IFRA POSITION STATEMENT ON DIETHYL PHTHALATE (DEP)

The Fragrance Industry reaffirms its support of the use of DEP in fragrances as safe for the consumer and the environment.

Recent misleading reports on the use of phthalates as fragrance ingredients have raised questions regarding their safety in consumer products. Not all phthalates have safety concerns. Diethyl phthalate (DEP), as used in fragrances, is safe for human health and the environment. The fragrance industry would like to make clear that consumers can use fragranced products containing DEP with confidence.

"Phthalates" is a broad term that refers to a wide variety of compounds of differing chemical structure. General, undifferentiating statements about "phthalate toxicity" have created confusion about potential safety concerns that are in fact only associated with specific materials within this group. Safety concerns have been raised most recently about Dibutyl Phthalate (DBP) and Diethyl Hexyl Phthalate (DEHP). However, neither DBP nor DEHP is permitted for use in cosmetic products in Europe. On a global basis they have never been important as fragrance ingredients and today their use in fragrances is virtually nil.

As in so many other examples, broad generalizations of hazard or risk can be misleading and lead to unfounded public concern. For example, nobody would consider all berries or mushrooms unsafe, though specific types have a known toxicity at certain levels.

DEP, which continues to be used in fragrance applications, does not have the safety concerns raised for DBP or DEHP. DEP was recently re-examined by authorities and expert scientific groups both in the U.S. and Europe. The European Commission's Scientific Committee on Consumer Products[1], as well as the U.S. Cosmetic Ingredient Review (CIR) Expert Panel[2] have reaffirmed that DEP is safe for use in cosmetic products. Moreover, DEP is present in consumer products at extremely low levels.

While some reports continue to raise questions about "phthalates" in general, it is important to define the specific chemicals of concern, as well as the scientific legitimacy of the associated data. The scientific validity of some highlighted results remains very much in question. For example, recent studies reporting the potential association of "phthalates" with male reproductive biomarkers are inconsistent[3,4]. Moreover, since DEP does not demonstrate a potential for adverse reproductive effects, it is inaccurate to imply that there are concerns similar to those of other phthalates, such as DBP or DEHP. DEP presents no safety concern from use in fragrances[5].

[1] Scientific Committee on Cosmetics & Non-Food Products SCCNFP/0411/01, 2002.
[2] Cosmetic Ingredient Review (CIR). 2004. Annual Review of Cosmetic Ingredient Safety Assessment – 2002/2003. p 37-47. Washington, DC: CIR
[3] Swan et al., (2005) Environ. Health Perspectives. doi:10.1289/ehp.8100 (available at http://dx.doi.org/)
[4] Jonsson et al., (2005) Epidemiology 16(4):487-93
[5] Api A.M. (2001) Food Chem. Toxicol. 39:97-108.

The safety of fragrance ingredients is a top priority for the industry. New scientific data is constantly evaluated to ensure that the highest standards are applied to the creation of fragrance. The Research Institute for Fragrance Materials (RIFM, www.rifm.org) provides ongoing evaluation of all new materials, with an independent assessment made by RIFM's Expert Panel (REXPAN)[6]. REXPAN is composed of internationally renowned scientific experts who are independent from the fragrance industry.

The International Fragrance Association (IFRA, www.ifraorg.org) continues to set strict self-imposed safety standards for the use of fragrance ingredients, as advised by RIFM. IFRA Member companies, which include all major suppliers of fragrance, must adhere to the IFRA Code of Practice and agree to produce fragrances to meet these high standards of safety.

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[6] D.R. Bickers et al., The safety assessment of fragrance materials, (2003) Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology 37: 218-273