

FEIBP Congress 2024 Raw Materials Market Report: Fine Hair

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For those of you paying any attention to my annual report, and there have been far too many reports, will be tired of hearing that volumes of natural fine hair used in artist and cosmetic brush production continue to decline for reasons we are all aware of (veganism / animal rights, cheaper synthetic alternatives, improved synthetic qualities).

A continuing, but failing, argument for using natural filaments is that they are generally less polluting than using plastics, but we are now seeing many new so-called Biofilaments being developed. Most are based on vegetable oils but still need to be mixed with polyester and, for artist / cosmetic brushes, need to be chemically tapered. We are seeing some traction now with biodegradable PLA and PHA which are ecofriendly but more expensive and not as good as standard PBT. And there ends my synthetic market report!

As mentioned last year, another nail is being hammered into the fine hair coffin by the Chinese authorities who are clamping down on any unauthorized dealing in wild animal hairs, notably sable and squirrel. Due to the massive price increase in sable prices over last 3-4 years, and various difficulties previously mentioned, we have seen a large drop off in usage despite prices falling 20-30%.

But I'm pleased to say, natural fine hair is still used for many applications, hence this report!

Goat hair prices are flat on the cheaper qualities but for high end we're seeing increases mainly because it's harder to find factories skilled enough to sort the grades.

Pony prices flat on shorter sizes but longer sizes increased.

Badger hair - again quite steady but certain grades like so-called Manchurian, is becoming harder to find as its popularity increases.

Squirrel - prices falling slightly as demand falls and Russia off-loads skins to China

Ox hair prices steady as suppliers have old stock. But future supplies, and this relates to many types of fine hair, will be limited as many factories have now stopped dressing as demand falls.