Report calls for nanotechnology regulation

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A report says more aggressive oversight and new resources are needed to manage the potential adverse effects of nanotechnology.

Nanotechnology is the ability to measure, see, manipulate and manufacture things usually between 1 and 100 nanometers. A nanometer is one-billionth of a meter; a human hair is roughly 100,000 nanometers wide.

In a report from the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Terry Davies, former assistant administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, challenged business and government to work together to nurture and encourage nanotechnology and to anticipate and address its adverse effects.

Former EPA administrator William K. Reilly said nanotechnology holds tremendous potential for improvements in healthcare, the production of clean water and energy, and continued advances in IT infrastructure.

"But nanotechnology can only flourish if industry and government are committed to identifying and managing the possible risks to workers, consumers, and the environment," he said in a release.

The National Science Foundation predicts that the global marketplace for goods and services using nanotechnologies will grow to $1 trillion by 2015.

The U.S. invests approximately $3 billion annually in nanotechnology research and development.