



EFBW Statement Microplastics in Bottled Water

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Microplastics are a fairly new topic being raised in several contexts. There is increased certainty that microplastics are everywhere around us, even in the air we breathe. Recent findings suggest that more than half of all microplastics in the environment are caused by car tyres and building construction. Washing synthetic clothes or the abrasion of shoe soles are also known to contribute, along with littering and poor plastic waste management.

EFBW welcomes the recent WHO report¹ reviewing scientific knowledge on microplastics in drinking water, confirming that **data on occurrence of microplastics is still limited and conclusions are often not reliable**² and differ from one study to another. This is because there is currently no official standardised methodology to measure microplastics.

As to **potential exposure and impact on health**, the WHO further concluded that although there is insufficient information to draw firm conclusion on the toxicity of microplastics, no reliable information suggests it is a concern.

Consumer health and safety is of the greatest concern for natural mineral water and spring water producers. Therefore, the European Federation of Bottled Waters (EFBW) has **set up a platform for the scientific community and laboratories to facilitate collaboration on the topic** and advance understanding. Indeed, the EFBW believes that it is vital to develop robust and standardised testing methods in this area for the common benefit. The ambition is that by the end of the year the work of this platform will contribute to standardization processes at EU and international level with the objective to define harmonized analytical methods for microplastics in all drinking water, whether from a natural source or through the municipal tap systems.

All natural mineral and spring waters are safe and high-quality products strictly regulated by EU food and drink legislation. Under EU legislation (Directive 2009/54/EC), natural mineral and spring waters must come from a protected underground source and protected from all risk of human pollution. Both types of waters must be safe to drink at source in their natural state and may not be disinfected nor chemically treated. Alongside regular testing and monitoring at the source and throughout the entire bottling process this guarantees the product reaches the consumer in the utmost quality. In the EU, more than one million quality analyses are conducted annually by producers' quality assurance units and by accredited external laboratories.

About EFBW

The European Federation of Bottled Waters (EFBW) is the voice of the European bottled water industry, dedicated to promoting the unique qualities of natural mineral and spring water. EFBW is a registered international not for profit trade association with a membership base of national trade associations and direct member companies. In total, EFBW represents almost 550 natural mineral and spring water producers in Europe. For more information, please visit www.efbw.org

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¹ https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/microplastics-in-drinking-water/en/

² For example, the Nile Red dye method that is sometimes used is unreliable for measuring microplastics, as it can pick up mineral content and produce false positives. Additionally, as the size of a microplastic particle can be ten times smaller than a hair, they can be found all around us, on surfaces or in the air. This can impact the analytical results if laboratories are not following a very rigorous protocol with strict precautions, to minimize the occurrence of "false positives".