

Q&A REGARDING THE EU COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATION ABOUT THE USE OF RUBBER GRANULATE ON ARTIFICIAL TURF PITCHES

Has new legislation now been passed, banning the use of rubber granulate on artificial turf pitches?

THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE EU COMMISSION

No, the EU Commission has made a proposal which will now be politically debated in Brussels as well as in each individual member state. Certain is that new legislation will be passed at some point – but it may take a long time. There is no telling how such future legislation will look once finally adopted in the EU Parliament, but many stakeholders will argue for another solution for the benefit of the climate, the environment and the game of football.

Is it no longer allowed to install artificial turf pitches with granulate made from tyres?

FUTURE PITCHES

It is allowed to install new artificial turf pitches in the next few years. Currently, there are no restrictions. The proposal of the Commission suggests a ban with a 6-year phase-in period counting from when legislation is passed. If legislation is adopted in accordance with the recommendation of the Commission, this date will most likely be months or years from now. In any case, for the sake of the environment, Genan recommends that containment measures are implemented if new pitches are installed, especially around barriers and grates – to avoid the dispersal of granulate. At Genan, we are happy to help with information about containment.

If a ban is passed, will it then be possible to add rubber granulate refill to existing pitches?

EXISTING PITCHES

That will be possible, yes. Before the end of the phase-in period, pitch owners just need to buy enough refill to last the entire lifetime of the pitch. Such refill material can be stored at the premises of the pitch owner or at the premises of a third party.

Are there other alternatives offering the same quality of play and use year-round?

ALTERNATIVES TO RUBBER GRANULATE

When it comes to quality of play, natural grass pitches are the only pitches which can match the quality of play of an artificial turf pitch with rubber granulate. However, a natural grass pitch cannot be used all year round, and consequently, as a rule of thumb, the capacity of a pitch converted from artificial turf to natural turf will drop to less than half on an annual basis.

There are other types of artificial turf pitches, e.g. with cork and sand – or gravel as we knew it decades ago – but pitch performance is by no means the same. Moreover, the environmental impact of some of these alternatives is unknown. More plastic is e.g. needed for artificial turf yarn if other infill material than rubber is used, and from such pitches, increased dispersal of microplastics from the plastic fibres (grass blades) is thus to be expected. The only real alternative will thus be natural grass.



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Which level of rubber granulate dispersal from an artificial turf pitch is acceptable?

DISPERSAL LIMIT FOR RUBBER GRANULATE

SEAC, a committee under ECHA, has previously mentioned 7 g/m² as a possible limit value. From a standard 11-a-side football pitch, this corresponds to approx. 50 kg a year. Research results show that it is possible to observe this limit, even by a large margin. However, the current proposal does not specify any acceptable limit value, and it should thus be expected that the Commission recommends zero tolerance. This is rather unusual, as this type of environmental legislation normally operates with limit values, and this will be one of the points focused on during the next phase.

We can furthermore inform you that by far the largest source of microplastics dispersal from rubber comes from tyre and road wear.

Will the proposal of the Commission – and a possible, subsequent ban – affect the financial situation of Genan?

CONSEQUENCES FOR GENAN

It is difficult to predict market reaction during the minimum 6-year transition period. On the one hand, there is a risk that the market will act with certain caution, but on the other hand, the transition period also opens a window for pitch installations which may at a later stage become more difficult. Supply of refill can be handled as previously all through the transition period. After this time, and thus before the end of the transition period, pitch owners must have bought refill material for stock for pitch maintenance to last the remaining life cycle of the pitch. For a number of years, the amount of Genan rubber granulate used for artificial turf pitches has dropped; and for Genan, dependence on this market segment is thus decreasing.

Genan management has not revised its financial expectations due to the publication of this proposal.

Will the proposal of the Commission change the raison d'être and long-term strategy of Genan?

GENAN'S FUTURE

No, there will still be room and need for Genan to recycle the large amounts of end-of-life tyres in Europe. Genan's strategy will still be to contribute to solving the large task of developing sustainable applications for worn-down tyres. If the proposal of the Commission becomes legislation, this task will only be all the more crucial, as the decision at EU level has then been to remove a well-established, sustainable application for 500,000 tonnes of tyres annually – unfortunately without pointing to an alternative field of application.

Any other questions? Contact Genan at +45 87 28 30 00

