

# Gorgeously GREEN

There is no doubt that green beauty is becoming big business, however, since it is largely an unregulated industry, it can be a little confusing when choosing which green beauty products to invest in. Antonella Dési investigates this trend and offers some insights into how spa and salon owners can keep up with ever increasing market demand.



**T**here is a lot of hype in the beauty industry about green products – there are thousands of products on the market claiming to be green, environmentally friendly, natural, safe, organic, flower- and plant-based, pure, botanical, eco-friendly, and the list goes on. However, the truth of the matter is that these are largely undefined terms in a largely unregulated industry, especially here in South Africa.

Jacoline Wentzel, From The Spa Warehouse, explains: “Even though this is a fairly new trend in South Africa and it is a more established market overseas, there is still no international standard regarding organic products. In Australia for instance you need 95% organic ingredients in your products to be termed as being organic. In South Africa, there is currently no law that regulates this. There are a number of international independent organisations that regulate this industry, but they all have their own standards.”

## So what does it all mean?

Using green beauty products is not just driven by the social drive to save our world and the environment, but also a much more personal reason – one of health. Since your skin is your body's largest organ, whatever you rub, lather and smooth into your skin should be made using ingredients that don't have any damaging side effects. Absorbing

small amounts of toxins into your skin over a long period of time can have a cumulative damaging effect. Essentially, green products can be divided into two categories:

- **Products manufactured and packaged by companies that use environmentally-friendly practices:**

These companies will use sustainable energy solutions, and the packaging will be made from recyclable materials and printed with soy ink. There should also be a drive to refill and reuse the containers.

- **Products that have been manufactured using ingredients that won't be harmful to the environment or the body in any way:** These ingredients are defined by how biodegradable they are, whether they are organic or natural ingredients, as well as by the origins of the ingredients. When asked what defines an organic



**ABOVE: Thalgo's range of organic skincare called Terre & Mer is more than 99% natural, and has no added synthetic fragrance and colouring and contains organic vegetable and essential oils, floral water and olive leaf extracts.**

product, Anita Meiring from Environ, answers: “An organic product should be derived from plants that have been grown without any chemical fertilisers >>

and pesticides, on land that has properly recovered from conventional farm use. I think that the definition does not include any enhanced activity at all. From our point of view, there should be minimal difference in the nature of the raw materials used, whether they come from organic or conventional farming. The contaminants of pesticides and other chemicals would be of a very low concentration when plant derivatives have been highly refined.”

### Ingredients to look out for

It is important that therapists can read and understand the ingredient lists – while many products have a long list of “organic” and “natural” ingredients, they might still be using potentially harmful ingredients. Even though some products claim to be free of some bad ingredients, they could also include a variety of other potentially harmful ones. As such, it is essential to be able to define what is in the ingredients of a product, and what isn’t.

With regards to advice about buying organic products, Trevor Steyn, from Esse, notes: “The easiest way to be sure is to look for a certification logo and a declaration of the percentage of organic and the percentage of natural ingredients. All certification agents will insist that an organic brand offers full disclosure to the client and declares their natural and organic percentages. Many brands will try to capitalise on the organic trend by using some organic ingredients in a conventional chemical product. They will then claim that the product contains organic ingredients or call the product ‘organic’. The only way to evaluate these products is to look at the INCI ingredient listing on the pack. Organic products should not have any parabens, petrochemicals (mineral oil, petrolatum, petroleum jelly, and so on) or ethoxylated ingredients. There are plenty of other ingredients that are not allowed, but these are the most common.”

Sarah Vrancken, from Africology Skin Care points out that although certain products might claim to be organic, if they contain any of the common chemical ingredients listed in the table on the right, you should think again before using them: “If you would like to do some research of your own, [www.cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com) is a good website to ascertain how good or bad certain ingredients are.”

She says that perfume is a chemical that can cause pigmentation, and so it should be avoided in moisturisers and body lotions. She also provided the following glossary (see right) for blacklisted ingredients that should be avoided in all green products.

## ON THE BLACKLIST

INGREDIENT	USE	EFFECT
Sodium laureth sulphate	Foaming agent	Eye irritation, rashes, hair loss, flaking skin, mouth ulcerations, when combined with other cosmetic chemicals it can produce nitrosamines, which are carcinogenic
Parabens [butyl parabens, methyl paraben, propyl paraben]	Preservatives in cosmetics; used in 99% of cosmetics	Damages skin cell DNA; causative factor in male infertility and breast tumours in women
DEA - Diethanolamine MEA - Monoethanolamine TEA - Triethanolamine	Solvent pH adjuster and lathering agent	These are hormone-disrupting chemicals that can form carcinogenic nitrates. They are banned in the UK.
Isopropyl alcohol SD - 40	Drying agent	Disrupts skins immune protective barrier, making it vulnerable. Promotes irregular pigmentation and age spots. Is an irritant.
Propylene glycol	Drying agent	Skin agent and susceptibility to cancer
DMDM Hydantion-imidazolidinyl	Preservative	Can release formaldehyde into the body, triggering skin reactions, allergies, joint pain, dizziness, low immunity. Formaldehyde undermines the life processes of the living matrix – morticians use this for embalming.
EDTA and Disodium EDTA	Stabiliser and prevents texture, odour or consistency changes	Shown to accelerate the formation of hydroxy radicals that damage cell membranes and triggers degenerative changes in the cells. Offers a fast track to rapid aging.
Phenoxyethanol	Now also used instead of parabens. Beware of marketing that says “paraben-free”, as it often contains this ingredient.	It has been linked to skin irritation and is believed to have damaging effects on the nervous system. Like parabens, it has oestrogenic properties so should be avoided by endometriosis sufferers or those afflicted with adult acne.
Ammonium sulphate		Ecotoxicology wildlife and environmental toxicity
Methylchloroisothiazolinone	Preservative	Cancer-one or in-vitro tests on non-mammalian cells show positive mutation results

### OTHER INGREDIENTS TO AVOID INCLUDE:

**Ethoxylates:** Chemical compounds that are irritating to the skin and thought to be carcinogenic.

**Silicone:** A synthetic additive which can be harmful and irritating.

**Phthalates:** These compounds are commonly found in nail polish and fragrances. They are thought to be harmful to reproductive system, have been linked to developmental disorders in children, and guilty of immunotoxicity and endocrine disruption.

**Petrolatum:** Developed from petroleum, it can be irritating to the skin, clog pores, and may be contaminated with toxic impurities.



### Certifications

Steyn says: “South Africa does not have organic standards for personal care products. Many brands claim that their products are organic but don’t carry any form of certification. In the EU and the US this would be illegal, but the legislation here has not yet caught up. The local branches of the international certification agents are working with government to try to implement a way forward in this regard.”

Due to the fact that this industry is largely unregulated, and that some products that are labeled “organic” or “natural” have been found to still contain potentially harmful ingredients, it is often difficult to differentiate the good from the bad, creating confusion and mistrust. There are many certifications out there however, that are in the business of building credibility amongst the truly organic products, as well as protecting consumers against false claims. Some of these include:

**Oasis (USA):** Dedicated to beauty and personal care, the Oasis seal aims to provide clarity and set the standards for organic products. It looks for organic manufacturing procedures, as well as organic ingredients for products to bear its certification. There are currently two certifications available: “Made with Organic” requires a minimum of 70% organic ingredients; “Organic” requires a minimum of 85% organic.

**The Natural Standard (USA):** The Natural Products Association has created The Natural Standard – the Natural

1. Sothy’s Beauty Garden range of skin care products carries the Ecocert label.
2. All the products in the Babor’s Baborganic range are completely organic, and are based on ECOCERT-compliant natural ingredients from the pristine Alpine region.
3. The Danné Herb and Mineral Mist is an organic-based product that will re-hydrate the skin restoring vital moisture.
4. All Africology products are fragranced naturally using essential oils. Each fragrance also has a therapeutic effect on the mind, which will help to relax or uplift your spirit.
5. Unlike chemical sun blocks, Esse’s new organic sunscreen starts working immediately. Esse sunscreen is formulated for daily use, is transparent on application and fragrance-free.
6. Pure Beginnings is a range that consists of everyday personal hygiene products. It doesn’t contain petrochemical, parabens, synthetic fragrances, aluminium or animal products.

Seal is awarded to products that use organic, biodegradable ingredients and environmentally sensitive packaging. This certification requires a minimum of 95% organic ingredients, and will only be accredited to brands with a minimum 60% of its products meeting the association’s standards.

**ECOCERT (France):** Regulates cosmetics and perfumes, as well as detergents, textiles, food and food products. ECOCERT does not require 100% organic ingredients in order for a product to be labeled “Organic”. It provides certification for South African, Japanese, EU and US products and standards.

**COSMEBIO (France):** This certification guarantees a natural cosmetic. It requires that a minimum of 95% of the ingredients stem from organic agriculture, that 95% of the ingredients must be from natural origin,

and that 10% of the ingredients must be certified organic.

**The Soil Association (UK):** If a product carries the Soil Association symbol and is labeled “organic”, it must contain a minimum of 95% organic ingredients. A product that carries the Soil Association symbol alone must contain a minimum of 70% organic ingredients. The remaining ingredients that are permitted in the products must be proven to be non-GM and can only be used if the organic version of that ingredient is not yet available, or they are from a restricted list of synthetic chemicals that have been assessed against criteria to demonstrate they have no detrimental impact on human health and minimum environmental impact.

**BDIH (Germany):** BDIH “Certified Natural Cosmetics” seal use natural raw material such as plant oils, fats and waxes, herbal >>

## THE PRESERVATIVE WARS

With the trend towards greener products, there has been a building controversy surrounding the inclusion of the preservative, methylparaben. This preservative has been used in cosmetics since the 1920s – it kills bacteria from gram positive and gram negative, as well as fungus and moulds, thus extending the shelf life of a product up to the required two years. Danne Montague-King from DMK says that many new alternatives have become available in the market place, which allows chemists to dispense with this green offensive preservative, but that their anti-mould or -microbacterial qualities are a little dubious. He says that in light of this quandary, an exciting new ingredient has been discovered: "Biosense is a globally-approved paraben and formaldehyde-free preservative system that is compatible with almost all personal care products; it is safe, non-toxic and non-irritating with no evidence of ocular irritation or skin reactions. To the compounding chemist, Biosense is versatile, easy to use, and highly stable and effect over a broad pH range – including complex molecules such as proteins and surfactants. It can also be incorporated into cosmetic phasing under a wide range of temperatures."

extracts and essential oils and aromatic materials from controlled biological cultivation or controlled biological wild collection. In addition to the careful selection of raw materials, the ecological impact of each product plays an important role.

**USDA Organic (USA):** Products that display a "100% organic" USDA Organic certified label may contain only organically produced ingredients. If they are labeled "Organic", 95% of the ingredients must be organically grown, and the remaining ones must come from non-organic ingredients that must be listed on an approved list. The "Made with organic ingredients" denotes that the product is made with at least 70% organic ingredients, three of which must be listed on the package. The remaining 30% of non-organic ingredients as per approved list.

**Bio Eco cosmesi AIAB (Italy):** The Italian Organic Farming Association (AIAB) and The Institute for the Ethic Certification (ICEA), together with a group of manufacturers, developed guidelines for natural and organic cosmetics. Certification means that all raw materials must be natural, and the use of organic ingredients is compulsory whenever possible. The product must be derma-compatible and eco-compatible.

**COSMOS (Europe):** This certification has been developed at an international level by ICEA (Italy), BDIH (Germany), Bioforum (Belgium), Cosmebio/Ecocert (France) and the Soil Association (UK) in order to define minimum requirements and definitions for organic and/or natural cosmetics. The standards for beauty products, which will comprise a harmonised European standard for natural and organic cosmetics, won't be operative before March/April 2010. **PB**

**7. eco.kid is an organic, biologically friendly product range formulated exclusively for the hair, scalp and skin of children aged 3 to 12 years old. The range contains up to 99% Ecocert-certified organic ingredients.**

**8. Enchantrix offers a comprehensive range of cleaning, body, hair, facial, baby and pet products. All Enchantrix products are free of harmful chemicals, and as far as possible, only locally sourced, certified organic ingredients are used and they are completely biodegradable.**

**9. Many organic brands use a few organic ingredients in a water base, which makes up most of the product - making the organic content less than 5%. Instead of the typical water base that cannot be "organic or pesticide-free", Juice Beauty created an antioxidant-rich, organic juice base. All Juice Beauty products contain up to 95% certified organic ingredients.**

**10. Baobody products are pH balanced, soap-free and are made with a combination of natural and organic ingredients.**

**11. Trevarno Organic Skincare is a certified organic company accredited with the Organic Farmers and Growers Organisation.**

**12. Klapp's Organic High Tech Care range is paraben-free, free of synthetic fragrances and colourants, paraffin and mineral oils, PEG, chemical light filters, animal extracts, and genetically modified raw materials.**

**13. Beaucience is a proudly South African professional skincare brand specifically focusing on using 100% natural formulations and organic ingredients where possible.**

7.



8.



10.



9.



11.

12.



13.

