

BFA Press Release, 27 July 2011

Organic beauty products provide “no-nano” safe-haven

As the battle for consumer education on beauty product potential health risks continues to intensify, the entry of nanotechnology is adding to a contentious debate.

The full health implications of nanotechnology being used in creams applied to the skin, or cosmetics, is not yet completely understood, but in a bid to win consumers over *Invisible Zinc* claimed its sunscreen was ‘not nano’. Complaints were made from other companies and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) ruled that the claim of ‘not nano’ be removed from the product.

Nanotechnology is a field of applied science where matter is manipulated at the nanoscale (down to 1/100,000 the width of a human hair) to change the internal structure of compounds and create new materials and products. Nanotechnologies are reportedly reaching the market at a rate of 3-4 new products per week with cosmetics and sunscreens representing a reported 60% of listed products.

Carla Oates, representative for organic industry representative body, the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA), says it is important consumers are aware of nanotechnology in their products and the TGA ruling is arbitrary and inconsistent.

“The people who are really losing out are consumers. They are caught up in the middle of marketing antics of big companies and the inefficiency of regulating bodies,” Ms Oates said.

“The only way you are to be guaranteed of getting a truly safe product is by purchasing a certified organic product. If you don't, it's important to look up all the ingredients on the ingredients list in order that you are aware of what you are putting onto your skin and potentially into your blood stream.”

A Position Paper released this year by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) said; *In the absence of a moratorium, all food, agricultural and other products which include manufactured nanomaterials must be clearly labelled to allow consumers and farmers to make an informed choice.* The paper goes on to say; *Those who seek to commercialise manufactured nanomaterials should be required to demonstrate the safety of the new technology before the technology is released.* (2011)

Owen Gwilliam, BFA Cosmetics Advisory Group Convenor says, “The Therapeutic Goods Administration, by ordering a cosmetics company to remove a nanoparticle-free claim has set a worrying precedent.

“While the jury is still out on whether or not such particles are dangerous, surely consumers have the right to know what is in the product they are using, or at least have the choice to buy a product that does not contain ingredients they are concerned about.

“The good news for organic consumers, or those wanting to avoid nanoparticles, is that nanotechnology is prohibited in all cosmetics and personal care products carrying the Australian Certified Organic (ACO) “Bud” logo. So even if an ACO certified product doesn't explicitly state “nano-free” on the labelling, you have that assurance.”

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Reference:

- IFOAM, (2011), *The use of nanotechnologies and nanomaterials in organic agriculture*, Position Paper, Approved by the IFOAM World Board on 15 April 2011

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Alison J Beaty

Editor and Media Officer
Ph 07 3350 5716 ext 222
alison.beaty@bfa.com.au

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