



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESSE 36

Water quality: restriction of phosphates in household detergents

The Council today¹ adopted a regulation restricting the use of phosphates and other phosphorus compounds in consumer laundry and automatic dishwasher detergents in order to reduce the level of phosphorus poured into the waters ([67/11](#) and [5752/12 ADD1](#)).

Consumer laundry detergents

The limit value for consumer laundry detergents is set at 0.5 grams of phosphorus per washing process in a standard washing machine. It will be applicable as from 30 June 2013.

In addition to domestic detergents, the scope of the regulation also includes detergents used in public laundrettes.

Consumer automatic dishwasher detergents

The limit value for consumer automatic dishwasher detergents is set at 0.3 grams of phosphorus in a standard dosage. It will be applicable as from 1 January 2017.

¹ The decision was taken without discussion at a meeting of the Education/Youth/Culture/Sport Council.
It follows an agreement with the European Parliament at first reading.

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This limit will have to be confirmed before that date by means of a thorough assessment in the light of the most recent scientific data and taking into account available alternatives to the use of phosphates.

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The deferred application of the restrictions is intended to give producers (in particular small and medium-sized enterprises) enough time to reformulate their phosphate-based detergents with more ecological alternatives.

The new regulation will modify regulation 648/2004, which harmonised the labelling of detergents and the biodegradability of certain substances they contain. It will also improve the free movement of detergents in the internal market by harmonising existing different national rules concerning their phosphate content. In the absence of EU legislation, some countries had taken national measures restricting the use of phosphates in detergents. Others had relied on voluntary action by industry to replace phosphates. Imports of detergents from third countries into the EU are insignificant.

Phosphates and other phosphorous compounds are used in detergents to reduce water hardness and allow detergents to perform efficiently. However, they can damage the aquatic environment and disturb the ecological balance by increasing the proliferation of algae, a phenomenon called eutrophication. Eutrophication is currently monitored under the "water framework directive" (2000/60/EC).
