

Water is Water is Water ¹

Key Words: “Green,” “Greenwash,” Organic, Organic Farmer, Sustainability, Water

Abstract: The cosmetic industry is at a crossroads. Naturally based and organically based products are in the spotlight and the number of these products increases daily. The cosmetic industry is highly self regulated, and the current question on the table is whether or not to include some organically derived waters as “Organic” for labeling purposes.

Introduction

Should water be considered “Organic” if it is associated with a certified organic material? I implore you keep an open mind as you read this, especially if you have been on the formulation side of our business for most of your career as I have. Gattefossé has opened Pandora’s box. They want their product that is mostly water, to be claimed as all organic! “As there is nothing added, this ingredient is 100 per cent organic ... Adding even 10 percent of the organic lemon extract will bring the formulation up to the 10 per cent organic ...” ² There are others that have suggested that their water be included in the “Organic” content of a product, albeit the Gattefossé statement is bold and to the point.

Water is Not Organic Argument

Any organic chemistry text book will tell you that to be organic you need to have at least one carbon and one hydrogen in the molecule. Organic Chemistry is often called Carbon Chemistry. Water has one Oxygen, two Hydrogens and no Carbons. How can we even think about talking of water from an organic source and call it “Organic.” David Steinberg states that “water is water is water” regardless whether it is from a certified organic food or from a faucet.¹ If we approach this with a purist mindset the water content should not be considered organic, it contains no Carbon atoms, i.e., it is not “Organic.”

Water is Organic Argument

If the water collected comes from an “Organic” food source should it not be included in the organic calculation of a cosmetic product? Gattefossé and other producers of organic water extracts want you to do just that. They explain, “Water extracted from organic lemons can help formulators increase the organic percentage of their products, ...” They go on to say that “It is this aspect of the ingredient that is likely to be appealing to formulators. Most organic certification systems demand a minimum percentage of organic ingredients along with compliance to a number of other parameters.” ² This is appealing to marketing managers of these products as well. Lord Northbourne (1896-1982) coined the term and called himself an “Organic Farmer” in 1939.³ This use of the word “Organic” was not tied to a definition of molecules containing Carbon.

Win, Win, Win

This is a great idea. Water from an organic source should be considered to be “Organic” and claimed as such. The term “Organic” as used in cosmetics would embrace the water as well as the solids that are part of “Organic Food,” etc. This mentality would be embracing the very essence of the meaning behind the use of the term “Organic Farmer” and the products that are a result of Organic Farming. Therefore

achieving high levels of “Organics” without comprising product aesthesis would be possible. MANUFACTURERS OF ORGANIC COSMETICS WIN!

The consumer gets the high level of “Organic” product she wants. SHE WINS!

The suppliers of other organic materials (not the water extracts highlighted in this article) sell less, but are able to charge a higher dollar, and therefore do not run the risk of running out of material due to lack of sustainability. THESE VENDORS WIN!

As a result, these cosmetic products probably have slightly higher levels of water, and therefore a smaller carbon footprint. Think of the reduction in emissions from the manufacturing of these materials. Think about how these products are returned to Mother Earth, I think water is easier for her to digest than other materials? EARTH WINS!

When you, a manufacturer and/or seller of organic cosmetics, sell a product with a substantial amount of a particular natural material or an organic material you can add a separate claim on the label. You can call further attention to this item by putting the percentage shown in bold type! Other manufactures of similar organic cosmetics cannot do so unless they raise their concentrations above a label value and to the concentration claimed. You stand out when compared to your peers. YOU WIN AGAIN!

The only one who gets upset is the chemistry professor who is caught up in semantics and loses sight of the BIG PICTURE!

Beware

There will be those who do not like putting water under the umbrella of “Organic.” They will side with the chemistry professor. The best defense for arguing against this line of thinking will be to make sure that your products are obviously superior in customer acceptance and clearly demonstrate that they are “green” and not “green washed.” Emphasize your commitment to a “greener” planet. Simply make and give the consumer products that she likes, feels good about using, and wants to purchase again.

1 - <http://www.cosmeticsandtoiletries.com/regulatory/organic/42265242.html>

2 - http://www.cosmeticsdesign-europe.com/Product-Categories/Skin-Care/Bio-lemon-extract-can-help-formulators-go-organic-says-Gattefosse/?utm_source=Newsletter_Product&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletter%2BProduct

3 - <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Look-to-the-Land/Lord-Northbourne/e/9781597310185>