



Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

1. What is NATRUE?

NATRUE, the International Natural and Organic Cosmetics Association, is an international non-profit association (AISBL) based in Brussels. NATRUE was founded in 2007 by the pioneers of the natural and organic cosmetic sector, including **WELEDA**, **WALA**, **laverana**, **PRIMAVERA**, **LOGOCOS** and **CEP**, to protect and promote natural and organic cosmetics to the benefit of consumers worldwide. In 2008, NATRUE's members decided to create the internationally applicable **NATRUE Label** to support NATRUE's mission and to provide producers and consumers with a high benchmark for natural and organic cosmetic products. After more than 10 years of commitment, NATRUE is an established international advocate and voice for the political, regulatory and scientific needs of the natural and organic cosmetic sector, and the NATRUE Label continues to represent high-quality ingredient and product transparency in the face of greenwashing. More details about certified products and brands carrying the NATRUE Label can be checked in real time in [NATRUE's public online database](#).

2. Is there a legal definition for “natural” and “organic” cosmetics?

To date, 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 to ensure they are verifiable and not misleading, but there are no mandatory harmonised criteria (or label) for natural and organic cosmetics. The European Commission has provided clarification of the absence of an European harmonised standard for natural and organic cosmetics in a document that can be read [here](#).

3. What does the NATRUE Label guarantee?

In the absence of an official definition of “natural” and “organic” cosmetics, private, voluntary standards exist to offer consumers guarantees about the composition and qualities of a cosmetic product. The NATRUE Standard, which is private, voluntary and international, sets strict label criteria for natural and organic cosmetics, which translate into guarantees both for:

- **producers** whose cosmetic products are certified to a high and strictly controlled benchmark for natural and organic cosmetics in the market and
- **consumers** who can rely on the NATRUE seal to identify natural and organic cosmetics that match their expectations and demands.

The type of ingredients, the allowed processing methods and the overall composition of cosmetic products established in NATRUE's Criteria guarantee that NATRUE labelled products are truly worth of the claims “natural” or “organic”. Under the NATRUE Label criteria, depending on the proportion of organic ingredients, cosmetic products can be certified to one of three possible levels: **natural**, **natural with organic portion** and **organic**.

The NATRUE Standard establishes that at least **95%** of the ingredients from plant and animal origin contained in a cosmetic product that claims the NATRUE organic certification level must come from certified controlled organic farming or wild collection.

4. Are natural and organic cosmetics safe?

Like all other cosmetics, natural and organic cosmetics are subjected to strict safety assessments required by cosmetics legislation ([Regulation \(EC\) No 1223/2009](#)) in order to be placed in the market. This means that all legally placed cosmetics in the market, both conventional and natural/organic, are safe for use.

5. Are natural and organic cosmetics tested on animals?

Animal testing is against NATRUE's underlying values and ethics, and it is prohibited by law in the European Union. [Regulation \(EC\) No. 1223/2009](#) on cosmetic products ensures that no cosmetic product placed in the European market has been subjected to animal testing. NATRUE's Standard extends this ban to third countries outside the EU, which means that the marketing of NATRUE certified finished products is not possible in countries where animal testing is required by law.

6. What ingredients are allowed under NATRUE's standard?

NATRUE certified products only contain 100% natural, derived natural and nature-identical ingredients. NATRUE labelled products must only be formulated with substances from compliant origin and manufacture according to the NATRUE Label criteria, which means that no silicones, parabens, mineral oils, microbeads/microplastics, synthetic fragrances or GMOs are allowed.



7. What are synthetic ingredients? And what are chemicals?

Synthetic ingredients are a type of compounds produced by chemical synthesis. These can be entirely man-made ingredients that do not exist in nature (for instance, dimethicone, which is a common silicone) or ingredients reproduced from those that already exist in nature (such as panthenol, which is a preservative). Synthetic ingredients can also be chemically modified natural substances (for instance, glycerine).

The word “chemical” is colloquially used as synonym for synthetic (man-made) substances, including petrochemicals. However, from a scientific point-of-view, all substances are chemicals, and not all chemicals have a synthetic nature (for instance, water is a natural chemical). Natural substances can be considered as synthetic when they have been subjected to a certain amount of chemical processes, so the quality of “natural” of an ingredient is determined not only by its origin, but also by its processing.

8. What is the difference between natural, derived natural and nature-identical ingredients?

Natural ingredients are those isolated directly from the plant (herbal extracts or essential oils), animals (for example, lanolin) excluding dead vertebrates, or mineral source (for instance, sea salt). Derived natural ingredients (also commonly known as “nature origin” ingredients) are those obtained from natural ingredients by chemical modification modelled on physiological reactions, reproduction or refinement. For example, plant-based glycerine can be obtained through the chemical processing of plant oils. As for nature-identical ingredients, these exist in nature but they cannot be recovered from it using reasonable technical effort or in sufficient quality or purity. For NATRUE, only certain pigments, minerals and preservatives are permitted in nature-identical form. Authorised or approved nature-identical and derived natural substances are positively listed by their INCI on the annexes of the NATRUE Standard.

9. How does NATRUE guarantee the highest levels of natural and organic ingredients in NATRUE certified products?

In order to acknowledge the different qualities and characteristics of cosmetic products, NATRUE has created a unique system of **13 product categories** and has assigned minimum levels of natural ingredients and maximum levels of derived natural substances to each category. This is how the NATRUE Label can guarantee the highest levels of natural and organic ingredients for each product category under each level of certification (natural, natural with organic portion and organic cosmetics).

In addition to this product classification system, the NATRUE label ensures a maximum concentration of natural and organic ingredients by **not counting added water** when calculating the portion of natural substances in a finished product. Whilst water is clearly natural, counting the contribution of water when calculating the naturalness of a product can inflate the natural content and dilute the contributions made from plants and minerals, which are the ones that consumers particularly look for in natural and organic cosmetics. By leaving added water out of the calculation of natural substances, the NATRUE Label guarantees a high content of natural and organic ingredients in all NATRUE certified products.

10. What is “greenwashing” and how does NATRUE contribute to preventing it?

Since there is no harmonised criteria to define the properties of natural and organic cosmetics at international level, it is difficult for producers and consumers to evaluate whether the claims ‘natural’ or ‘organic’ are considered misleading. The core of the problem remains the fact that conventional and nature-inspired products may make claims (for instance, “made with rose oil”), use images, iconography and other forms of marketing that can emphasise or draw attention to limited number of natural ingredients rather than the product as a whole. Such natural ingredients may be present in the finished product, but only in very low concentrations relative to the proportion of non-natural substances used. This phenomenon, called “greenwashing”, can be seen not only in the misleading use of claims such as “natural” or “organic”, but also “environmentally friendly”, “clean” or “green”. Consumers need to remain vigilant in the face of such misleading claims and greenwash and check the INCI list (product’s ingredients list), which is mandatory on-pack by law.

NATRUE actively contributes to fighting greenwashing in the cosmetic sector thanks to our **75% rule**, which makes the NATRUE certification of a product only possible if 75% (8 out of 10) of the products of the same brand or sub-brand (if this has been specifically created to develop the natural and organic product line of a brand), also undergo the certification under the NATRUE Label. This rule prevents brands from marketing one or two “*hero products*” as certified cosmetics while keeping the rest of the products in the line as conventionally formulated ones, which can be misleading for consumers as they might believe that the whole brand is certified as natural or organic cosmetics.



11. What are GMOs?

A genetically modified organism (GMO) is any 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 recombination. GMOs and ingredients produced from them are prohibited in natural and organic cosmetics certified under the NATRUE Label.

12. What are preservatives?

Preservatives are substances which are exclusively or mainly intended to inhibit the development and proliferation of microorganisms (such as bacteria, fungi or yeast) in a product. NATRUE permits a selected number of preservatives of natural, derived natural and nature-identical origin in the formulation of cosmetic products, and prohibits the use of preservatives such as Triclosan, Phenoxyethanol and parabens.

13. What are nanomaterials? Are they allowed under NATRUE's standard?

Nanoparticles are natural, incidental or manufactured material containing particles in the size range 1nm – 100 nm. Nanoparticles modify properties of cosmetic products such as their colour, transparency, solubility and chemical reactivity. Insoluble nanoparticles are mainly used in cosmetic products as UV-filters.

All nanomaterials used in cosmetic products require a thorough assessment of safety. NATRUE does not exclude the use of assessed nano forms of ingredients compliant with the NATRUE criteria, e.g. Titanium Dioxide and Zinc Oxide. Both Titanium Dioxide and Zinc Oxide are safely regulated through the provisions laid out in the EU Cosmetic Regulation (EC) No. 1223/2009 based upon a positive Opinion by the European Commission's independent risk assessment body, the Scientific Committee of Consumer Safety (SCSS).

14. What does vegan mean? Are all NATRUE certified products vegan?

Veganism is a way of living whereby the individual (a vegan) neither eats nor uses animal products. It is possible to guarantee products as vegan to a given standard/definition via a certification process from a registered body.

Finished cosmetic products certified to the NATRUE Label criteria contain natural and organic ingredients, which also includes animal derived ingredients (except dead vertebrates), such as beeswax, honey, milk, etc. Whilst NATRUE has an identical position to certain vegan certification requirements (e.g. both are against animal testing), not every vegan certifiable requirement overlaps with NATRUE's scope and definition of natural and organic cosmetics. Vegan certification is hence not a requirement for NATRUE certified products, but it's totally compatible with the NATRUE certification, so in practice many NATRUE certified products free of animal ingredients also carry a vegan seal.

15. Is palm oil allowed in NATRUE products?

NATRUE ensures that only natural ingredients processed according to NATRUE's strict criteria are present in the final cosmetic product. Palm (kernel) oil and its derivatives are substances of botanical origin, and therefore they are permitted in NATRUE certified products. NATRUE recommends using sustainable certified palm oil and is currently working on implementing requirements for sustainable palm oil in the formulation of all NATRUE certified cosmetic products.

16. Does NATRUE have special criteria regarding packaging?

NATRUE's Standard establishes that packaging should be kept to a minimum and that products should be designed for multiple uses. Whenever possible, all packaging should be recyclable and renewable materials should be used. The use of halogenated plastics is forbidden.