

# Zero Waste Live!

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## THE BLOODY TRUTH ABOUT SINGLE-USE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS



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# TOXIC FREE PERIODS

ECO-FRIENDLY  
HEALTHY  
PLASTIC-FREE  
PERIODS



## Is our health at stake?

Creating awareness on the environmental health risks of regular tampons and pads!







# We are WECF an ecofeminist network

- **International network with 150 member organisations in 50 countries**
- **Secretariat in the Netherlands, and national branches in Germany, France and Georgia**
- **UNEP partner**
- **Co-Lead: Women Major Group UN SDGs**



# OUR KEY ISSUES

Sustainable development



Toxic Free Healthy Environment



Climate and Environmental Action from the ground





# OUR CHEMICAL PROJECTS

- Sustainable Chemistry from NGO Perspective
  - Stakeholder ECHA, European Chemicals Agency
  - BRS– Gender Action Plan,
  - European Chemicals Strategy
  - Advocacy on REACH Article 33, the right to know!
  - SAICM: Beyond 2020 (global)
- 
- Project Nesting: trainings, tools, guides & website
  - Toxic Free Periods, tools, guides and projects
  - SAICM: Innovation non-chemical technologies (Western Balkans)
  - BRS – pilot projects Nigeria & Indonesia, Bolivia and Kyrgyzstan

## Women and Chemicals

The impact of hazardous chemicals on women

A thought starter based on an experts' workshop



# Three key points



1. The right to a healthy and toxic-free environment for womxn in all their diversity



2. The effects and dangers of hazardous substances in menstrual products for our bodies and health



3. The right to know what's in our pads and tampons

# 1. The right to a toxic free and healthy environment for all

- Bring womxn to the decision-making tables
- main responsibilities for regulation should lie with government, industry and legislators



2. The effects and dangers of hazardous substances in **menstrual** products for our bodies and health

We have a serious problem







# WHAT'S IN YOUR TAMPON?

## PESTICIDE RESIDUES



Regular tampons consist mainly of cotton. Large quantities of toxic pesticides are used in non-organic cotton cultivation. As much as 25% of the insecticide use and 90% of the pesticide use is accounted for by cotton cultivation. This creates contamination of drinking water and food, which can cause people in the area to develop all kinds of health problems. Pesticide residues can also have consequences for your own health when using tampons containing these residues. Unfortunately, this has not really been researched yet.

## DIOXINS

Bleaching with chlorine can release dioxins, substances with proven carcinogenic properties. Since the 1990s, tampons and sanitary towels have been bleached with hydrogen peroxide, also known as a bleaching agent. Hydrogen peroxide is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen. The problem is that this can release other harmful substances, such as POPs, Persistent Organic Pollutants.



## FRAGRANCES

Fragrances can disturb the balance between good and bad bacteria, trigger allergic reactions or simply cause irritation. Synthetic fragrances can be made from a cocktail of up to 3,900 chemicals. Some of them may even be carcinogenic, neurotoxic, endocrine disrupting and / or harmful to reproduction. Would you like to have a scent like that in your underpants?

## PLASTIC

A tampon contains a lot of plastic. The problem with plastic is that, unfortunately, it never goes away. It eventually falls apart into smaller and smaller pieces until nothing else remains than microplastics, pieces of plastic smaller than 5mm. Microplastics pollute our nature, affect biodiversity and, moreover, the effects of microplastics on our health are still insufficiently known.



## Chemicals of concern in menstrual products

**Pesticide residues**

**Dioxins**

**Fragrances**

**Metals**

**Parabens**

**Methylhexyl ethoxycinamate**

**Nonylphenol ethoxylates**

**Flame retardants**

**Phthalates: DINP, DIDP, DiOP, DEHP**

**polyethylene, polypropylene, polyeste**

# Scope of the problem

**Body burden: up to 300 substances can be found**

**Over 1,300 scientific studies link exposure to EDCs to spiraling rates of hormone-related cancers, diabetes, obesity, reproductive health and behavioural problems in children**

*There is strong evidence that our health is at stake: each day we're exposed to plastics and additives in different ways*





3. The right to know (what's in our pads)& the right to choose

What can we do ourselves?



# Research needed!

- Gender specific research on the impact of plastics on human health and our environment, covering production, usage and post-usage management.
- Bio-monitoring of exposed male and female workers in plastic production and recycling processes.
- Exposure levels for men and women to microplastics and associated hazardous chemicals needs to be investigated as a basis for a reliable gender-related risk assessment.







# THANK YOU



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