

Colourants for Cosmetic Packaging: How to Ensure Their Safety in Accordance with the European Regulation on Cosmetics?

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Abstract

There is currently no European legislation that specifically regulates colourants for use in cosmetic packaging. The provisions for packaging set forth in the European regulation on cosmetic products give no guidance either. It is, however, commonly accepted that colourants complying with the legislation for food contact materials are safe for use in cosmetic packaging. Therefore the requirements for colourants intended for food contact are used as reference to ensure the safety of colourants for cosmetic packaging. This document presents the key elements to consider in the selection of colourants which respect the safety requirements of the European Cosmetics Regulation. It is intended as guidance for manufacturers of colourants and packaging as well as the cosmetics industry as a whole in order to clarify understanding of the current regulatory framework. The approach developed in this review is the result of consultations and agreement with key suppliers of colourants operating in the European market.

Introduction

The use of colour is a key element in attracting the attention of the consumer. This is particularly true for cosmetic packaging. Not only is it used for aesthetic reasons but also as a means of protecting the product. There is currently no European legislation that specifically regulates colourants used in cosmetic packaging. From a legal perspective, as the colourant is part of the finished packaging material, it is covered by the requirements for cosmetic packaging.

The European cosmetics regulation⁽¹⁾ is very imprecise concerning the requirements for cosmetic packaging and has no requirement specifically addressing the colourants of the packaging. Based on the assumption that packaging safe for food is also safe for cosmetic products, it is commonly accepted that colourants complying with food contact legislation should be safe for use in cosmetic packaging. Therefore the legislative requirements of colourants intended for food contact materials

are viewed as a useful reference to ensure the safety of colourants used in cosmetic packaging.

This document is divided into three sections. The first section summarises the regulatory situation in Europe regarding colourants used in cosmetic packaging. The second section reviews the legislative framework for colourants used in food packaging. In the third section, we share our experience and practical knowledge in the assessment of the safety of colourants.

Requirements for Colourants Under the European Regulation on Cosmetic Products

The European regulation on cosmetic products contains no specific provision for colourants. However since colourants are part of the cosmetic packaging, they are covered by the requirements of the cosmetics regulation.

The European Regulation on cosmetic products is very imprecise concerning the requirements for packaging. Article 3 of the regulation states that: any cosmetic product that is placed on the market shall be safe for human health, when used under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions of use. This general rule also applies to the packaging, including any colourant it may contain.

Annex I of the regulation specifies that the cosmetic product safety report shall contain, as a minimum, information regarding impurities, traces and information about the packaging material. The regulation also requires that the packaging must not release into the cosmetic product traces of prohibited substances in such amounts that bring about a toxicological risk. A list of prohibited substances is given in Annex II. The regulation also prohibits substances classified as Carcinogenic, Mutagenic and toxic to Reproduction by CLP (Classification, Labelling and Packaging) Regulation⁽²⁾.

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