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Certified organic leads the way in consumers' quest for 'natural' beauty

All natural is "not good enough" for a growing base of concerned consumers who demand a real alternative to synthetic products in their daily beauty regimes.

Organic manufacturers say certified organic cosmetics are the only products that are required by regulation to deliver on '100% natural' product claims.

They say 2008 will be a defining year for the sector with the certified industry facing tough competition from companies wanting to capitalise on strong demand for 'chemical free'.

Narelle Chenery, Director of Research and Development with *Organic and Natural Enterprise (ONE) Group* said un-synthetic product claims are proliferating despite few real changes to processing techniques and raw ingredients.

She said when it comes to natural beauty it is a case of 'buyer beware'.

"Unfortunately, many consumers seeking respite from routine chemical applications via their personal care products are being lulled into a false sense of security by companies with big marketing budgets making 'natural' claims and selling synthetically processed products", she said.

"99% of so-called 'natural ingredients' go through a chemical processing technique or are added to products based on synthetic formulations, preservatives and emulsifiers".

She said the personal care and cosmetic sector is largely un-regulated but that products complying with international certified organic food standards had the best chance of meeting consumers' safety and purity needs.

"It's the wild west out there. A logo such as the Australian Certified Organic 'bud' is the only guard against extravagant natural claims on any product, and guarantees no irradiation, no GMO's and no complex chemical combinations", she said.

Akiko Nicholls, Chair of the Biological Farmers of Australia Cosmetic Sub-committee, approves the licensing of organic cosmetic products to the Australian Organic Standard.

She said developing natural formulas requires ingenuity and that preservatives and emulsifiers present a particular challenge to organic personal care companies.

"However clients who have overcome these challenges are delivering natural products at the highest possible standard actively sought by consumers," she said.

She said the shift towards organic personal care is similar to that of the organic food movement.

"People are more conscious about their health, lifestyle and environment. People who are careful about what they eat quickly realise the need to be conscious about what they 'feed' their skin, as the body absorbs skin products directly upon application".

Ms Chenery says cosmetics and personal care products have traditionally been the cause of a range of skin irritation and sensitivity problems - "allergic reactions such as contact dermatitis and phototoxicity can be caused by synthetic ingredients and fragrances" - with some synthetic ingredients being linked to longer term health issues including cancer.

Fragrances and preservatives are the main ingredients in cosmetics and the first and second most common cause of irritated or infected skin from cosmetic products respectively.



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The BFA has a vision for organic industry growth and education in Australia. Guaranteed all natural ingredients in certified organic personal care and beauty products is one good reason to buy organic and help the organic industry achieve its goal. More information is available at <http://www.bfa.com.au>



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