
Microplastics in cosmetics. Call-for-action

November-16

Dear Minister for the Environment and Food, Esben Lunde Larsen.

It has recently become evident that plastics pose a major environmental problem when the material is lost from the consumer chain to the environment. Denmark, following a long tradition as a frontrunner in the chemicals area, is currently pursuing this plastic issue on the political agenda, not only in Denmark, but also in the EU by raising the concern in the EU-Commission. In this policy paper we, the signatories, give our full support to the Danish Minister to continue this work. Furthermore, we encourage you to bring our collective call to the EU-Commission.

Plastic is a strong, durable material suitable for a range of products. However, plastic should be managed correctly and never end up in nature. Microplastics¹ are a particular challenge because of their small size. When used in cosmetic products, especially "wash off" products like scrubs and cleansers, they are inevitably washed down the drain and thus, flow out to sea because they are too small to be filtered out by today's sewage treatment methods. Once microplastics reach the sea, they are impossible to remove and only add to the growing volume of plastics in the world's oceans.

The Danish Ecological Council, Plastic Change, and The Danish Plastics Federation jointly call for a common EU-ban against microplastics in cosmetics.

We call for EU-based legislation on cosmetic products that:

- is logical, operational, and manageable so that businesses can fulfill their responsibilities concerning the safe use of ingredients.
- creates consumer confidence that products are regulated to ensure environmental compliance.
- includes all types of microplastics [solid plastic particles less than 5 mm in size] in all cosmetic products².
- includes a definition of microplastics that can be applied horizontally to existing legislation to achieve a high level of protection for the environment.
- ensures that the microplastics are substituted with substances that are environmentally safe to use.

¹ Microplastics are often referred to as microbeads when used in cosmetics. However, 'microbead' is only one of many terms applied to plastic ingredients used in cosmetics and personal care products; they may also be called microplastics, microspheres, nanospheres, plastic particulates etc. ('Plastics in Cosmetics', UNEP, 2015: <http://unep.org/gpa/documents/publications/PlasticinCosmetics2015Factsheet.pdf>)

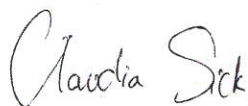
² Defined as in REGULATION (EC) No 1223/2009 on cosmetic products, paragraph 7: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:02009R1223-20150416&from=EN>

In view of the public interest in this matter, we intend to make the content of this letter more widely available.

Sincerely,



Lone Mikkelsen,
Policy Officer – Chemicals; The Danish Ecological Council



Claudia Sick,
Project Manager, Plastic Change



Thomas Drustrup
Managing Director, CEO, The Danish Plastics Federation



Malene Teller Blume
Quality Manager & Social Compliance, COOP Denmark



Henrik Karup Jørgensen
Chairman, VKH - The Association of Danish Detergents and Cosmetics Industries