

Fragrance allergies and natural cosmetics

Challenges – that can be met!

To avoid hypersensitive reactions it has been required since 2003 to separately identify 26 potentially allergenic fragrances (synthetic or natural) in the INCI name, if they exceed a clearly laid down level of concentration.

The SCCS (the EU's advisory board) has now evaluated further perfume ingredients with regard to their allergy risk*. Angelika Meiss, senior editor of COSSMA, has spoken to fragrance suppliers to discover what problems this may cause and what challenges it poses for the fragrancing of natural cosmetics.

What does the statement by the SCCS on fragrance allergies mean for the fragrance industry, and also for consumers?



Alain Joncheray, Technical Director, Azur.Fragrances:

In addition to quantifying over a hundred allergens, the opinion of the SCCS requires the limitation or prohibition of substances which are of essential importance for perfumery and cosmetics. If this opinion is accepted, more than 90% of products sold today would risk disappearing because the majority of "mythical" perfumes contain at least one of the substances that SCCS wants to limit. This is as if one would remove a red or blue colour from the painter's palette or the C sharp minor could not be used by composers ... Of course you can create a fragrance without allergens, but the perfumes on the market today would possibly only be seen in museums. A perfume has to be worn on the skin and it is the chemistry between the creation and the skin which reveals its specific aura.

The opinion of the SCCS has not yet been adopted by the European Com-



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Through creative blending of natural ingredients perfumers are now able to produce more sophisticated natural fragrances at lower cost than before

mission. It takes into account the allergic reactions of persons exposed to perfumery substances under extreme conditions. The experts of the SCCS extrapolate the results and consider that these persons will be allergic to perfumes while the exposure conditions are not the same. Everything depends on the dosage.

We can, without difficulty, inform our customers about the presence of all allergens listed and thus give information to consumers via our own customers. However, if customers want to respect the opinion of the SCCS, it will be impossible to modify existing perfumes without an important olfactory impact. Reformulations would thus not only cause a very important loss in character but also one in income for the fragrance industry in an already difficult economic environment.

However, we must bear in mind that our creations are intended for all consumers. Health and consumer safety must, of course, be one of our main concerns.

Therefore the industry must provide answers through a pragmatic approach to a problem that is not a public health problem but a problem for individual consumers.

The return to a traditional perfumery, the limitation of over-use, the reduction of solvents, etc. could be an option as an answer to the problems we face.

In order to limit the risks of potential allergens an analysis of exposure is required instead of a ban on raw materials. The precautionary principle should not be an inhibition principle, but on the contrary should ensure the safest products for consumers.



Francois Roberts, HCT Fragrance Consultant: Today there are 26 allergens regulated by the European Cosmetics Directive.

These allergens may provoke a reaction to someone allergic to one of the 26. These allergens are mentioned on any packaging if present above a specific level in the end product. Only a very small percentage of the population is sensitive to these. An allergen warning on cosmetic products has the same purpose as a nut warning on food ingredients or dishes. The problem caused to the industry is derived from the fact that these 26 allergens are present in natural ingredients and over-cautious corporations tend to ban all allergens, thus banning most natural ingredients which are used in our fragrances. To create an allergen-free product means having very few fragrance options, very little or no natural ingredients or no fragrance at all. Complex and rich fragrances containing natural ingredients such as Jasmine, Rose, Lavender, Lemon, Orange, etc. will have allergens declared; this is inevitable and helpful to allergic customers.



Rebecca Goswell, Global Creative Director HCT Group: A year ago

when developing the fragrance line BEX London with Francois Roberts, we had specific issues with one of the products that have a high citrus content and had to reduce the citronella and reformulate the top notes in accordance with the ECD.

Many fragrances traditionally rely on a fresh burst of citrus fruit to spontaneously attract purchasers at point of sale, as mid and base notes sometimes take a couple of hours to become evident on the skin. With more cautious legislation threatening to come into force in the future, it will certainly limit the level of both the perfumer's creativity and the performance of the perfume itself.



Mireia Navas, Regulatory Affairs Department, Eurofragrance: The recommendation of increasing

the number of allergens from 26 to 82 – 28 of them being natural substances – could have a big impact for the fragrances present in the

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market. Most of these fragrances would need a reformulation that could affect some of its properties, even the odour. It would also have a big impact in the design of new fragrances, forcing the perfumers to find alternatives for substances commonly used in fragrances at the moment.

What are the challenges when perfuming natural cosmetics?



Ulrich Jensch, MD of Robertet, Germany: For numerous ingredients

and fragrances that are used in the creation of traditional perfumes there is no real equivalent in natural fragrances. This applies, for example, to all synthetic fragrances that provide a link between top notes, heart notes and base notes, resulting in a properly rounded composition and which is often missing from the traditionally recognised and expected dimension of natural compositions. Whilst the perfumer's art, when creating a synthetic fragrance, can use a selection from up to 3,200 different aromas there are only about 150 available for "natural" Ecocert compositions.

For a pure, organic product only about 29 aromas can be used. The Robertet Group, in particular regard to the fragancing of natural cosmetics, has more than a decade of experience and know-how, and our perfumers are in a position to create fragrance bouquets that come very near to the olfactory dimensions of traditional, synthetic perfumes. This is something that more and more end users are seeking.



Ed Matson, Vice President - Sales and Marketing, Carrubba: There are many challenges when

fragancing natural cosmetics. Firstly, there are many widely used synthetic aroma chemicals that have no natural equivalent. A good example of this is the synthetic musk, Galaxolide, which is often used to provide long-lasting base notes. Cost can

be a major challenge as well. Natural sandalwood and rose cost far more than their synthetic counterparts. The wider range of synthetic aroma chemicals available means the perfumer has much greater flexibility and creative ability than when working only with naturals. Brands long active in the natural market understand these limitations. However, as the demand for naturals continues to grow, new players enter this space and sometimes bring their synthetic fragrance sensibilities with them. This can result in expectations that may be difficult to meet, as when the fragrance house is asked to do a natural version of a purely synthetic fragrance i.e. one that contains aroma chemicals not found in nature. That being said, there has been substantial progress of late in advancing the state of the art in natural fragancing. Through creative blending of natural ingredients perfumers are now able to produce more sophisticated natural fragrances at lower cost than was possible just a short time ago.



Anne Basch, Perfumer at Joh. Vögele: Allergenic substances can only be avoided to a limited extent because of the complex composition of natural ingredients. Modern aquatic notes, and clean, powdery notes, can be imitated only in a limited way.



Danielle Maniquant, Perfumer & Legislation Manager, Floressence, Fragrance division of the Elixens Group: In the past,

perfumers only had essential oils to work with, when developing fragrances for natural cosmetic products. The simple association and mix of essential oils is rather basic, naturally simple but nevertheless often overpowering and, sometimes, even harsh. This olfactory result is usually considered more a "smell" than a "fragrance". Today, we dispose of a much larger choice of aromatic raw materials, molecules extracted from naturals, enabling us perfumers to let our creativity run more freely. We therefore design appealing and sophisticated 100% natural fragrance creations with very low allergen profiles, and these are to be shown at the next In-Cosmetics show in Paris. ■

* The SCCS view and full statement can be found on the Internet (see Internet panel)

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