

## Poisoning for Profit: Amazon's Double Standard

### Toxic trade in mercury-laced skin lighteners continues, outside US

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This [report](#) documents the ongoing availability of mercury added skin lightening products (SLPs) on Amazon websites around the world, despite a recent legal settlement with Amazon.com in the United States. The legal settlement in the U.S.—negotiated by the U.S. State of California Attorney General and citizen enforcers—requires Amazon.com to eliminate sales offerings of toxic SLPs into California, but generally applies to the entire U.S. Unfortunately, it does not apply to the E-commerce giant's other sales operations outside the U.S. in over 20 countries, with dedicated websites still selling mercury added SLPs into over 100 countries.

This report builds upon previous work of the Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) in exposing the toxic and often illegal trade in mercury added SLPs globally and, in this particular case, sales offerings by Amazon worldwide. Although banned by the Minamata Convention and numerous governments, the manufacture, trade, advertising and sales of mercury added SLPs often continue unimpeded on the largest E-commerce platform in the world, who has pledged that "...every product for sale is safe."

Mercury, when added into SLPs, lightens the skin by suppressing the production of melanin and can also remove age spots, freckles, blemishes and wrinkles. However, regular use of mercury added SLPs reduces the skin's resistance to bacterial and fungal infections and may lead to rashes, skin discoloration and blotching. Long-term use of mercury added SLPs may damage the eyes, lungs, kidneys, digestive and immune systems.

Despite health risks, unscrupulous manufacturers add mercury compounds into their formulation of SLPs. Then distributors and retailers, including online platforms such as Amazon, profit from this toxic trade, potentially exposing millions worldwide to this dangerous neurotoxin.

Our recent market surveillance indicates that Amazon.com is now generally in compliance with the U.S. mercury content threshold of 1 part per million (ppm) due to the conditions imposed by a recent legal settlement in California. As part of the legal settlement, Amazon agreed to implement a sales-prevention protocol, or "Suppression Control" rule. This includes implementing compliance control measures designed to block a listing of "Prohibited Covered Products" from being offered for sale on Amazon.com.

Importantly, the "Suppression Control" rule also requires that Third Party Sellers using the Amazon.com platform must first test their products for mercury and other hazardous substances (verified through Amazon approved accredited labs) to ensure that there are no hazardous ingredients in their SLP sales offerings. Third Party Seller compliance requirements also include label verification, a good manufacturing practice certificate, and manufacturing facility registration for listed products. These and other Third Party Seller requirements are now reflected in the Amazon.com Seller Central requirements, but again, only apply in the U.S.

While Amazon.com has implemented a new protective approach designed to eliminate mercury added SLP sales in the U.S., it appears to be in no hurry to do so for the rest of the world. In effect, Amazon and other online platforms have enabled the creation of a black market in plain sight where SLPs intentionally

formulated with mercury and other hazardous substances are being sold—without listing the hazards or any other consumer precautions.

By turning a blind eye towards these Third Party Sellers—and the unscrupulous manufacturers who supply toxic SLPs to online marketplaces such as Amazon—this business model allows unsafe products to bypass health, consumer and safety regulations under the guise of legitimate commerce. Through its inaction outside of the U.S., Amazon presents a classic case of double standards through knowingly engaging in the toxic trade of cosmetics containing a dangerous neurotoxin to the rest of the world


Earlier in 2025, ZMWG and its partners in the United States, France, Belgium, India, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates purchased suspect SLPs from Amazon websites in their respective countries. ZMWG partners included: Toxics Link in India, the European Environmental Bureau in Belgium and France, the Mercury Policy Project in the U.S., Casa Cem for Mexico, and an individual collaborator in the United Arab Emirates.



In preparation for the study, listings of SLP brands known to contain mercury from prior testing by governments, civil society, and others were compiled. These served as the basis for conducting market surveillance on Amazon websites in each of the six targeted countries. A total of 31 samples of suspect SLPs were identified, purchased and sent to the lab for testing by the ZMWG partners.

Of the 31 creams purchased, 25 SLPs contained mercury at significantly elevated levels, as indicated in the table below, with an average mercury concentration of close to 14,000 ppm. The highest recorded mercury level was more than 27,000 ppm in the Chandni Whitening Cream purchased on Amazon India. Six of the SLPs were found to contain mercury levels below 1 ppm.

*Details of SLPs purchased and analyzed for this study*

Brand name	Product name	Country of Amazon Purchase	Mercury content (ppm)	Product photo	Confirmed Mercury Content and/or Legal Violations
4K Plus	Whitening Night Cream	India	19,825		<a href="#">California</a> (US), <a href="#">Consumers Association Penang</a>
BIOCOS	Goldish Beauty Cream	UAE	25,556		<a href="#">Environmental Investigation Agency</a>
Chandni	Whitening Cream	India	27,431		<a href="#">NY</a> (US), <a href="#">EU</a> , <a href="#">London</a> (UK), <a href="#">Bangladesh</a> , <a href="#">US</a>
Collagen Plus	Day & Night Cream	UAE	<1		<a href="#">Philippines</a> , <a href="#">Brunei Darussala</a> , <a href="#">Indonesia</a> , <a href="#">US</a>
Faiza	Beauty Cream	India	15,043		<a href="#">NYC</a> (US), <a href="#">Bangladesh</a> , <a href="#">London</a> (UK), <a href="#">EU</a> , <a href="#">Philippines</a> , <a href="#">Pakistan</a> , <a href="#">UAE</a> ,

Brand name	Product name	Country of Amazon Purchase	Mercury content (ppm)	Product photo	Confirmed Mercury Content and/or Legal Violations
Fresh & White	Beauty Cream	India; UAE	21,673 – 22,800		<a href="#">Sri Lanka</a> , <a href="#">Philippines</a>
Goldie parley	Beauty Cream	Belgium; France	13,182 – 15,005		<a href="#">NYC (US)</a> , <a href="#">Philippines</a> , <a href="#">EU</a>
Goree	Beauty Cream; Day & Night Beauty Cream	Belgium; UAE; India	14,201 – 25,908		<a href="#">Sri Lanka</a> , <a href="#">NYC (US)</a> , <a href="#">Brunei Darussalam</a> , <a href="#">California (US)</a> , <a href="#">US</a> , <a href="#">Bangladesh</a> , <a href="#">EU</a> , <a href="#">Fiji</a> , <a href="#">Singapore</a> , <a href="#">Canada</a> , <a href="#">Philippines</a> , <a href="#">New Zealand</a>
Infocus	Pearl Beauty Cream	India	7,359		<a href="#">NYC (US)</a>
Kanza	Beauty Cream	Belgium, France	<1 – 11,566		<a href="#">NYC (US)</a> , <a href="#">Beautywell (US)</a>
Kanza	Whitening Soap	Belgium	0.6		
La Crema de Rebeca	Master, Crema Facial	Mexico	11,202 – 21,925		<a href="#">California (US)</a> , <a href="#">Sacramento (US)</a>
La Tía Mána	Crema Limpiadora y Curativa	Mexico	5,060		<a href="#">Minnesota (US)</a> , <a href="#">Sacramento (US)</a> , <a href="#">California (US)</a>
Nunn Care	Crema limpiadora/ Cleansing cream	Mexico, USA	<0.48 - 6,876		<a href="#">California (US)</a> , <a href="#">Minnesota (US)</a> , <a href="#">Texas (US)</a>
Nunn Care	Aqua Serum	Mexico	<1		
Nano Extra White	Whitening Cream with Papaya and Carrot	Belgium, France	7,448 – 8,762		<a href="#">California (US)</a>
Olifair	Radiant effect night cream	India, Belgium	7,230 – 7,331		<a href="#">Sri Lanka</a>

Brand name	Product name	Country of Amazon Purchase	Mercury content (ppm)	Product photo	Confirmed Mercury Content and/or Legal Violations
Rossy Trujillo	Crema Facial Despigmante con acido hialuronico	Amazon USA	4,500 – 5,400		
Sandal	Beauty Cream	Amazon India	<1		<a href="#">NYC (US)</a> , <a href="#">EU</a> , <a href="#">US</a> , <a href="#">London (UK)</a> , <a href="#">Philippines</a>

Our findings from mercury added SLPs sampled in Mexico, the United Arab Emirates, and India confirm Amazon's double standard. In these countries, multiple mercury added SLPs are still widely available on Amazon websites, exposing unsuspecting consumers to serious risks. In contrast, only a few mercury added SLPs were found on Amazon websites in France, Belgium and the U.S., due in large part to the effectiveness of the EU Safety Gate system and the recent settlement in the U.S. respectively.

In summary, this investigation of Amazon websites around the world confirms that mercury added SLPs are still widely available. Outside the U.S., Amazon is demonstrating a double standard that threatens the health and safety of its customers worldwide.

In 2017, Amazon's Director of Worldwide Product Compliance and Safety, indicated on the record during court proceedings that Amazon was "...developing processes to screen global websites or the global Amazon sites for products that are recalled in individual markets". However, it's clear that these internal processes by Amazon have not yet borne fruit.

Following the U.S. settlement—after over a decade of litigation—Amazon clearly understands the hazards involved and the necessary steps to block toxic SLP sales. Nevertheless, Amazon is not yet sufficiently motivated to identify and block illegal mercury added SLPs sales, particularly into the Global South, often claiming that it's not legally responsible. A case in point is the response from Amazon India in 2020 (see Appendix E in the full report), where the responsibility is placed on the Third Party Sellers.

Clearly, toxic SLP sales that are prohibited in stores should also be banned online. Online platforms such as Amazon attract customers to their sites, profit from each sale, dictate the terms of the transactions, control the website, influence the prices, and often distribute the products. Therefore, Amazon platforms worldwide should voluntarily accept full legal responsibility for ensuring that their products fully comply with health, consumer and product safety laws. Anything less is inconsistent with Amazon's claim that it "...strives to be Earth's most customer-centric company, which includes ensuring that every product available for sale is safe."

Finally, ZMWG strongly urges Amazon to apply the same proactive Third Party Seller requirements to the rest of the world that it imposes in the U.S. Specifically, this means requiring independent testing of Third Party Seller SLPs for mercury and other hazardous substance before they can be offered for sale, as well as adhering to all the other Amazon.com Central seller requirements for SLPs laid out in Appendix A of the full report.

**Access to the full report:** <https://www.zeromercury.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/ZMWG-Amazon-Double-Standard-Oct-2025-Full-Report.pdf>