



## Organic Trade Association Task Force Rejects Counting Ordinary Water as Organic in Body Care Products

### *OCA's Coming Clean Campaign Changed Industry Attitudes*

ANAHEIM, CA – One year after the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) launched the *Coming Clean Campaign* to establish strong labeling standards for “organic” cosmetics, the Organic Trade Association’s Personal Care Task Force (PCTF) rejected a scheme of counting ordinary water as “organic” in body care products. In a 13 to 2 vote on Saturday at the Natural Products Expo West in Anaheim, California, the task force of natural body care companies condemned the practice of counting as “organic” water added during the steaming of botanicals to make hydrosol water extracts. The task force subsequently voted 10 to 5 to not count any amount of hydrosol water extracts as organic until the minority percentage of water from plant material versus added from steam can be determined.

“The rejection of the organic water scheme by natural body care companies is a result of vocal consumer demands for meaningful organic standards on cosmetics products,” says Ronnie Cummins, OCA’s Executive Director. “By addressing the hydrosol water extract fraud, the OTA and leading natural body care companies are heading in the right direction as they continue to hammer out recommendations to the USDA for organic label standards on personal care products,” Cummins said.

The immediate cause for this definitive statement from the OTA’s PCTF was the recent Rutgers University study sponsored by the OCA which rigorously demonstrated that even with very conservative assumptions, a high-quality hydrosol water extract is composed mostly of water from steam. OCA’s Complaint to the USDA’s National Organic Program exposing regulatory violations as well as general consumer pressure were also key. Representatives of companies that count ordinary water in hydrosol water extracts as “organic” attended the PCTF meeting as well as companies that joined the OCA’s Complaint to the USDA.

USDA must respond to the OCA Complaint filed against Bayliss Ranch’s hydrosol water extracts by May 19 of this year. The organic water scheme enables Bayliss Ranch’s customers--manufacturers of body care and food products for consumers--to make fraudulent claims that their products are “70% organic,” by counting the ordinary water in the Bayliss extracts as the primary “organic” content of the products. This makes a mockery of the fundamental purpose of the NOP, which assures consumers that products claiming organic status are truly at least 70% organic WITHOUT counting water as “organic.” After receiving QAI’s certification under the National Organic Program for food in the summer of 2003, Bayliss Ranch commenced marketing its hydrosol water extracts for use in beverages, sauces, soups and other water-based food products as well as body care products “as the perfect base ingredient in products allowing a certified organic labeling claim.” (See OCA’s Complaint at [www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/links2.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/links2.cfm))

Currently, an increasing number of brands, such as **Avalon Natural Products**, **JASON**, and **Nature’s Gate**, are misleading consumers into thinking 70% of the ingredients in their products are “organic” (Note: 70% organic content enables a product to make a front panel organic label claim under the National Organic Program.) All these companies are supplied organic hydrosol water extracts by a single supplier, **Bayliss Ranch**, certified by **QAI**, the largest organic certifier in the world. Similar to an infusion or tea, which is made by boiling plant material in water, hydrosol water extracts are made by steaming plants, and then cooling the steam back to water. Products made with infusions or teas cannot count the water in such teas or infusions as organic in calculating organic content under NOP food standards. However, it has become distressingly common practice to use “Steam Tea” as the main “organic” ingredient in many products by misleadingly counting the ordinary water in such “Steam Teas” as organic.

*The OCA is a grassroots nonprofit organization concerned with food safety, organic farming, sustainable agriculture, fair trade and genetic engineering.*

###