

Meeting Natural Expectations – UK Cleaning Products Industry Association Publishes Discussion Paper

An enthusiasm for all things 'natural' is a defining trend of our time – yet the common expectation that natural products will inevitably tend to be 'safer' is not supported by fact.

With this in mind the UK Cleaning Products Industry (UKCPI) has just launched a discussion paper whose aims are to de-mystify the facts about 'natural' ingredients versus 'chemicals' used in washing and cleaning products. *Meeting Natural Expectations* has been published to redress the balance of understanding and to open the debate between the Industry and society about ways to improve sustainability throughout the whole cleaning process.

The need for cleaning is self-evident in the Western world. In the past century or so, improved cleaning and hygiene have played a major role in improving our health and improving both the length and the quality of people's lives. Keeping ourselves, our clothes and our environment clean is not merely a luxury.

However, it is vital to separate popular beliefs from the scientific facts. The UKCPI's new publication – the first in a series of occasional discussion papers - points out that the separation of things 'natural' from things that are 'chemical' is irrelevant and essentially meaningless. 'All substances are just arrangements of atoms of the same 90-odd chemical elements of which the planet is made,' it points out.

Dr Andy Williams, Director General of UKCPI, says: "Our Trade Association represents an enormously important industry whose products in the UK are worth £3 billion in the UK and which make a genuine contribution to the quality of people's lives, giving them the clean, safe and healthy lifestyle they expect. For a variety of reasons, there is a trend towards mistrusting manufactured products yet there is no evidence to suggest that man-made cleaning products are less safe for people, less safe for the environment or less sustainable than other types of product.

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“Indeed, it must be remembered that a central key to sustainability of the whole cleaning life-cycle is performance. Product performance affects how people use products – and, crucially, how much of a product people use in order to avoid compromising on results. Using too much product drains resources, including energy, and adds to waste.

“We view the publication of *‘Meeting Natural Expectations’* as the start of what we hope will be positive dialogue with those who sometimes misunderstand the crucial role that modern cleaning products make to health, wellbeing and bettering the environments in which we live and work”.

Commenting on the UKCPI’s discussion document, **John Emsley***, the award-winning popular science writer, says: “If you believe that ‘natural’ means good and wholesome and that ‘man-made’ means alien and suspect then you need the dose of realism that is to be found in *Meeting Natural Expectations*. ‘Natural’ is no guarantee a product will do the job we want because Nature did not design its vast range of natural molecules for the benefit of humans. On the other hand chemists have created new molecules specifically to meet our needs, often basing them on natural molecules but with the dangerous components replaced by something safer.

“Today we need to go beyond the pointless confrontation between ‘natural’ and ‘man-made’ and ensure that what we make not only does what we want it to, but it is based on sustainable resources, and poses no threat to the environment. *Meeting Natural Expectations* shows how the makers of laundry and household cleaners are moving in the right direction, so that ultimately we can live in harmony with Nature and the environment, and yet continue to enjoy the benefits of products that clean so superbly well.”

For a copy of *Meeting Natural Expectations* contact: UK Cleaning Products Industry Association on 01829 770055 or email enquiries@ukcpi.org

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**John Emsley’s new book “Better Looking, Better Living, Better Loving - How Chemistry Can Help You Achieve Life’s Goals”* is published by Wiley-VCH.

For further information about *Meeting Natural Expectations* please contact:

Jo Jacobius at Axiom Communications

☎ 020 8347 8206

✉ jo@axiom-uk.com

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