

Defending Fragrance Ingredients

SFP and IFRA host a discussion with perfumers surrounding the escalating pace of European regulation.

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The self-regulation that the fragrance industry has practiced since 1973, when it formed IFRA (International Fragrance Association), is coming under greater scrutiny from the European Union. When the Directorate General for Consumer Protection (DG SANCO) and the Scientific Committee for Consumer Safety (SCCS) discovered that 1–3% of the EU population is allergic to fragrances, they found this number to be too high and called for stricter regulation of commonly used ingredients. In response to the report of the committee, published in July 2012, IFRA proposed a cooperative approach that engages the various stakeholders to address issues surrounding fragrance allergens in cosmetic products.

On October 18, the Société Française des Parfumeurs (SFP) hosted a conference in Paris on the subject of raw material regulations. Titled “To Control or To Suffer, The Choice is Yours,” the conference brought together perfumers and the representatives of professional organizations such as IFRA and the National Union of Manufacturers of Aromatics (PRODAROM) to inspire a dialogue and to work collectively to present information to the regulatory bodies.

The conference was timely because there are few issues of greater concern to the perfume industry today than the escalating pace of regulation. Raw material restrictions have made a profound impact on the way perfumers work, from the constant reformulations to the disappearance of a whole series of ingredients from perfumers’ palettes. Ask perfumers about regulations, and the frustration in their tone becomes palpable. Even if perfumers can find a clever replacement for a banned or restricted material, a few months later they encounter even more constraints. The proposed EU regulations add significant challenges—the list of potential allergens is now at 100, with some like Lilial^a and oakmoss facing complete bans. What can be done about it?

^a Lilial is a trade name of Givaudan.



From left, Pierre Sivac (IFRA), Patrick Saint-Yves (president of SFP) and Philippe Massé (Prodarom)

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For most perfumers, this question is impossible to answer. The subject of regulation is complex, the methodologies are unclear and IFRA’s activities are poorly understood. Historically IFRA has interacted with the fragrance companies, but not with perfumers directly. The consequence has been that perfumers have had to adjust to changes over which they had no control.

“We confront a difficult problem,” said Pierre Sivac, the president of IFRA. “To respond to DG SANCO, we need better predictability—we have to know the effects of our ingredients.”

The perfumers are the ones who understand the materials better than anyone in the industry, and they are the essential actors IFRA needs to engage. Establishing the means of communication was the main outcome of the SFP conference; it was the first step in creating a forum where perfumers could interact with IFRA directly, without the mediation of their companies. The president of the SFP, Patrick Saint-Yves, noted, “The ultimate goal is to keep alive the vastly underestimated cultural and economic potential of fragrance creation by pulling together all the actors concerned toward one common goal.”

As Sivac and Philippe Massé, the president of PRODAROM, made clear during the conference, IFRA’s advocacy plan to address the SCCS opinion on fragrance allergens involves extensive collaboration with both the fragrance manufacturers and the perfume brands. Earlier this year, IFRA gave EU representatives a tour of the perfume houses in order to illustrate the significant economic consequences the new regulations impose on the industry.

Some might say that perfumers have more ingredients in their palette today than 50 years ago, and even the limitations themselves can spur greater creativity. But the ever-encroaching restrictions coupled with the economic issues faced by the industry have profound ramifications on growth in the sector.

“The main challenge facing the perfumers after this first conference will be to better understand and accept the importance



From left, Alexandra Monet (Drom), Paige Crist (P&F) and Sylvie Borin (Org-Syboconcept)



Philippe Massé (Prodarom), left, and Jean Guichard (Givaudan)


of the work undertaken by IFRA,” commented Saint Yves. “They would also need to contribute their vast global know-how to help IFRA.”

The burden is on both parties; IFRA also needs to be proactive in seeking partnerships and in communicating even more with the perfumers about its operations and methods.

DG SANCO is expected to present its regulatory proposal to the European Commission in June 2013, but in the interim, it is open to consider the economic importance of perfume and the actual number of perfume-induced allergies. Now is the crucial time for the industry to pool its resources and powers. It will take work on the part of everyone involved, but the effort is worth it if the industry is to preserve its heritage and ensure its future.

To learn more, visit the IFRA and SFP websites: www.ifraorg.org; www.parfumeur-createur.com.

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