

DetR: Detergents Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 648/2004), explained

The Detergents Regulation harmonises the rules for detergents and surfactants on the EU market, requiring biodegradable surfactants, ingredient and dosage labelling and phosphorus limits, and makes the manufacturer, meaning whoever places the product on the market, responsible. It has applied since 8 October 2005 and is repealed from 23 September 2029 by Regulation (EU) 2026/405.

Reviewed 24 September 2026 by Conphora compliance team · Next review 11 March 2027 · Not legal advice

Key facts

Reference	Regulation (EC) No 648/2004	Act type	Regulation
In force	8 October 2005	Applies from	8 October 2005
Amended by	Commission Regulation (EC) No 907/2006, Regulation (EC) No 1336/2008, Regulation (EC) No 219/2009, Commission Regulation (EC) No 551/2009, Regulation (EU) No 259/2012	Enforced by	The competent authorities appointed by each Member State under Article 8 enforce the regulation with the control measures of Article 10, the safeguard clause of Article 15 and the market surveillance powers of Regulation (EU) 2019/1020, which lists Regulation (EC) No 648/2004 in its Annex I; in Denmark, Miljøstyrelsen's chemicals inspection (Kemikalieinspektionen) supervises detergents under the chemicals act (lov om kemikalier, lovbekendtgørelse nr. 1200 of 25 September 2025).

Key dates

31 March 2004	Regulation (EC) No 648/2004 adopted by the European Parliament and the Council	title and signature block after Art. 19
8 April 2004	Published in OJ L 104 of 8 April 2004, p. 1	Official Journal reference
8 October 2005	Entry into force and direct application in all Member States; Directives 73/404/EEC, 73/405/EEC, 82/242/EEC, 82/243/EEC and 86/94/EEC and Recommendation 89/542/EEC repealed on the same day	Art. 17 and Art. 19
11 July 2006	Regulation (EC) No 907/2006 in force: Annex III replaced, adding ISO 10708:1997 as a sixth ultimate biodegradability test method	Art. 1(1), Art. 2 and Annex I
12 January 2007	New Annex VII applies: allergenic fragrances above 0,01 % declared however they are added, the website address for the ingredient list on the packaging, and INCI names in the public ingredient list	Art. 1(2), Art. 2, recitals 3 to 5 and Annex II
20 January 2009	Regulation (EC) No 1336/2008 in force: the term preparation replaced by mixture throughout the text to align with the CLP Regulation	Art. 1(1) and Art. 2
20 April 2009	Regulation (EC) No 219/2009 in force: Article 12 on the committee procedure replaced (M3 in the consolidated text)	Art. 12 (M3)
27 June 2009	Regulation (EC) No 551/2009 in force: Annex V lists the first derogated surfactant, alcohols, Guerbet, C16-20, ethoxylated, n-butyl ether (7-8EO), for bottle washing, cleaning-in-place and metal cleaning until 27 June 2019; Annex VI (banned surfactants) stays empty	Art. 1, Art. 2 and Annexes I and II
19 April 2012	Regulation (EU) No 259/2012 in force: Article 4a and Annex VIa on phosphorus limits, the definitions of consumer laundry and consumer automatic dishwasher detergent, dosage labelling in Article 11(4) and Annex VII B, delegated acts in Articles 13 and 13a, and the new Articles 14, 16 and 18	Art. 1 and Art. 2
30 June 2013	Consumer laundry detergents with a total phosphorus content of 0,5 g or more per recommended dose for a standard load in hard water may no longer be placed on the market	Art. 4a and Annex VIa, point 1
1 June 2015	Points 2 and 3 of Article 1 of Regulation (EC) No 1336/2008 apply: Article 9(1) and Article 11(1) refer to Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 (CLP) instead of the old classification directives	Art. 1(2), Art. 1(3) and Art. 2
1 January 2017	Consumer automatic dishwasher detergents with a total phosphorus content of 0,3 g or more in the standard dosage may no longer be placed on the market	Art. 4a, Art. 16(2) and Annex VIa, point 2

27 June 2019	End of the Annex V derogation for alcohols, Guerbet, C16-20, ethoxylated, n-butyl ether (7-8EO) in industrial applications	Annex V
2 March 2026	Regulation (EU) 2026/405 on detergents and surfactants, signed on 11 February 2026, published in OJ L 2026/405	title and Official Journal header
22 March 2026	Regulation (EU) 2026/405 enters into force; its Article 4(3) and (4) apply from this date, setting biodegradability deadlines of 23 March 2032 for films and 23 March 2034 for other organic substances added at 10 % or more	Art. 4(3), Art. 4(4), Art. 31(2) and Art. 37
23 September 2029	Regulation (EC) No 648/2004 repealed; Regulation (EU) 2026/405 applies in full; detergents and surfactants placed on the market before this date in compliance with the old regulation may continue to be made available indefinitely	Art. 35, Art. 36(1) and Art. 37
23 September 2030	End of the transitional window: detergents and surfactants placed on the market between 23 September 2029 and 22 September 2030 under the old rules may be made available until this date	Art. 36(2)

Obligations by role

Manufacturer (the party responsible for placing on the market, including brand owners and packagers)

- Be established within the Community and take responsibility for the conformity of your detergents and surfactants with the regulation and its annexes, and where relevant with the biocides rules and other Community legislation. Art. 3(1), Art. 3(2) and Art. 3(3)
- Use only surfactants that meet the Annex III criteria for ultimate aerobic biodegradation: at least 60 % mineralisation within 28 days in one of the six point A tests, or at least 70 % in the two point B DOC methods where justified; for industrial or institutional detergents, apply to the competent authority and the Commission for a derogation where a surfactant fails Annex III but passes the 80 % Annex II primary biodegradability test. Art. 4, Art. 5, Art. 6, Annex II and Annex III
- Use only surfactants that meet the Annex III criteria for ultimate aerobic biodegradation: at least 60 % mineralisation within 28 days in one of the six point A tests, or at least 70 % in the two point B DOC methods where justified. Art. 4 and Annex III
- For an industrial or institutional detergent with a surfactant that fails Annex III but passes the 80 % Annex II primary biodegradability test, apply to the competent authority and the Commission for a derogation before using it. Art. 5, Art. 6 and Annex II
- Have the tests carried out under the Annex I standards, EN ISO/IEC 17025 or the principles of good laboratory practice, and hold at the disposal of the competent authorities the results of the Annex III tests, the Annex II and IV technical files for any derogation request, and documentation showing that the tests were performed correctly and that you may use the test results. Art. 7, Art. 9(1), Art. 9(2) and Annex I
- Have the tests carried out under the Annex I standards, EN ISO/IEC 17025 or the principles of good laboratory practice. Art. 7 and Annex I
- Hold at the disposal of the competent authorities the results of the Annex III tests, the Annex II and IV technical files for any derogation request, and documentation showing that the tests were performed correctly and that you may use the test results. Art. 9(1) and Art. 9(2)
- Keep an ingredient datasheet per Annex VII C, naming the detergent and the manufacturer and listing every ingredient in decreasing order of weight within the bands 10 % or more, 1 % to below 10 %, 0,1 % to below 1 % and below 0,1 %, with the common or IUPAC name, the INCI name where available, the CAS number and the European Pharmacopoeia name, and make it available without delay and free of charge to any medical personnel on request. Art. 9(3) and Annex VII C
- Label the consumer packaging legibly, visibly and indelibly with the product name and trade name, the name or trade mark, full address and telephone number of the party responsible for placing the product on the market, and the address, email address where available and telephone number from which the datasheet can be obtained; put the same information on the documents accompanying bulk shipments. Art. 11(2)
- Declare the contents per Annex VII A: the eighteen listed constituent classes, from phosphates and the four surfactant classes to bleaching agents, EDTA, NTA, hydrocarbons, soap, zeolites and polycarboxylates, in the bands below 5 %, 5 % to below 15 %, 15 % to below 30 % and 30 % and more where added above 0,2 %; enzymes, disinfectants, optical brighteners and perfumes whenever added; preservatives by their common nomenclature; allergenic fragrances above 0,01 % by name; plus the website address of the ingredient list, instructions for use and special precautions. Art. 11(3) and Annex VII A
- For consumer laundry detergents, give the recommended quantities or dosage in millilitres or grams per standard load for soft, medium and hard water, the number of standard loads per package in medium-hard water, and the capacity and markings of any measuring cup; for consumer automatic dishwasher detergents, give the standard dosage for a fully loaded 12 place settings dishwasher, with water-hardness variants where relevant. Art. 11(4) and Annex VII B

- Publish the ingredient list on a website per Annex VII D, with INCI names or the European Pharmacopoeia, common or IUPAC name, the words parfum and colorant for perfumes and colourants, allergenic fragrances above 0,01 % listed by name, without percentage bands or CAS numbers, freely accessible, kept up to date and linked to a table of correspondence between INCI names, Pharmacopoeia names and CAS numbers; industrial and institutional detergents with a technical or safety data sheet are exempt. *Annex VII D*
- Keep the total phosphorus content below 0,5 g per recommended dose for a standard load in hard water in consumer laundry detergents and below 0,3 g per standard dosage in consumer automatic dishwasher detergents; products at or above those limits may not be placed on the market.

Art. 4a and Annex VIa

- Respect national language requirements for the contents and dosage labelling, and remember that the regulation's labelling is without prejudice to the classification, labelling and packaging duties of the CLP Regulation and to the poison-centre notification of Article 45 CLP. *Art. 9(1), Art. 11(1) and Art. 11(5)*

Importer

- Treat import into the Union customs territory as placing on the market: as the importer you are deemed the manufacturer and carry every duty of Articles 3, 4, 4a, 9 and 11 for the detergents and surfactants you bring in, and you are the Community-established party the regulation requires.
Art. 2(9), Art. 2(10) and Art. 3(2)
- Obtain from the non-EU producer, and hold at the disposal of the competent authorities, the Annex III ultimate biodegradability results for every surfactant, the documentation on how the tests were performed and proof that you may rely on the test results. *Art. 7, Art. 9(1) and Art. 9(2)*
- Compile the Annex VII C ingredient datasheet with full composition, CAS numbers and weight bands, and be able to hand it to medical personnel without delay and free of charge. *Art. 9(3) and Annex VII C*
- Put your own name or trade mark, full address and telephone number on the consumer packaging as the party responsible for placing the product on the market, together with the datasheet contact details, the Annex VII A contents declaration, the fragrance allergens above 0,01 %, the website address of the ingredient list and, for consumer laundry and dishwasher detergents, the Annex VII B dosage information, in the language the Member State requires.
Art. 11(2), Art. 11(3), Art. 11(4), Art. 11(5) and Annex VII A and B
- Put your own name or trade mark, full address and telephone number on the consumer packaging as the party responsible for placing the product on the market, together with the address, email address and telephone number from which the datasheet can be obtained. *Art. 11(2)*
- Put the Annex VII A contents declaration on the consumer packaging, including the fragrance allergens above 0,01 % and the website address of the ingredient list, in the language the Member State requires.
Art. 11(3), Art. 11(5) and Annex VII A
- For consumer laundry and automatic dishwasher detergents, put the Annex VII B dosage information on the packaging, in the language the Member State requires. *Art. 11(4), Art. 11(5) and Annex VII B*
- Check the phosphorus content before import: consumer laundry detergents at 0,5 g or more per dose and consumer automatic dishwasher detergents at 0,3 g or more per standard dosage may not be placed on the market. *Art. 4a and Annex VIa*
- Expect the competent authorities to detain consignments of detergents that fail the regulation and to prevent their making available; Member States must provide such measures in their penalty rules. *Art. 18*

Distributor (wholesaler or retailer)

- If you sell a detergent without changing its characteristics, labelling or packaging, you are not the manufacturer; if you repackage, relabel, create your own-brand label, change the product or act as the importer, you become the manufacturer with all its duties. Art. 2(10)
- Where the Member State requires labelling in its national language, comply with that requirement for the contents declaration and the dosage information. Art. 11(5)
- Make available only detergents and surfactants that conform to the regulation: compliant products move freely, while the competent authorities may prevent the making available of non-compliant ones and detain consignments. Art. 3(1), Art. 14(1) and Art. 18
- Check that the consumer packaging you sell carries the responsible party's name, address and telephone number, the datasheet contact, the contents declaration with fragrance allergens, the website address and, for consumer laundry and dishwasher detergents, the dosage information, so that a product with missing labelling is not put on your shelves. Art. 11(2), Art. 11(3) and Art. 11(4)
- Prepare for 23 September 2029, when Regulation (EU) 2026/405 replaces the regulation and gives distributors their own obligations in its Article 11, next to the rules on supply through refill and on cases in which manufacturer obligations apply to importers and distributors. Art. 11, Art. 12, Art. 13 and Art. 37

Penalties

Member States lay down the rules on penalties applicable to infringements of the regulation and take all measures necessary to ensure that they are implemented; this may include measures allowing the competent authorities to prevent the making available on the market of detergents or surfactants that fail to comply, the penalties must be effective, proportionate and dissuasive, and the rules must include measures allowing the authorities to detain non-compliant consignments. The competent authorities may apply all necessary control measures to detergents on the market, using the Annex VIII reference methods, without obliging manufacturers to repeat or pay for tests already passed at an approved laboratory, and a Member State may provisionally withdraw, recall or restrict a compliant detergent that presents a risk to human or animal health or the environment. Market surveillance follows Regulation (EU) 2019/1020, which lists the regulation in its Annex I. In Denmark the regulation is directly applicable and supervised by Miljøstyrelsen's chemicals inspection (Kemikalieinspektionen) under the chemicals act, lovbekendtgørelse nr. 1200 of 25 September 2025: the authority must have an unlawful situation ended and may order the responsible party to stop sales, warn users, remedy the cause, recall or destroy the product (§ 48); unless a higher penalty is due under other legislation, infringing an EU regulation on substances, mixtures or articles covered by the act is punished with a fine (§ 59(1)(1)), and the penalty rises to imprisonment of up to two years where the infringement is intentional or grossly negligent and has harmed or endangered the life or health of people or domestic animals, has harmed or endangered the environment, or has obtained or was intended to obtain an economic advantage, including through savings, for the person concerned or for others (§ 59(2)); any economic advantage obtained is confiscated even where no harm or danger was caused (§ 59(7)), the supervisory authority, or the police on its behalf, may seize unlawful substances, mixtures and articles (§ 48 b), companies can be held criminally liable (§ 60) and the limitation period for that liability is five years (§ 61).

Art. 10, Art. 15 and Art. 18; Annex I; § 48, § 48 b, § 59, stk. 1, nr. 1, § 59, stk. 2, § 59, stk. 7, § 60 and § 61

Checklist

- 1. Confirm the product is a detergent or a surfactant for detergents under Article 2(1): it contains soap or surfactants for washing or cleaning, or is an auxiliary washing mixture, fabric softener or cleaning mixture; body-cleaning products are cosmetics instead.
- 2. Decide who the manufacturer is: the producer, the importer, an own-account packager or anyone changing the product or its label is responsible for conformity and must be established in the Community (Article 2(10) and Article 3(2)).
- 3. Collect Annex III ultimate biodegradability results for every surfactant, at least 60 % in 28 days, run under EN ISO/IEC 17025 or GLP, and keep the test documentation and property-rights evidence ready for the authorities (Articles 7 and 9).
- 4. For industrial or institutional detergents with a surfactant that fails Annex III, check Annex II primary biodegradability and prepare the Annex IV file for a derogation request, or reformulate (Articles 4 to 6).
- 5. Measure the total phosphorus content: below 0,5 g per dose for consumer laundry detergents and below 0,3 g per standard dosage for consumer automatic dishwasher detergents (Article 4a and Annex VIa).
- 6. Draw up the Annex VII C ingredient datasheet with CAS numbers and weight bands and set up the address, email and telephone number through which medical personnel obtain it without delay (Article 9(3) and Article 11(2)(c)).
- 7. Write the label: product name, responsible party with address and telephone, Annex VII A contents bands, enzymes, disinfectants, optical brighteners, perfumes and preservatives, fragrance allergens above 0,01 %, the ingredient-list website address, instructions and precautions, in the national language where required (Article 11).
- 8. Add the Annex VII B dosage information for consumer laundry detergents (soft, medium and hard water, loads per package, measuring cup) and for consumer automatic dishwasher detergents (standard dosage for 12 place settings).
- 9. Publish the Annex VII D ingredient list online with INCI names, keep it current and link to the INCI, Pharmacopoeia and CAS correspondence table; keep CLP classification, labelling and the Article 45 poison-centre notification in place alongside.
- 10. Plan the transition to Regulation (EU) 2026/405: it applies from 23 September 2029 with a digital product passport, digital labelling, refill rules and micro-organism requirements; detergents and surfactants placed on the market before 23 September 2029 in compliance with the old rules may be made available indefinitely, while those placed on the market from 23 September 2029 up to and including 22 September 2030 under the old rules may only be made available until 23 September 2030.

Sources

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2. Regulation (EC) No 648/2004 as published in OJ L 104, 8 April 2004 (EUR-Lex) — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32004R0648>
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12. Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 on cosmetic products, definition of cosmetic product (EUR-Lex) — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32009R1223>
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.8. Bekendtgørelse af lov om kemikalier, lovbekendtgørelse nr. 1200 af 25. september 2025
(Retsinformation) — <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2025/1200>

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