



Natural Cosmetics – What exactly does that even mean?

There is hardly a trend that has influenced the cosmetic industry during the last years as natural cosmetics did. About 16,5% of the total German market were made up by natural or near-natural products – and counting. By now, even mass-market-producers rely on “green products” which results in an almost infinite number of products consumers can choose from. But what exactly does natural cosmetics stand for? When can a product be called natural? Are there strict definitions and regulations? We are trying to bring some light into the darkness...

Let's be honest: If we had asked you 10-20 years ago, how you would define the term “natural cosmetics” your answer probably wouldn't have been that positive. Eco-activists, a minority far away from glamour and lifestyle who ate tofu and put sticky stinging nettle or chamomile lotions on their skin, were laughed at. As if those products would work...an anti-aging lotion can only be effective when it is a high-tech-product from a well-known concern.

And today? When taking a walk through the aisles of a drug store we can find “green” wrinkle-fillers, make-up or aftershave lotions right next to the products from big brands. And it's not just that: Even the market leaders for classic cosmetic products primp themselves with a rising number of natural and near-natural innovations. The market for natural cosmetics is booming. While 2013 almost EUR 920 mil. were achieved through natural cosmetic products, the number increased by 25% to EUR 1,150 mil in 2016.¹ The market share of drug stores adds up to 40%.²

The market for cosmetic products has changed. Sophisticated and increasingly younger consumers further drive natural cosmetics forward. Environmentalism and sustainability are omnipresent subjects that motivate consumers to opt for natural alternatives, even when it comes to their skin and hair care. That this trend has been picked up by a number of producers can be seen in the number of trendy and new natural products which are brought onto the market on what feels like a daily basis.

With this variety, it is hard to keep track. Near-natural, natural,...how exactly do I recognize “real” natural cosmetic products? Are there strict definitions? After all, banana can only be called natural or organic when it meets the legal EU guidelines!

Unfortunately, it is not that easy when it comes to natural cosmetics. Although there are a few first suggestions, e.g. the restriction of authorized preservatives or the requirement, that all used raw materials should be of “plant, animal or mineral origin” which may only be “physically, microbiologically or enzymatically processed”, a strict, legally defined and protected definition is still missing.

As a result of this uncertainty- and to at least try to give the consumers some orientation - a couple of manufacturers joined forces and formed associations to define their own standards for organic and natural products, test products according to these criteria and award labels. Examples? **COSMOS** will award your product with its “**Ecocert**” label for natural cosmetics, when it has a minimum of 50% of plant-based ingredients in the formula and a minimum of 5% of all ingredients by weight come from organic farming. The **BDHI**-label requires that at least 95% of the raw materials come from organic farming, however, certain preservatives are allowed.³ For **NaTrue** it

¹ <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/201220/umfrage/umsatz-mit-naturkosmetik-in-deutschland/>

² <http://www.kosmetiknachrichten.de/2016/09/06/naturkosmetik-branchenmonitor-naturkosmetik-2016-stabiler-wachstum-naturnahe-kosmetik-holt-auf/>

³ <http://www.ecocert.com/sites/default/files/u3/Ecocert-Standard.pdf>



comes down to the share of organic ingredients. At least 30, 70 or 95%? Altogether three labels are available.

As you can tell by now: The definition of natural cosmetics is more or less up to you. Will that change? According to a number of experts it will not because the market for natural cosmetics is already too differentiated and it is too late to find an official definition. ⁴

Despite all the differences it is possible to categorize cosmetic products into three groups: Classic cosmetics, near-natural cosmetics and natural cosmetics.

Classic cosmetics

All products that are approved according to **the EU-cosmetics regulation** are assigned to this category. As the regulation allows chemical-synthetic raw materials there are far more ingredients suitable for classic cosmetics than for natural cosmetics. This variety of course involves the danger that some of the ingredients used might be harmful to health and/or the environment.



Near-Natural cosmetics



Near-natural cosmetic products are those, which ingredients are part natural or which go without certain synthetic raw materials. This includes the so-called **“White Label Products”** which are characterized by the notation “free of...” Although these products don’t use specific ingredients such as mineral oil, parabens or genetically changed raw materials they cannot be certified to a renowned natural cosmetic standard (see above).

Natural cosmetics

Natural cosmetic products are characterized by the labels from the different associations mentioned previously (**certified natural cosmetics**), tested by supervisory institutes (**controlled natural cosmetics**) or meet the requirements of the leading trade fair for natural cosmetic, Vivanness. **Health shop products**, which are in line with the guideline of the association of health shops in Germany (neuform) are assigned to this category as well.

In case you are still not sure, whether a product is classic, near-natural or natural, feel free to contact us, your experts at TER Chemicals. We are on hand with help and advice and would be happy to inform you about all our classic, near-natural and natural cosmetic products.

⁴ <http://naturkosmetik-zertifizieren.de/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Raus-aus-dem-Label-Dschungel.pdf>