

## Consumers: Be sun-smart this summer

*At the start of the holiday season, the European Commission takes the opportunity to alert consumers to look out for the new clearer labelling regime which should appear widely on sunscreen bottles on the market this summer. The new labels - including a new UV-A logo or seal on bottles and a ban on misleading terms such as "sun blocker" or "total protection" - are a response to a Commission recommendation on sunscreen products adopted in September 2006. As well as alerting consumers to look for the new sunscreen labelling system so they can make an informed choice about the products they use this summer, the Commission is also seeking to remind consumers that there are several reasons why sunscreen products should be only one out of a number of measures which are necessary to protect from the UV radiation of the sun. The Commission will continue to monitor the compliance of industry with the recommendation to ensure full implementation.*

Consumer Affairs Commissioner Meglena Kuneva said: "Our message to consumers this summer is very clear, look out for these new labels and make an informed decision about the sunscreen products you use for yourself and your family this summer. Most importantly, be fully aware that sunscreen is only one of a number of measures that are necessary for effective protection against the sun." Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou said "There are serious health risks such as skin cancer linked to insufficient protection from the sun. EU citizens need to be fully aware of the use and effects of sunscreens so as to be able to make informed choices." Vice-President Günter Verheugen, Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry, said: "The new industry initiative on proper sunscreen labelling is an example of responsible business behaviour. It shows that we do not always need legislation to focus on consumer and health concerns."

### The improved labelling

The requirements for the information on the labelling of sunscreen products was set out in a Commission recommendation in September 2006 on the efficacy and claims of sunscreen products. Under the recommendation:

- Claims **such as "sun block" or "100% protection"** should not be used any more. Despite frequent claims like "sun blocker" and "total protection", no sunscreen products can provide for a full protection against UV radiation.
- **Standardised verbal descriptors** ("low" – "medium" – "high" and "very high" protection) should be used alongside traditional SPF (sun protection factor indicators) to provide guidance for the choice of the appropriate sunscreen product.

- Better **labelling of UV-A protection**: while UV-B radiation is the cause of “sunburn”, UV-A radiation causes premature skin ageing and interferences with the human immune system. Both types of radiation are important contributors to the skin-cancer risk. The so-called ‘sun protection factor (SPF)’ only refers to equal levels of sunburn (UV-B radiation) and not to similar effects from UV-A radiation. Sunscreen products with only UV-B-protection may provide a false sense of safety because they let hazardous UV-A radiation reach the skin.
- Industry is introducing a **standardised UV-A-seal** on its product labels, indicating a quantified minimum UV-A-protection which increases in parallel with an increasing sun protection factor and is based on a standardised testing method.

### **Facts about the implementation of the Commission recommendation**

Colipa (The European Trade Association representing the interests of the cosmetic, toiletry and perfumery industry) carried out a survey earlier this year on the situation at the start of the summer season 2008:

- Three quarters of the major manufacturers (covering a large majority of the market) estimate that 70-100% of their sunscreens on sale in the EU at the start of the summer 2008 will implement the Commission recommendation.
- For all of them, almost 100% of their sunscreens produced in 2008 on sale in the EU at the start of summer 2008 will implement the Commission recommendation.
- The results of a similar survey with Colipa’s National Associations showed a similar trend for smaller producers.
- In conclusion, it is estimated that all newly manufactured products will implement the principles of the Commission recommendations, but it is difficult to assess remaining stocks for last year.

### **What should consumers know this summer?**

Consumers should look out for products carrying the improved labelling regime so they can make a fully informed choice about the sunscreen products they use this summer. At the same time, consumers are advised to **use sunscreen products only as one out of many measures to protect against the sun**. Other measures include:

- Avoid excessive sun exposure at peak hours, which is usually between 11am and 3pm;
- When it is not possible to stay out of the sun, **keep yourself well covered; hats and sun glasses** can give you additional protection;
- Avoid direct sun exposure of babies and young children;
- Use sunscreens products protecting **against both UVB and UVA radiation**;
- Apply **sunscreen products in sufficient quantity**. The **correct application of the product** is just as important as the choice of the product itself. To reach the protection indicated on the “sun protection factor”, a quantity of 2mg/cm<sup>2</sup> needs to be applied. This is about 36 grams (6 full tea spoons) of sun cream for one adult body. Presently consumers use usually only about ½ of this quantity. This quantity has to be **re-applied** after swimming or towelling to maintain protection.

See pictograms which are used to reinforce these and other key facts and figures on sun exposure in accompanying memo.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/citizen/my\\_holidays/sunscreens\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/citizen/my_holidays/sunscreens_en.htm)



### Facts about the sunscreen industry:

The EU is a major and growing market for sunscreens. In 2007, the estimated retail value (retail sales price) of sunscreen products in Europe was over € 1.7 billion. There was a + 5.1 % increase in sales in the EU in 2007 compared to 2006. The EU sunscreen market is dominated by European companies: amongst the top ten suppliers in the EU, there are only two non-European companies whose combined market share amounts to roughly 7 %. (Source : Euromonitor).

### The new labelling requirements:

Labelled category	Labelled sun protection factor	Recommended minimum UVA protection factor
"Low protection"	"6"	
	"10"	
"Medium protection"	"15"	
	"20"	
	"25"	
"High protection"	"30"	
	"50"	
"Very high protection"	"50+"	