

Prerequisites for a successful chemical industry depend on created competitive advantages. The responsibility lies in the hands of each company, its management, and personnel. Universities and research institutes play an important role in developing required capabilities. Decisions and choices made by politicians, however, also play a role in developing the competitiveness of an industry sector or a country. Therefore it is of utmost importance that decision-makers clearly understand the significance of chemistry and the chemical industry.

Chemistry needs visibility

The year 2011 was nominated as the International Year of Chemistry. The theme year will make chemistry as visible as possible by presenting the significant role it played in the development of our society, its role today, and its ability to help solve future global challenges.

The International Year of Chemistry is also a worldwide celebration of the achievements in human well-being enabled by chemistry.

Chemistry is a vital part of life. We who work daily within chemistry and chemical industry understand it very clearly. Unfortunately, the same is not true for the majority of people, who may regard chemistry as mysterious or complicated and possibly dangerous.

We must change this image, because we need enthusiastic young people who are attracted to chemistry. We need dedicated chemistry professionals who

are obsessed with solving problems and well informed decision-makers who understand the importance of chemistry. This is true in every country, but it is especially important for Finland since the Finnish welfare is built upon a strong domestic and export industry.

In Finland, the International Year of Chemistry offers a wide spree of events and activities aimed at the public and different stakeholders. Teachers and pupils are an important stakeholder group for the chemical industry, interest in natural sciences later steers decisions concerning studies and employment.

Decision-makers and media are targeted to promote the importance of chemistry in the society. Showcases include environmental, water and energy-related, and well-being challenges that can be solved with chemistry.

The year 2011 also marks the 250th anniversary of chemistry education at Finnish universities. An anniversary seminar will be held at the University of Turku.

Chemical industry is appreciated in Finland

The chemical industry, together with the technology and forest industries, is competing for recognition within the society. In particular the importance of Finnish industry and export industry is no longer well understood.

Industry produces about half of

Finland's tax income, hence it funds half of the Finnish welfare. Finnish industry directly employs 400,000 persons and the overall figure with indirect employment included is about one million. This

represents more than 40% of those employed in Finland.

The chemical industry accounted for 20% of Finland's total industry export in

2010. The relative share of the chemical industry in overall exports has steadily grown since 2000. The chemical industry directly employs about 33,000 employees, which in 2009 was 9% of the Finnish industry workforce.

Perception studies show that appreciation and approval of the chemical industry within our society are among the highest in Europe. This reflects the continued commitment to environmental thinking and sustainable development long pursued by the Finnish chemical industry.

National decisions do play a role

National decisions made by the Parliament play an important role in developing the competitiveness of the Finnish industry. Finland had a general election in the spring 2011 and the new Government was formed in June. The political programme for the new Government includes several important items for the chemical industry.





Events organised to celebrate the International Year of Chemistry have attracted large crowds all over Finland. Harri Montonen from Heureka Science Centre performed chemical tricks in Helsinki on May 12.



The chemical industry is the third largest industrial user of electricity in Finland. The new political programme promises to revisit last year's energy taxation decision. Energy taxation for energy intensive industries will be lowered to the EU approved minimum, thus paving the route for a level playing field for Finnish industries with their European competitors.

Tax incentives for R&D investments are among the implements presented in the Government programme. The assessment of different tax incentive models should be conducted in a decisive manner so that the incentives can be rapidly executed. The investment fund capacity of the Finnish Industry Investment Ltd will be increased. Venture capital and private equity investments should be increasingly directed to areas of national interest. The chemical industry is a growing and important future industry sector for Finland and growth investments should be directed to develop it further.

Chemistry is our life and our future

Chemistry is the central science for mankind. Global challenges associated with population growth, renewable raw materials, and new energy sources cannot be solved without chemistry. Perceptions of the chemical industry are changing.

Chemistry is the central science for mankind.

The change is slow, but ongoing. In the first half of the 20th century the chemical industry was the source for new fascinating products and innovations. New materials were developed and taken into use. Society enjoyed the fruits of chemistry in a hassle-free way.

The last decades of the century witnessed a change in thinking and attitude towards all industries. Environmental concerns added a darker shade to the perceptions of industries. Anxiety about the interaction between chemicals, individuals, and the environment grew. The chemical industry stepped up its efforts in reinforcing and enlarging its

actions to build a sustainable future. At the same time legislation was tightened, requirements rose, and dialogue between the industry and society deepened. This all leads to a favourable development where trust among the industry and society started to grow. The Finnish chemical industry took an active part in this development.

Now the tide has turned again. Chemistry is seen as an enabling driver for development. The society is looking for solutions created with it. Global challenges are acute and the confidence in the ability of the chemical industry to provide sustainable solutions continues to flourish. Chemistry is crucial for our future and therefore every year from now onwards should be called a Year of Chemistry. □

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In 2010, the chemical industry accounted for 20 per cent of Finland's total industry export and employed about 33,000 employees.