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The need for surfactants by the adhesives and sealants industry

Surfactants are critical for both water-borne and solvent-based adhesive, sealants and primer formulations.

Water-based polymer dispersions cannot be manufactured without surfactants.

Surfactants are also added to formulations of adhesives, sealants and primers to provide characteristics like storage stability, to reduce surface tension, and to improve flow, compatibility and wetting of substrates and fillers.

Some examples of the use of surfactants in adhesives, sealants or primer formulations are:

- Water-based adhesives, e.g. for construction purposes and assembly
- Water-based pressure sensitive and contact adhesives, e.g. for foam bonding and laminating
- Water-based wood adhesives
- Water-based caulks and sealants, e.g. for façades, interior finishing, sanitary applications, fireproofing and general purposes

If surfactants that allow the manufacturing of water-based polymer dispersions would disappear from the market, water-based adhesives and sealants would also **no longer be available**. The many products depending on these adhesives and sealants would be at risk of also becoming unavailable or at least of losing their technical functionalities. These wide-ranging implications of upstream restrictions need to be taken into consideration in their impact assessments. Sales of water-soluble polymer adhesives added up to a total 115,000 tonnes in 2023.

In addition, many solvent-based adhesives and sealants would not fulfil their function without the use of surfactants because without wetting, **adhesion would not be possible**.

Contact

FEICA, the Association of the European Adhesive & Sealant Industry, is a multinational association representing the European adhesive and sealant industry. Today's membership stands at 16 National Association Members (representing 17 countries), 25 Direct Company Members and 25 Affiliate Company Members. The European market for adhesives and sealants is currently worth more than 19.9 billion euros. With the support of its national associations and several direct and affiliated members, FEICA coordinates, represents and advocates the common interests of our industry throughout Europe. In this regard, FEICA works with all relevant stakeholders to create a mutually beneficial economic and legislative environment.

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