



True Stories

Dr Aldo Ammendola, Chief Research & Development Officer at Weleda AG

Dr Aldo Ammendola joined Weleda AG as Chief Research & Development Officer and Member of the Executive Board in 2016. As a molecular and microbiologist with a Master of Business Administration, he has spent most of his professional life in the development of innovative pharmaceuticals. Before joining Weleda, he was responsible for the R&D division of a leading herbal medicines company in Germany, where he also implemented the development of natural cosmetics.

Weleda started in 1921 as a pharmaceutical laboratory with its own plant garden. Weleda's founders, Dr Rudolf Steiner and Dr Ita Wegman, created with a team of scientists the first synergistic products designed to reconnect the body with its natural rhythms. Today, Weleda is the world's leading manufacturer of certified natural and organic cosmetics and a worldwide benchmark company of anthroposophic medicine. Currently, the international Weleda Group consists of 23 companies worldwide and employs ca. 2,500 people. Weleda's products are available in 55 countries worldwide.



Photo: Dr Aldo Ammendola, Weleda AG

NATRUE: How do you think that Weleda contributed to NATRUE's creation as one of its founding members?

Dr Aldo Ammendola: With its strong values and with almost 100 years of experience in making truly natural cosmetics, Weleda has been quite privileged to contribute to NATRUE's development as an authentic label for the certification of products using natural ingredients. Weleda has always had a clear understanding of natural cosmetics that has allowed us to effectively differentiate our products from conventional and only nature-inspired cosmetics. For Weleda and for the rest of NATRUE's founding members it was clear that we could all create together the perfect groundwork for the production of true certified natural cosmetics, given our experience and expertise in the NOC sector.

NATRUE: What are the main values of Weleda as a worldwide natural and organic cosmetics company? How do you think that NATRUE represents those values?

Dr Aldo Ammendola: Weleda is not a brand that follows short-lasting trends, and this can be clearly seen in our vision: Creating a world in which health, beauty and nature continually unfold. Weleda seeks to sustainably develop its products in harmony with nature and the human being, promoting the healing forces within human beings and nature. Being transparent and clear about what we do and how we do it is an essential part of our values, and it brings us close together with NATRUE's philosophy.



Weleda's work is particularly focused on the protection of biodiversity, which is at the very essence of our products. We were one of the first companies to use biodynamic farming to obtain natural raw materials in our own gardens. Weleda uses around 650 plants in our cosmetic products, some of them being arnica, pomegranate, lavender, rose and calendula. These are all part of the biodiversity of our natural environment and are essential ingredients in our products. By collecting and harvesting plants and seeds with respect, Weleda contributes to their conservation and supports people whose livelihood depends on nature.

In 2018, Weleda was the first cosmetic company in Europe to get certified with the "Sourcing with Respect" label by UEBT (the Union for Ethical BioTrade), whose criteria guarantee that biodiversity is protected during the cultivation, harvesting and further processing of the natural ingredients that Weleda uses. The UEBT certification also covers fairness and social responsibility along the whole value chain.

NATRUE: What is your personal idea of true natural and organic cosmetics?

Dr Aldo Ammendola: Making use of nature's wisdom in a respectful and sustainable way is one of the big challenges we encounter in our industry, and I am proud to say that Weleda is really at the forefront here. Additionally, true natural and organic cosmetics have to meet consumers' expectations regarding performance and efficacy. With the wide variety of ingredients that nature offers, we have a challenging but realistic chance to fully compete with conventional cosmetics.

NATRUE: How do you think that the natural and organic cosmetic sector is changing? What will be the main challenges in the near future?

Dr Aldo Ammendola: Firstly, we still lack a clear legal definition of what is meant by "natural cosmetics". Of course, there are labels for certified natural cosmetics, being NATRUE and COSMOS the most recognised ones, but with many other labels and pseudo-labels in the market, there is a lot of consumer confusion as to which labels represent "authentic" natural cosmetics. As a result, there is a great deal of greenwashing in the cosmetic market, where some conventional products claim "x%" natural even though if they contain ingredients synthetically derived from petrochemical sources that do not exist as such in nature.

Other challenges for the future will be the steady growth of the NOC market, which will increase competition. As big and small companies step into the NOC sector, the demand for raw materials will grow, and this could lead to shortages in the sourcing of certain ingredients and possible price increases.

NATRUE: How do you perceive the role of NATRUE in the NOC sector?

Dr Aldo Ammendola: NATRUE is very well known in Germany and partly well known in Switzerland and Austria, which are countries in which consumers have traditionally highly appreciated the benefits of natural cosmetics. In other cosmetic markets, such as France, other labels are more known than NATRUE and currently set the scene.

Consumers worldwide are demanding guidance to identify truly natural products. The current challenge for NATRUE, being – from my point of view – the most transparent and strict label to date, is to further develop its international presence and to become more well-known in other European countries. Because of its inherent strengths as a label, NATRUE has a golden opportunity to present



itself as the “white knight” that can truly combat greenwashing, helping consumers to take well-informed decisions to choose authentic natural and organic cosmetic products that meet their expectations.

NATRUE: What would you say to brands that want to join NATRUE? And to consumers that look for truly natural and organic cosmetic products?

Dr Aldo Ammendola: If you want to have a reliable certification for natural and organic cosmetic products, NATRUE is the best choice for its guarantees and values. You just need to compare the NATRUE label to others to see the difference. As a consumer, you can be reassured by the NATRUE seal, which can only appear in natural and organic cosmetic products that comply with the strict criteria of NATRUE.

About NATRUE:

NATRUE is an international non-profit organisation located in Brussels. It has promoted and protected authentic natural and organic cosmetics since 2007. The NATRUE Label sets a high standard which guarantees quality and integrity so consumers worldwide may identify and enjoy natural and organic cosmetics truly worthy of that name. Currently over 6,200 products and more than 280 raw materials are NATRUE certified. Products are listed on the publicly accessible database in our website (www.natrue.org).

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