



RINSING OFF RESPONSIBILITIES?

Legislation | What is the current legal situation concerning microbeads? Find out from Priyanka Malik from Freyr Solutions.



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One of the most noteworthy introductions into the cosmetics and body care industries was that of microbeads. The term microbeads refers to the microplastic ingredients used in cosmetics such as Polyethylene terephthalate, Polytetrafluoroethylene, Polymethyl methacrylate and Nylon. These tiny plastic pieces, with dimensions of less than one millimetre, have the ability to deep-cleanse the skin. They help remove dead cells, whiteheads and blackheads and clean pores at a micro level, thus giving the skin a smooth and feel-soft texture.

How it all began

Patented in 1970s, microbeads became highly commercialised in the 1990s and 2000s and were a hit with consumers; slowly but surely more and more products started including them in their formulations, so that the usage of these ingredients in-

creased tremendously. Consumers all over the world became used to products that contained microbeads and unknowingly let them drain into the general world water system. Because of their miniscule size, it is impossible for water treatment plants to filter them out. This leads to pollution in both fresh and marine waters, which then threatens aquatic life and causes deterioration of the marine environment.

While no EU-wide action has yet been proposed, various country-specific regulations have been proposed, and some have already taken effect. Currently, the proposed ban

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“WHILE NO EU-WIDE ACTION HAS YET BEEN PROPOSED, SOME COUNTRIES HAVE ALREADY TAKEN ACTION”

Priyanka Malik, Solutioning Lead of Cosmetics for the EU market, Freyr Solutions

10th January 2018. It prohibits all manufacturing companies in the UK from including microbeads in their formulations. However, selling these products is allowed until July 2018. The French government published a decree ‘2017-291’ on 6th March 2017, aiming to impose a ban on the use of microbeads in rinse-off exfoliating and cleansing cosmetics as of 1st January 2018. Sweden announced a ban on the sale of cosmetics containing microplastics at the **United Nations Ocean Conference** at the beginning of June 2017. The ban will come into effect in 2020. Countries such as Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Norway have also joined the initiative.

applies only to rinse-off products, while make-up products and sunscreens are excluded from the list. The movement has experienced a surge, with 91 NGOs from all over the world partnering in a ‘**Beat the Microbead**’ campaign to support the cause. The ‘Beat the Microbead Campaign’ aims at banning these tiny plastic substances from products of daily use because of the detrimental effects they cause to the environment.

The UK: the first European country to ban microbeads

The United Kingdom (UK) became the first European country to ban microbeads in personal care products. The government has pledged to ban manufacturing of all cosmetics and personal care products containing microbeads as of September 2016. The ban came into full effect on

A BAN ON ALL

microplastics in cosmetics and personal care products has been proposed in the EU

Make-up products and **sunscreens** are not affected by the proposed ban in Europe

Campaign shifts responsibility to companies

To achieve a fully comprehensive ban, the campaign **Beat the Microbead** has shifted the responsibility to the companies by asking

producers to include a statement that their cosmetics are completely free of microplastic ingredients. Companies that make this statement publicly are allowed to use the **Look for the Zero** logo. Such a statement might look like the following: “We as a producer declare that all of our products of brand [...] are 100% microplastic free”. While many still debate whether the ban should be extended to other products, it is safe to say that the movement for environmentally friendly products is on the rise.

Given the bans that have been imposed, are the personal care product manufacturers living up to their own responsibilities? Will they be able to label their products with the **Look for the Zero** logo? Let’s hope that we won’t rinse off our responsibilities; let’s just be compliant. □

Reference link: Look for the Zero - <http://www.beatthemicrobead.org/look-for-the-zero/>

Additional information can be found on the Internet – see download panel



Microbeads are used to deep-cleanse the skin