

EPA accused of ignoring sewage chemicals

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U.S. scientists say tons of bacteria-killing chemicals are being released into the environment annually, possibly entering food and water supplies.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore say about 75 percent of the antibacterial chemicals used in soaps and numerous other household products end up on farm fields, yet no government agency monitors or regulates them, The Los Angeles Times reported Wednesday.

The scientists say about 200 tons of two commonly used chemicals -- triclocarban and triclosan -- are applied annually to agricultural lands nationwide.

The antibacterial chemicals are used in dishwashing and hand soaps, toothpaste, cutting boards and shower curtains, with about 1,500 such products introduced since 2000, the Times said.

Rolf Halden, an assistant Johns Hopkins professor who led the study, noted triclocarban, used in antibacterial soaps and toothpaste, is "potentially problematic."

"What we are finding is this chemical is building up in the environment," Halden said. "This is an example of an emerging contaminant. It has been in the environment for almost five decades, and we manufacture large volumes of it, but we don't know what happens to it."

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