EU retailers under pressure to pull toxic hygiene products

Petition attracts over 20,000 signatures

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Spar, a major supermarket chain in Europe is facing pressure to stop selling personal hygiene products, such as tampons and baby diapers, which contain toxic chemicals.

A social media campaign,４％Cleaner, is accusing the supermarket chain of stocking some popular tampons and diapers that have been bleached with chlorine dioxide.

"It is estimated that the average woman will use 25,000 tampons or menstrual pads in her lifetime - risking repeated levels of exposure to chemicals like chlorine," he said.

The campaign also launched a petition, which has attracted 20,000 signatures so far, to support an open letter to the EU's largest retail chains urging them to stop selling these unsafe products and asking producers to offer chlorine-free alternatives.

The campaign also intends to raise consumer awareness of the issue. According to ４％Cleaner, there is currently no legal requirement for disposal and other chemical ingredients to be listed on the packaging of these products.

As a result, consumers "cannot avoid" potential toxins when purchasing such items, he added.

French example

４％Cleaner urged EU governments to act on the issue and follow the example set by French authorities. In January this year, diaper manufacturer Ultra-Preservés was ordered to remove its products from store shelves and was fined for using chlorine-containing materials.

This policy is based on a report published by the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety (Anses), which showed that there were carcinogenic levels of chlorine in tampons and pads, raising concerns that they represent a public health risk.

"No risk"

Pierre Morel, general manager of Éditha - the trade association representing manufacturers of baby diapers in the SMA region - said that members' products pose no risk to the health of consumers and comply with relevant EU legislation.

While authorities conduct two implementations of chemicals of concern in these products, said the manager, "they are as low as 0.01% lower than legal limits.

Earlier this year, Éditha said that studies carried out in 2017 and 2018 by the Belgian, French, Swiss, Danish and Swiss authorities found that feminine hygiene products and baby diapers are safe.

At the EU level, the recently adopted single-use products Directive calls on manufacturers to avoid using hazardous chemicals in sanitary towels, tampons and tampon applicators.

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