

IBHA Position on Plastic Microbeads

Background :

Small pieces of plastic material (typically under 5mm in size) identified in the marine environment, are often referred to as micro-plastics. They originate from a variety of different sources including the breakdown of larger plastic materials in the water, tread from tires, the manufacture and distribution of plastic pellets, the shedding of synthetic fibers from textiles during domestic clothes washing, and from the use of small plastic beads, for their abrasive or other properties, in a range of consumer and industrial products.

In the personal care industry, plastic microbeads (any solid plastic particle that is less than 5 mm in size and is intended to be used to exfoliate or cleanse in washoff products), benefit as an ingredient because of their ability to gently remove dead skin cells from the surface of the skin. Many consumers enjoy the clean feeling that using products with the beads provide.

The amount of plastic in the marine environment thought to originate from the use of plastic micro beads in personal care products is considered to be limited compared to other sources. However, stakeholders had expressed concerns about the growing presence and potential impact of micro-plastics in the marine environment and are looking at ways in which the amount of micro-plastics can be reduced, including from the use of plastic micro beads in personal care products

IBHA Position :

Although often highlighted in the context of marine litter debate, the use of solid plastic micro particles in cosmetic and personal care products is considered to be limited compared to other sources. Many individual member companies of IBHA have publicly stated that they will discontinue those uses in cosmetics that are most likely to end up in the aquatic environment and for which alternatives exist.

The Indian beauty and hygiene industry is issuing a recommendation to discontinue their use in wash off cosmetic and personal care products for exfoliating and cleansing purposes. IBHA is committed to stopping the manufacturing and importing of products using plastic microbeads for exfoliating and cleansing in rinse-off cosmetic products by December 1, 2018. Conservation of environment and sustainability are amongst the top priorities of the industry while delivering important benefits to the consumers through value-added innovations.

While the Indian industry is aligned to the principle of environment protection, the transition to complete elimination of use of microbeads is a challenging process. Nonetheless, measures to phase out their use have already been initiated and the cosmetic industry is in tune with the global efforts to ensure that solid plastic microbeads used to cleanse and exfoliate (scrub beads) from cosmetics in wash off products are not contributing to the accumulation of micro-plastics in the world's oceans.

April 2016