

Countdown to harmonisation of organic and natural standards

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Dec 4/2007 - Representatives of Europe's leading natural and organic certification bodies told delegates at the Natural Beauty Summit that they are on course to develop a common standard by June 2008.

The harmonization of standards is considered necessary to ease the confusion of consumers who are currently faced by an array of [organic](#) and natural cosmetics certified by different bodies.

The credibility of the industry and certificated cosmetics are also at stake as L'Erbolario executive Antonio Argentieri indicated in a panel discussion with representatives of France-based Ecocert, Germany-based BDIH, UK-based Soil Association and Italy-based AIAB at the Natural Beauty Summit in Paris last week.

He said that with so many [certification](#) bodies around the world an owner of a cosmetics company had told him that his products were not certified because he could create his own stamp with an appropriate logo and consumers would not understand the difference.

Work towards a harmonized standard has been underway for four years but progress has been slow.

The certification bodies present at the Natural Beauty Summit together with Belgium-based EcoGarantie and France-based Cosmebio plan to increase the frequency of their meetings in order to hit the June 2008 deadline they set for the creation of a common standard.

AIAB spokesperson Riccardo Anouchinsky told CosmeticsDesign.com that they were 80 per cent of the way towards developing a common standard and only had the details to sort out.

The harmonized certification system will be composed of two levels covering natural and organic cosmetics respectively.

Currently a number of certification bodies only certify naturals such as BDIH and others only organics like the Soil Association.

Variations also exist between the bodies in terms of how they certify cosmetics. The organisations have differing stances related to percentage requirements and permissibility of certain ingredients and processes.

Nonetheless Ecocert spokesperson told delegates at the Natural Beauty Summit that there were not as many differences between them as they had previously thought and that they were moving quickly towards a common standard.

For instance, in order for a product to qualify as organic manufacturers will be asked to prove that 95 per cent of its vegetal and physically processed ingredients are organic.

One complex and controversial areas is ingredients of natural origin that have been chemically transformed because synthetic chemicals may be used in the process.

The certification bodies are reviewing processes and catalysts and will draw up a list of acceptable and unacceptable chemical transformations.

Preservatives are notoriously problematic for formulators of organic and natural products and according to

the speakers these maybe the last to be removed from such products.

It is expected that the common standard will evolve and become stricter as scientific developments permit the inclusion of more effective physically processed and vegetal ingredients.

Alongside the development of a common standard between Europe's certification bodies an EU standard is also expected in order to prevent unscrupulous companies from advertising cosmetics as natural or organic when they contain little natural or organic material.