

Subject: CESIO comments on the Detergents Regulation, supporting 'end-user surfactant' definition to distinguish from B2B uses

Brussels, 19 March 2025. CESIO, a sector group of Cefic representing manufacturers and suppliers of surfactants in the EU, remains concerned about the general application of new measures that would treat (B2B) surfactants like final detergents. Such measures are disproportionate, would add unnecessarily to the administrative burden for surfactant manufacturers, and duplicate existing measures that already apply to B2B surfactants. We therefore highlight our support for the inclusion of a definition on "end-user surfactant" in the revised regulation to clarify the scope of any new measures, and the need to provide further technical clarifications that will help to avoid other unnecessary duplication of measures for B2B surfactants. In our opinion, these recommended changes are absolutely essential in order to ensure that provisions affecting surfactants at B2B level remain fit for purpose and can deliver the intended results.

- On definitions, we support the inclusion of a definition on 'end-user surfactant' in the revised regulation. Furthermore, references to "surfactants and surfactants in detergents" should also be removed, as this regulation only applies to surfactants used in detergents, not to surfactants used in other applications. Within the scope of surfactants used in detergents, B2B and B2C surfactants must be distinguished. We propose to clarify the scope under recital 1.
- Regarding information requirements and technical documentation, B2B surfactants are already well regulated within EU REACH; EU CLP and biodegradability criteria set by the current (EC) N° 648/2004. Consequently, additional information on "surfactants" requested by the proposal that is not already part of the current detergent regulation (e.g. Annex IV (2.2)) should either be deleted or limited to "end-user surfactants" used in detergents and sold directly to consumers. This would be more in line with the spirit of recital 7 of the proposal.
- Regarding labelling, the label for B2B surfactants should always be according to CLP, as surfactants are sold for many purposes beyond their use in detergents, and it would be difficult to have different labels for different uses. An additional label according to Annex V.1 (c to f) specifying the type of surfactant would have no added value and should be deleted or at least limited to surfactants sold to end consumers.
- Regarding biodegradability: In the EU, strict requirements regulating the biodegradability of surfactants used in detergents were introduced over 20 years ago, with the entry in force of Regulation (EC) 648/2004 (updated by Regulation (EU) No 259/2012). Consequently, surfactants available on the EU market today already comply with the ultimate biodegradability standard, as defined under Annex III of Regulation (EC) 648/2004 (and the subsequent amendment issued in 2012). The proposed revision of Regulation (EC) 648/2004 retains this high standard. So, CESIO agrees to uphold this request, but we also highlight the need for the following changes to the revised legal text:
 - To also maintain the possibility to use all methods listed in Annex III of Regulation (EC) 648/2004, that means OECD guidelines 301 A to F and 310, depending on the type of substance being tested, its physical properties and characteristics such as solubility, volatility and sorption.



- To use data already available when reliable and scientifically robust studies are available as granted in regulation EC 648/2004. For this purpose, it is essential to reinstate paragraph 30 of the current detergent regulation EC 648/2004, which allows to waive additional biodegradability tests on surfactants when previous reliable and scientifically robust studies and data are already available. This will help to avoid the unnecessary duplication of tests that otherwise would be conducted without any benefit.
- Not to define a reference method as in Annex III to be used by surveillance Authorities. Rather, the best method according to surfactant's properties should be used.
- Test reports should only be provided directly to authorities when asked. Only the test results and methods are shared with the economic operators.
- CESIO believes that a Digital Passport is not needed for B2B surfactants. Because surfactants are B2B molecules, all important information can be found on the standard documentation that is already available through parallel regulation (e.g. SDS and labels according to EU CLP, UFI number for poison centre notification).

Conclusion

The EU's competitiveness and sustainability in the area of surfactant production relies on efficient and fit for purpose legislation, and CESIO remains deeply concerned that the current EU proposal for a regulation on detergents and surfactants adds uncertainty to the regulatory landscape for B2B surfactants in Europe with no assessment of impact and unnecessarily duplicates already existing regulatory requirements for B2B surfactants that are used in detergents.

Surfactants are raw material chemicals used primarily in B2B transactions in the formulation of finished products, including but not limited to detergents. They are typically not intended for standalone consumer use and are used in many non-detergent products ranging from construction and cosmetics to printing inks and adhesives, to name a few. Over 3 million tonnes of surfactants were produced in the European Economic Area in 2023 (2.4 million tonnes by CESIO members alone) with a total estimated annual turnover for the entire sector in Europe of between €5-10 billion. Roughly 60% of the market is estimated to derive from detergents.

We stress that the development of science-based legislation should support and not add burden to EU industries. We therefore call on the EU institutions to further develop fit for purpose legislation focused on the original aims of the revision, and we remain committed to supporting the further evolution of the regulation in line with the latest scientific developments.

For additional information, please also see [CESIO's detailed position](#), as well as [CESIO factsheets](#) on surfactants and biodegradability; and [CESIO's TMS Guidance](#) on the definition of surfactant, all available here on [the CESIO website](#).

