

New Global Standards for Natural and Organic Cosmetics

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Guest Post by Mark Wuttke, Principal, Wuttke Group LLC

Over 250 international attendees convened at the first European Natural Beauty Summit. Held at the Hotel Meridian Paris Etoile, the summit was dedicated to natural cosmetics and sustainability primarily to address the key challenges and opportunities facing the development of international standards in the natural and organic beauty products industry. Topics by noted speakers included: sustainability, ingredients and formulation, technical issues, ethical marketing, regulatory platforms, and investment.

Although all topics sparked debate, “demystifying the convoluted myriad of certification standards” was the liveliest. Attendees were clearly passionate about the need for one harmonized global standard for ethically produced, chemically clean products.

At a reported 20% or more expected growth per year, natural and organic cosmetic products are among the fastest growing in the European and US cosmetic sector. The growth is largely fueled by the tremendous spending power (over 200 billion \$ in the US alone) of the “cultural creative’s” or “LOHAS” consumers, who are highly educated and demand ethical and sustainable risk-free products that are safe, healthy and effective.

The four leading European certification groups understand the importance of one global standard and earning the confidence of this discerning client. BDIH [Germany], Soil Association [UK], EcoCert [France] and AIAB [Italy] are putting the finishing touches on one unified European standard poised to debut in June 2008. In November 2007, the US formed OASIS, whose mission echoes that of their European peers. OASIS intends to align their standards with the unified European standards.

Though unified certification initiatives are important for reducing confusion within the natural and organic community, there are downsides. There may be prohibitive costs associated with compliance, and quality standards risk dilution in an effort to be broadly inclusive and politically correct. Conscious consumers already pay a premium for quality, and it will be crucial for them to feel confident that standards remain high.

To maintain the standard’s integrity and avoid potential dilution, six leaders in the European natural cosmetics industry-- Laverana/Lavera, Logocos/Logona, Primavera, Santaverde, Wala/Dr. Hauschka and Weleda—formed the Brussels-based regulatory group NaTrue.

NaTrue brings together the collective experience, expertise and philosophies of clear leaders in natural and organic industry. Their mission is to ensure consumer protection through clear regulatory definitions that will be upheld through precise criteria and internationally recognized labelling. NaTrue also focuses on the preservation of high quality fair trade materials [plant extracts, essential oils, ingredients, etc] with minimal processing and intervention, and a comprehensive ban on animal testing both during the development and manufacture of natural and organic cosmetics. NaTrue is open to all interested companies, organizations and institutions who wish to participate.

One global definition and legal status for natural and organic cosmetics is without question, one giant step forward towards defining what is and what is not natural or organic. The next Natural Beauty Summit is scheduled for May 2008, in New York City.

Mark Wuttke heads the Wuttke Group, LLC, a world class business development team with a focus on sustainable luxury, spa, boutique retail, organic luxury and the emerging category of eco-chic. Developing business globally, their clients are in the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Hong Kong, UAE in addition to the USA and Australia. www.wuttkegroup.com



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