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IBWA response to Orb Media research claiming to have found microplastic particles in bottled water

The non-peer reviewed study released by Orb Media is not based on sound science, and there is no scientific consensus on testing methodology or the potential health impacts of microplastic particles. Therefore, this study's findings do nothing more than unnecessarily scare consumers.

Scientific experts in the field told the BBC News, "The particles below 100 microns *had not been identified as plastic*" [emphasis added] and that "since the alternatives would not be expected in bottled water, they could be described as *probably plastic*" [emphasis added]. Those not-identified substances made up the vast majority of particles counted. The study even acknowledged that the make-up of those particles was not confirmed but could "rationally expected to be plastic."

The study's "probably plastic" findings are weak at best and reporting it as news is alarmist and not responsible journalism.

Microplastic particles are found everywhere – soil, air, and water. And, as the report states, currently there is no evidence that microplastics can cause harm to consumers.

Orb Media is not an objective news outlet. In the past, Orb Media has shown itself to be an organization that has preconceived positions on issues and produces studies that support its point of view.

Consumers can remain confident that bottled water products, like all food and beverages, are strictly regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and, thus, are safe for consumption. The bottled water industry is committed to providing consumers with the safest and highest quality products.

Provided below are additional points, in more detail on this study:

- The Orb Media-sponsored research focuses solely on bottled water products. However, it is important to note that thousands of other food and beverage products also use plastic containers and, perhaps even more important, that microplastic particles are found in all aspects of our environment – soil, air and water.
- To date, there is no applicable regulatory framework or scientific consensus with respect to the adequate testing methodology or potential impacts of

microplastic particles, which could be found in any bottling environment.

- There is no scientific consensus on the potential health impacts of microplastic particles. The data on the topic is limited and conclusions differ dramatically from one study to another.
- However, a recent scientific study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Water Research* in February 2018 concluded that no statistically relevant amount of microplastic can be found in water in single-use plastic bottles. (Analysis of microplastics in water by micro-Raman spectroscopy: Release of plastic particles from different packaging into mineral water by Schymanski et al.)
- Orb Media's position on microplastics seems to be based on the faulty premise that if this substance is found in a bottled water product that it presents a health concern, even if no regulatory standard has been established. Because there is no scientific consensus about the potential health impacts of microplastic particles, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not issued any regulations concerning these substances in foods and beverages. Any regulatory action concerning microplastic particles would need to be based on sound science, including demonstrating a correlation between the levels of this substance found in foods and beverages and any potential adverse health effects.
- Despite the claims about microplastics by Orb Media, consumers can remain confident in the safety and quality of their bottled water products. Bottled water, as a packaged food product, is strictly and comprehensively regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). All bottled water products are produced utilizing a multi-barrier approach. From source to finished product, a multi-barrier approach helps prevent possible harmful contamination to the finished product as well as storage, production, and transportation equipment. Many of the steps in a multi-barrier system are effective in safeguarding bottled water from microbiological and other contamination. Measures in a multi-barrier approach may include one or more of the following: source protection, source monitoring, reverse osmosis, distillation, micro-filtration, carbon filtration, ozonation, and ultraviolet (UV) light.
- As always, the bottled water industry is committed to providing consumers with the safest and highest quality products and we are following any scientific developments on this subject closely.