

New Provisions for Detergents

Detergents are used in laundry, cleaning and washing-up products. They contain surfactants (tensides - surface-active substances) that act as fat solvents.

Detergents are released into the environment with the waste water. Undesired accumulation in the environment can be prevented only through sufficient biodegradation.

1. EU Detergents Regulation

On 31 March 2004, the regulation (EC) no. 648/2004 was adopted which regulates the placing on the market of detergents. The regulation came into effect on 8 October 2005 and replaced the previous Detergents Directive, 73/404/EEC, and the related directives on the biodegradability of anionic and non-ionic surfactants.

The Detergents Regulation applies directly to the following areas:

- Definitions
- Criteria for ultimate aerobic biodegradation of surfactants in detergents
- Special authorisations for launching surfactants in detergents that do not meet the criteria for ultimate aerobic biodegradation
- Labelling requirements for detergents
- Manufacturers' duties of information

Detergents containing anionic, cationic, amphoteric, and non-ionic surfactants may be placed on the market without further restriction only if such surfactants are fully bio-degradable.

This means that for methods determining the oxygen consumption or carbon dioxide formation the biodegradability must be at least 60% after 28 days.

Where methods are used that involve determining the reduction of dissolved organic carbon (which is possible for reasonable exceptions), a biodegradability of at least 70% in 28 days is required.

A special authorisation for surfactants which do not meet the criteria for full biodegradability but comply with the requirements of primary biodegradability (Appendix II) may be applied for until 8 October 2007 at the latest, if the following other conditions are satisfied:

- Used exclusively in industrial and institutional (I&I) detergents.
- Used in less common applications.
- The socio-economic benefit must be greater than the risks for the environment and human health.
- The surfactant must already have been on the market before 8 October 2005.

Until the Commission has decided on the application for a special authorisation, the placing on the market and use of the surfactant in question may continue.

Due to the time schedules provided in the EC Detergents Regulation for the submission of information and for the processing of the special authorisation the period remaining for the use of the surfactant may, in some cases, be extended until the year 2010.

AluFinish products use a broad range of surfactants which meet the criteria for ultimate aerobic biodegradation. Some products, however, use surfactants which do not satisfy the requirements of the new EC Detergents Regulation.

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For this purpose, the relevant suppliers have informed us that a special authorisation has been applied for.

Regardless of whether or not these special authorisations will be granted, we are working on alternatives for those surfactants that do not meet the EC criteria.

We have been able to replace most of the non EC-conforming surfactants with fully bio-degradable surfactants.

Please contact our field service to find out if the cleaning product you use is in compliance with the EU Detergents Regulation and/or if you are affected by any product change.

2. Washing and Cleansing Agents Act

The new EU Detergents Regulation has resulted in the need for a change of central parts of the national Washing and Cleansing Agents Act.

The Washing and Cleansing Agents Act (Wasch- und Reinigungsmittelgesetz, WRMG) governs the manufacture, labelling, and distribution of washing and cleansing agents in the Federal Republic of Germany. Under the WRMG, the provisions of the EC Detergents Regulation are brought forward on a national basis. In addition, Section 2 of the WRMG contains provisions on the manufacture and distribution of various products that are not subject to the EU Detergents Regulation. For instance, the WRMG also covers certain surfactant-containing cosmetic agents intended for cleansing and care products that are discharged into the waste water upon cleansing. Besides, Section 10 of the WRMG governs the duty of notifying the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung, BfR) about the products.

If you have any questions on the implementation of the EU Detergents Regulation or require detailed information, please contact:

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Glossary

Cleaning

According to para. 3 of Art. 2 has “the meaning defined by EN ISO 862.”

Detergent

According to para. 1 of Art. 2 “any substance or preparation containing soaps and/or other surfactants intended for washing and cleaning processes. Detergents may be in any form (liquid, powder, paste, bar, cake, moulded piece, shape, etc.) and marketed for or used in household, or institutional or industrial purposes.”

Manufacturer

According to para. 10 of Art. 2 “the natural or legal person responsible for placing a detergent or a surfactant for a detergent on the market; in particular, a producer, an importer, a packager working for his own account, or any person changing the characteristics of a detergent or of a surfactant for a detergent, or creating or changing the labelling thereof, shall be deemed to be a manufacturer. A distributor who does not change the characteristics, labelling or packaging of a detergent, or of a surfactant for a detergent, shall not be deemed to be a manufacturer, except where he acts as an importer.”

Placing on the market

According to para. 9 of Art. 2 “introducing onto the Community market, thereby making available to third parties, whether in exchange for payment or not. Import into the Community customs territory shall be deemed to be placing on the market.”

Preparation

According to para. 5 of Art. 2 a “mixture or solution composed of two or more substances”.

Primary biodegradation

According to para. 7 of Art. 2 “the structural change (transformation) of a surfactant by micro-organisms resulting in the loss of its surface-active properties due to the degradation of the parent substance and consequential loss of the surface-active property as measured by test methods listed in Annex II.”

Surfactant

According to para 6 of Art. 2 “any organic substance and/or preparation used in detergents, which has surface-active properties and which consists of one or more hydrophilic and one or more hydrophobic groups of such a nature and size that it is capable of reducing the surface tension of water, and of forming spreading or adsorption monolayers at the water-air interface, and of forming emulsions and/or microemulsions and/or micelles, and of adsorption at water-solid interfaces.”

Substance

According to para. 4 of Art. 2 “chemical elements and their compounds in the natural state or obtained by any production process, including any additive necessary to preserve the stability of the products and any impurity deriving from the process used, but excluding any solvent which may be separated without affecting the stability of the substance or changing its composition”.

Ultimate aerobic biodegradation

According to para. 8 of Art. 2 “the level of biodegradation achieved when the surfactant is totally used by micro-organisms in the presence of oxygen resulting in its breakdown to carbon dioxide, water and mineral salts of any other elements present (mineralisation), as measured by test methods listed in Annex III, and new microbial cellular constituents (biomass).”

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The logo for Finish, featuring the word "Finish" in a stylized, outlined blue font. The letters are interconnected, with the 'i' and 'n' being particularly prominent. The logo is set against a light blue background that is part of a larger rectangular area.

Washing

According to para. 2 of Art. 2 “the cleaning of laundry, fabrics, dishes and other hard surfaces”.