

Could this be the end of microplastics in artificial turf pitches?



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The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) will limit the use of intentionally added microplastics in products – including artificial turf pitches – to avoid or reduce environmental pollution.

It is estimated that [a total of 51,616 artificial turf pitches](#) exist in Europe with an installed area of 112 million square meters. The infill for these pitches usually include rubber granulate made from used tires. Rubber granules are in fact microplastics and they have become a common complaint, as it can be almost impossible to avoid wearing and discharging the small rubber pieces directly into the surroundings when playing a game of football. Consequently, artificial turf pitches are a significant source of microplastic pollution in the environment, leaching [between 18,000 and 72,000 tonnes of microplastics per year](#).

Furthermore, car tires used for these artificial grass pitches are not intended for skin contact and may contain potentially harmful chemicals from plastic. Therefore, artificial grass pitches with microplastics could pose a health risk to children, as well as adults, when overturned on the lane or when emptying their shoes for rubber granules.

New Proposal for Prohibition

This could soon be over. ECHA's Risk Assessment Committee (RAC) [supports the restriction of microplastics](#) and recommends a total ban on microplastics as infill on artificial turf pitches, such as rubber granules. It has been considered by RAC as the most effective and environmentally best solution to prevent more microplastics from ending up in the wild – even if it is not necessarily the cheapest solution. In addition, RAC recommends that intentionally added microplastics to products, e.g. cosmetics and care products, must be reduced to concentrations of a maximum of 0.01% by weight.

The proposals are currently being consulted and are expected to be ready by the end 2020, when decisions will be made in the European Commission. If the ban passes, it will apply to the entire EU / EEA with a six-year implementation period to ensure that industries have sufficient time to adapt.



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