

Assessing the Environmental Impact of Condom Disposal

SSL - a major international consumer products company - has an environmental programme that is focused on finding ways to reduce and manage the impact of its products on the environment. Being able to understand how its products affect the environment after they have been disposed of is the subject of an important research programme that the company is sponsoring at the University of York, following initial engagement with, and connections made through, Chemistry Innovation.

SSL is a focused consumer products company with the leading global brands, Durex and Scholl as well as a diverse portfolio of locally owned brands, such as Meltus, Medised and Syndol in the UK and Sauber and Mister Baby in Southern Europe.

The company has operations in 35 countries across Europe, Asia Pacific and the Americas and sells into over 100 countries. SSL has manufacturing operations in India, Thailand, China and the UK and employs around 5,000 people globally.



A key element of SSL's environmental programme is about finding ways to reduce and manage the impact of its products on the environment. The company's strategy in this area is focused on improving efficiency and reducing unnecessary material use, evaluating environmental impacts of packaging, understanding the carbon intensity of selected products and reducing environmental effects of product formulations.

SSL is also keen to understand how its products affect the environment after disposal and an area that the company feels could benefit from new research is the impact of polymer degradation.



Polymers are used in various products – including condoms – and can produce a range of compounds when they degrade, depending on the route and destination of disposal. But there is currently a very limited understanding of how specific polymers affect the environment.

With this in mind, SSL is sponsoring a PhD student at the University of York to carry out research into how polymers affect the environment. It is hoped that the work will help to identify the specific environmental impacts associated with disposal of these materials and provide SSL with valuable insight which may shape more sustainable product design in the future.



The project came about following initial discussion with SSL's Environment Head, Anne-Louise Farrar and Chemistry Innovation's Sustainable Technologies priority manager Dr Mike Pitts. Chemistry Innovation helped connect SSL with

other industry contacts and ultimately helped to shape the basis of the research project for SSL.

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