

“Natural” bodycare products

They may not be as kind
to nature as you think



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How many times have you seen the ingredient decyl glucoside in your “natural organic” body wash or cleanser? Decyl glucoside is the new, sexy, “natural” cleanser in the cosmetic industry. It is the ingredient of choice for a number of “natural” cosmetic body washes and/or cleansers.

Decyl glucoside is a surfactant. Natural soaps – a mixture of oils and an alkali – are also surfactants. Surfactants reduce the surface tension of water allowing dirt to be easily lifted from a surface. Decyl glucoside is considered one of the new generations of surfactants produced by the oleo-chemical conglomerates to replace sodium laurel sulfates, which were derived from coconut oil.

The production of alkyl glucosides requires alcohols and corn for a base, which are then exposed to strong acid catalysts and high heat to break apart the original molecules. The catalyst used may include the following acids: sulfuric, para toluene sulfonic, sulfosuccinic, dodecylbenzenesulfonic or dinonylnaphthalenesulfonic. This method of breaking down a natural product into isolated ingredients creates a large waste problem for our waterways, as components of the process, such as the toxic catalysts, must be disposed of. The degree of processing and use of intermediate reagents like sulfates negates the claim that decyl glucoside is a natural body product.

So why do cosmetic companies want to sell deconstructed products (cleansers and body washes) instead of the real thing, such as castile soap? Well, for the same reasons many people prefer white bread to a whole wheat artisan handmade loaf.

Deconstructed and chemically re-engineered products such as decyl glucosides are created to fulfill the consumer demand for a high-foaming product that can be pumped from a bottle. In one word, it is convenience. Authentic castile soaps are not thickened with corn sugars and may appear more liquefied, but the concentration of surfactant ability is greater in a castile soap.

High-foaming has been engineered into the properties of corn sugar soaps like the fluffy quality of a typical, commercially prepared white bread.

Corn is highly subsidized by the US government and by petrochemical companies. Corn relies on heavy petroleum inputs and growing corn is part of the vicious cycle of petrochemical dependency for agricultural products. Because corn is such a cheap commodity, a whole array of deconstructed foods and cosmetics are now produced from it.

* From mountainskysoap.com. For a list of authentic, natural bodycare and cosmetic products, visit cosmeticsdatabase.com