

OPINION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON COSMETIC PRODUCTS AND NON-FOOD
PRODUCTS INTENDED FOR CONSUMERS

CONCERNING

ESSENTIAL OILS

adopted by the SCCNFP during the 24th plenary meeting
of 24-25 June 2003

1. Terms of Reference

1.1 Context of the question

During the 10th plenary meeting of 8 December 1999, the Scientific Committee on Cosmetic Products and Non-Food Products intended for consumers (SCCNFP) adopted an opinion concerning fragrance allergy in consumers (doc. n° SCCNFP/0017/98). The paper is an analysis of the need for appropriate consumer information and identifies fragrance allergens. Additionally, the SCCNFP adopted during the 14th plenary meeting of 24 October 2000 an opinion concerning oakmoss/treemoss extracts and appropriate consumer information.

So far, the SCCNFP has identified 26 fragrance ingredients for which there is a need to provide the consumer with information when they are present in cosmetic products.

Because of the lack of dose/elicitation data for these substances, the SCCNFP has been unable to provide recommendations on levels above which the information to the consumer would be necessary. However, for practical risk management reasons, it was proposed that for leave-on products this level should be 10 ppm in the finished cosmetic product and for rinse-off products, a working level ten times higher than that recommended for leave-on products (doc. n° SCCNFP/0450/01, adopted on 13 March 2001).

Directive 2003/15/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 February 2003 amending Council Directive 76/768/EEC on cosmetic products (7th amendment) states that :

- Certain substances have been identified as an important cause of contact-allergy reactions in fragrance-sensitive consumers. In order to ensure that such consumers are adequately informed, it is therefore necessary to amend the provisions of Directive 76/768/EEC to require that the presence of these substances be mentioned in the list of ingredients. This information will improve the diagnosis of contact allergies among such consumers and will enable them to avoid the use of cosmetic products which they do not tolerate ("Whereas" n° 15).
- A number of substances have been identified by the SCCNFP as likely to cause allergic reactions and it will be necessary to restrict their use and/or impose certain conditions concerning them ("Whereas" n° 16).
- Perfume and aromatic compositions and their raw materials shall be referred to by the word "perfume" or "aroma". However, the presence of substances, the mention of which is required under the column "other limitations and requirements" in Annex III, shall be indicated in the list irrespective of their function in the product (Article 1.4.).

The European Commission received from federations representing part of the essential oil industry data to justify that such a regulation should not apply for natural ingredients.

1.2 Request to the SCCNFP

The SCCNFP was asked to answer the following question :

- * *Does the data provided justify that the opinions given by the SCCNFP on fragrance allergy in consumers do not apply to essential oils?*

2. Opinion

The above-mentioned opinions of the Scientific Committee on Cosmetic Products and Non-Food Products intended for consumers (SCCNFP) concerning fragrance allergy in consumers are based on and supported by an extensive number of studies, published in leading scientific journals. None of these studies indicates a difference in allergenicity between a fragrance ingredient synthetically produced or extracted from a natural product. An important problem with fragrance substances of ‘natural origin’ is the difficulty of quality control. There may be considerable variation in the content of toxic/sensitising chemicals; oakmoss is an example. There is no demonstration in the peer reviewed scientific literature that fragrances compounds of natural origin are ‘safer’ than synthetics.

On review of the information submitted, the SCCNFP is of the opinion that the data provided does not justify that the opinions adopted by the SCCNFP concerning fragrance allergy in consumers do not apply to essential oils.