



Frequently asked questions (FAQs)/Facts about...

What are natural cosmetics?

There is no legal definition for a 'natural' or 'organic' cosmetic product. In the EU, both terms are regarded as claims as defined by the Cosmetic Regulation. All claims are regulated through common criteria but there are no mandatory harmonised criteria (or label) for 'natural' and 'organic'.

In the EU, the European Commission has provided clarification of this absence of European harmonised standard for natural and organic cosmetics [here](#).

In the absence of an official definition for the term "natural cosmetic" private, voluntary standards exist. The NATRUE Standard (private, voluntary, international) has set strict label criteria regarding the origin of the ingredients, its manufacture and also the composition of the finished cosmetic product in order to be called natural or organic product and carry the NATRUE seal on the packaging, as explained [here](#).

What is organic?

Organic is a term to describe an agricultural production method compliant with the rules established in law, at all stages of production, preparation and distribution. In Europe, it is controlled by [Regulation \(EC\) No. 834/2007](#) but this legislation does not cover non-foods like cosmetics.

The overall principles are¹:

- The management of biological processes based on ecological systems using natural resources (use of living organisms and mechanical production, exclude the use of GMOs);
- The restriction of the use of external inputs;
- The strict limitation of the use of chemically synthesised inputs.

What are organic cosmetics?

In the absence of an official definition for the term 'organic cosmetic', the NATRUE Standard (private, voluntary, international) sets obligatory criteria for certified organic cosmetics products where at least 95% of the ingredients from plant and animal origin contained in the product come from controlled organic farming or wild collection.

What are synthetic ingredients?

Synthetic ingredients are a class of compounds produced by chemical synthesis. These can be entirely man-made ingredients that do not exist in nature or ingredients reproduced from those that exist in nature (nature-identical), or chemically-modified natural substances.

What is a chemical?

The word 'chemical' is colloquially used as synonym for synthetic (man-made) substances including petrochemicals. However, from a scientific point-of-view all life involves chemistry.

What are natural vs. natural origin ingredients?

Natural ingredients are those isolated directly from the plant, animal or mineral source. Natural origin ingredients are those derived from natural ingredients by chemical modification, reproduction or refinement. NATRUE classifies the ingredients of natural origin as derived natural ingredients.

What are GMOs?

A genetically modified organism (GMO) is an organism, with the exception of human beings, in which the genetic material has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally by mating and/or natural recombination².

GMOs and ingredients produced from them are prohibited in natural and organic cosmetics products certified to carry the NATRUE Label.

¹ Article 4, [Regulation \(EC\) No. 834/2007](#)

² Article 2, [Directive 2001/18/EC](#), on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms.



Are natural and organic cosmetics safe?

Yes. Like all other cosmetics, natural and organic cosmetics are subjected to the strict safety assessments required by cosmetics legislation (e.g. [Regulation \(EC\) No 1223/2009](#)). This ensures their safe usage.

Are natural and organic cosmetics tested on animals?

Animal testing is against NATRUE's underlying values and ethics, and in Europe is prohibited by law.

Further information, including NATRUE's position in relation to animal testing, can be read in our [position papers](#) and [factsheet](#).

What are preservatives? Are parabens permitted by NATRUE?

Preservatives are substances which are exclusively or mainly intended to inhibit the development of microorganism e.g. in a cosmetic product³. You can find out more information about preservatives and NATRUE's factsheet in this topic [here](#).

Parabens, a group of preservatives, are not permitted by NATRUE for reasons expressed in our [position paper](#).

What is nano and does NATRUE allow it?

Nano used to refer to things that are very, very small (mathematically 1 nanometre is equal to 10⁻⁹ m). [Regulation \(EC\) No. 1223/2009](#) defines the term 'nanomaterial', and sets out safety and labelling requirements for the use of nanomaterials in cosmetic products.

NATRUE does not prohibit the use of nanomaterials where a positive opinion on their safety from the European Commission's [Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety](#) (SCCS) has been made.

You can find out more information in NATRUE's [factsheet](#).

What is vegan and are NATRUE certified products vegan?

A vegan is a person that does not eat or use animal products. Finished cosmetic products certified to the NATRUE Label criteria contain natural and organic ingredients, which also includes animal derived ingredients (except dead vertebrates).

You can find out more information in NATRUE's [factsheet](#).

Is palm oil allowed in NATRUE products?

NATRUE establish strict criteria ensuring that only natural ingredients processed according to the strict NATRUE's criteria are present in the final product. Palm (kernel) oil and its derivatives are substances of botanical origin, and therefore permitted in NATRUE certified products. Where possible NATRUE recommends using sustainable certified palm oil.

You can find more information in NATRUE's [factsheet](#).

Does NATRUE have special criteria regarding packaging?

According to NATRUE, packaging should be kept to a minimum, the products should be designed for multiple uses, if possible recyclable and renewable materials should be used. The use of halogenated plastics is totally forbidden.

More information can be found in Section 5 of the NATRUE Standard found [here](#).

What is the difference between a nature-identical and derived natural substance?

Nature-identical ingredients are those that exist in nature, but they cannot be recovered from nature using reasonable technical effort or in sufficient quality or purity. These ingredients are listed in positive lists (for pigments and minerals – see Annex 2; for preservatives – see Annex 4a), and the proof of existence in nature is required before they are authorised in a product to carry the NATRUE seal.

Derived natural substances are those recovered from (only) natural substances but are manufactured further using permitted chemical modifications that are modelled on physiological reactions.

³ Article 2(l), [Regulation \(EC\) No 1223/2009](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on cosmetic products