

## ECHA Proposes to Restrict Intentionally Added Microplastics

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The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) [announced](#) on January 30, 2019, that it has submitted a restriction proposal for microplastic particles that are intentionally added to mixtures used by consumers or professionals. According to ECHA, if adopted, the restriction could reduce the amount of microplastics released to the environment in the European Union (EU) “by about 400 thousand tonnes over 20 years.” ECHA states that its assessment found that intentionally added microplastics are most likely to accumulate in terrestrial environments, as the particles concentrate in sewage sludge that is frequently applied as fertilizer. A much smaller proportion of these microplastics is released directly to the aquatic environment. Once released, they can be extremely persistent in the environment and practically impossible to remove. ECHA states: “Due to their small size, microplastics and nanoplastics — even smaller particles that are created from the further degradation of microplastics — may be readily ingested and thereby enter the food chain.”

ECHA’s proposed restriction targets intentionally added microplastics in products from which they will inevitably be released to the environment. The proposed restriction would cover small, typically microscopic, synthetic polymer particles that resist (bio)degradation. The scope would cover a wide range of uses in consumer and professional products in multiple sectors, including cosmetic products, detergents and maintenance products, paints and coatings, construction materials, and medicinal products, as well as various products used in agriculture and horticulture and in the oil and gas sectors.

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