

(19)



Europäisches Patentamt

European Patent Office

Office européen des brevets



(11)

EP 1 371 720 A1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:

17.12.2003 Bulletin 2003/51

(51) Int Cl.7: **C11D 17/00**, C11D 10/04,
C11D 3/20, C11D 1/835

(21) Application number: **03076740.4**

(22) Date of filing: **04.06.2003**

(84) Designated Contracting States:

**AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR
HU IE IT LI LU MC NL PT RO SE SI SK TR**

Designated Extension States:

AL LT LV MK

(30) Priority: **11.06.2002 EP 02077269**

07.08.2002 EP 02078247

(71) Applicants:

- **UNILEVER N.V.**

3013 AL Rotterdam (NL)

Designated Contracting States:

**AT BE BG CH LI CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GR HU
IT LU MC NL PT SE SK TR**

- **UNILEVER PLC**

London EC4P 4BQ (GB)

Designated Contracting States:

GB IE

(72) Inventors:

- **Appel, Peter William**

3133 AT Vlaardigen (NL)

- **Van der Kooij, Felix Marco**

3133 AT Vlaardigen (NL)

(74) Representative: **Joppe, Hermina L. P. et al**

Unilever N.V.,

Patent Department,

P.O. Box 137

3130 AC Vlaardingen (NL)

(54) **Detergent tablets**

(57) A cleaning tablet comprising a smooth phase wherein the smooth phase comprises 30 to 100 wt% of non-soap surfactants and wherein the weight ratio of cationic surfactants to nonionic surfactants in said smooth phase is from 1 : 1 to 1 : 10.

EP 1 371 720 A1

Description

[0001] This invention relates to cleaning compositions in the form of tablets for example, for use in fabric washing or machine dishwashing.

[0002] Detergent compositions in tablet form have advantages over powdered products in that they do not require measuring and are thus easier to handle and dispense into the washload.

[0003] Tablets of a cleaning composition are generally made by compressing or compacting a quantity of the composition in particulate form.

[0004] Tablets comprising two or more separate regions have also been described. For example WO 01/42416 describes the production of multi-phase moulded bodies comprising a combination of core moulded bodies and a particulate premix. WO 00/61717 describes a detergent tablet which is characterised in that at least part of its outer surface is smooth. WO 00/04129 describes a multi-phase detergent tablet comprising a first phase in the form of a shaped body having at least one mould therein and a second phase in the form of a particulate solid compressed within said mould. WO 99/24549 describes a detergent tablet comprising a compressed solid body and a non-compressed gelatinous portion mounted in a mold of said body.

[0005] It is an object of the present invention to provide a method to produce cleaning tablet comprising a smooth phase, wherein said smooth phase comprises surfactants and wherein said cleaning tablet has good cleaning properties and wherein the smooth phase has a suitable texture (preferably semi-solid between soft and hard).

[0006] A further objective of the present invention is to provide a method to produce a smooth tablet or phase thereof wherein the choice of materials and the manufacturing method allows the low cost production of tablets of good performance and of good consistency and texture.

[0007] Although the invention can relate to a single phase smooth tablet, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention there is provided a cleaning tablet which has a plurality of discrete regions with differing compositions, characterised in that at least one first region of the tablet is a smooth region and at least one second region of the tablet is a solid region of compacted particulate material.

[0008] In a first aspect the invention relates to a cleaning tablet comprising a smooth phase wherein the smooth phase comprises: 30 to 100 wt% of non-soap surfactants and wherein the weight ratio of cationic surfactants to nonionic surfactants in said smooth phase is from 1 : 1 to 1 : 10.

[0009] Preferably tablets of the invention are of cylindrical shape wherein the two main surfaces (upper side and bottom side) are substantially flat.

[0010] As indicated above, tablets of the invention can be single phase tablets, which are predominantly con-

stituted by the smooth phase as described above. However a preferred embodiment of the invention relates to a multiphase tablet wherein the smooth phase is present and additionally one or more other phases are present. Suitably these additional phases can be smooth or solid. Particularly suitable are solid phases composed of compacted particulate solids.

[0011] The regions of a multi-phase tablet are possibly separate layers within a tablet. However, a discrete region of a tablet could also have other forms for example one or more core(s) or insert(s). In a preferred embodiment the first region is a smooth layer and the second region is a layer of compacted particulate material. In a further advantageous embodiment the first region is a core or insert of smooth material embedded in the second region which is a layer of compacted particulate material.

[0012] If the tablet is a single phase smooth tablet, then preferably the weight of this tablet will be from 5 to 10 g, more preferably from 10 to 40 g, most preferably from 12 to 35 g.

[0013] If the tablet is a multi-phase tablet comprising the smooth phase of the invention then preferably the smooth phase is present as a distinctive region preferably having a weight of from 2 to 20 grammes, more preferred from 3 to 10 grammes. Preferably the other phases together have a weight of 10 to 50 grammes, more preferred 12 to 40 grammes.

[0014] For the purpose of this invention the term smooth phase refers to compositions which are on the one hand solid enough to retain their shape at ambient temperature and on the other hand smooth in appearance. Smooth textures are generally of low or no porosity and have -at normal viewing distance- the appearance of a continuous phase for example as opposed to the porous and particulate appearance of a compacted particulate material.

[0015] WO99/24 describes the use of non-compressed gelatinous portions mounted in a mold as a smooth phase. These tablets must be made with specific equipment to ensure the appropriate mold formation. Furthermore the compositions for the smooth phase as disclosed in this document contain very high levels of ingredients with a limited functionality in the wash such as dipropyleneglycolbutylether or glycerol-triacetate.

[0016] WO 00/61717 describes (in the example) the preparation of a compressed particulate tablet on top of which a (non-compressed) layer was made by pouring a mixture of nonionic and PEG followed by hardening. This formulation and its method of preparation is disadvantageous because it requires a very long hardening step in the tablet mould, during which the tablet mould cannot be used for further production, therewith significantly increasing the cost of production.

[0017] Preferably the smooth phase of the tablet is semi-solid. A suitable test to check if a composition can be considered as semi-solid can be described as fol-

lows:

[0018] A cylindrical tablet with a diameter of 45 mm and a height of 20 mm is compressed radially between the plates of a material testing machine until the tablet fractures. At the starting position the plates contact the tablet but do not apply force to it. Force is applied to compress the tablet, the vertical speed of the upper plate is 25 mm/minute. The testing machine measures the applied force (F), and also the displacement (x) of the plates towards each other as the tablet is compressed. The distance (y) between the plates before force is applied, which is the diameter of the tablet, is also known. At failure the tablet cracks and the applied force, needed to maintain the displacement, drops. Measurement is discontinued when the applied force needed to maintain the displacement has dropped by 25% from its maximum value. The displacement at failure (x_f) is measured.

[0019] The maximum force is the force at failure (F_f). The break energy is the area under the graph of force against displacement, up to the point of break. It is given by the equation:

$$E_b = \int_0^{x_f} F(x) \, dx$$

wherein E_b is the break energy in mJoules, x is the displacement in metres and F is the applied force in Newtons at displacement x and x_f is the displacement at failure.

[0020] Semi-solid compositions are characterised by a ratio of F_f to E_b of less than 1.0, more preferred from 0.1 to 0.9, most preferred from 0.2 to 0.6, while traditional tablets of compacted particulate materials are generally characterised by a ratio of F_f to E_b of more than 1, more generally more than 1.25 or even more than 1.5 up to say 6.

[0021] In an advantageous embodiment of the invention the smooth phase comprises from 30-80 wt% of non-soap surfactants (based on the total weight of said smooth phase), more preferred from 35 to 75 wt%, most preferred 40 to 70 wt%. It has been found that the combination of a separate smooth first region and these high surfactant levels provide very good dispersing and cleaning properties to the tablet. In another advantageous embodiment of the invention said smooth region comprises from 40-100 wt% of surfactants (based on the total weight of said region), more preferred from 50-95 wt%, most preferred the first region is predominantly constituted by surfactants e.g. more than 60 % for example 70 to 90 wt%. It has been found that the combination of a separate smooth or semi-solid first region and these high surfactant levels provide very good

dispersing and cleaning properties to the tablet.

[0022] Preferably the non-soap surfactants in the smooth region comprise a combination of cationic surfactants and non-ionic surfactants in a weight ratio of from 1 : 1 to 1 : 10, more preferred 1 : 2 to 1 : 9, more preferred 1 : 3 to 1 : 7. Further surfactants, for example non-soap anionic surfactants may equally be present for example at a low level of 0.1 to 10 wt%, more preferred less than 5 wt% or even less than 2wt% based on the weight of the smooth part. Most preferably the weight ratio of non-soap anionic surfactants to cationic surfactants is at least 1 : 5. Most preferably the smooth phase is substantially free from non-soap anionic surfactants. Surprisingly it has been found that smooth phases can be formulated which have on the one hand high nonionic levels in combination with low anionic levels, the use of a combination of cationic and nonionic surfactants in the smooth phase (which is preferably free from anionic surfactants) surprisingly allows the use of relatively high nonionic levels without unduly affecting a good dissolution time of the smooth region and without causing undesired high levels of stickability.

[0023] Preferably the level of nonionic surfactants in the smooth phase is from 5 to 70 wt%, more preferred from 20 to 65 wt%, most preferred from 30 to 60 wt%. Preferably the level of cationic surfactants in the smooth phase is from 3 to 25 wt%, more preferred from 4 to 20 wt%, most preferred from 5 to 15 wt%.

[0024] In addition to the non-soap surfactants the smooth region may comprise a structurant material for example a soap for example at a level of 1 to 30 wt% based on the weight of the smooth part, more preferred from 2 to 20 wt%, most preferred 3 to 10 wt%.

[0025] It has been found that the soap provides good structuring properties to the smooth phase, especially if this phase comprises relatively high levels of surfactants. This structuring leads on the one hand to a desired firm consistency of the smooth phase but on the other hand retains the smooth nature of the phase. Furthermore the soap is capable of reducing the bleeding of the smooth phase.

[0026] The smooth region of the tablet may also contain diluent materials for example polyethyleneglycol preferably having a molecular weight of less than 5000 or even less than 1000, dipropyleneglycol, isopropanol or (mono-)propyleneglycol. Preferably the level of these diluents is from 0 to 40 wt%, more preferred 5 to 30, most preferred from 10 to 25 wt% based on the weight of the smooth phase.

[0027] The smooth phase comprises no or only low levels of water. Preferably the level of water is less than 20 wt % based on the weight of the smooth phase, more preferred less than 15 wt%, most preferred from 1 to 7 wt%. Most preferably the smooth phases are substantially free from water.

[0028] Preferably the total weight of surfactants in the smooth phase is from 2 to 20 grammes, more preferred from 3 to 10 grammes.

[0029] In a preferred embodiment of the invention the tablet may be a multi-phase tablet wherein the phases other than the smooth phase as described above comprise no or only low levels of surfactants. Preferably the level of surfactants in the the other phases is less than 10 wt%(based on the total weight of said phases), more preferred from 0 to 9 wt%, most preferred from 1 to 8 wt%.

[0030] In an advantageous embodiment of the invention the cleaning tablets comprise a first smooth region (as described above) in combination with a second region of the tablet which is a solid region, for example prepared by compression of a particulate composition.

[0031] Although the second region may comprise surfactant materials, this region preferably comprises ingredients of the tablet other than surfactants. Examples of these ingredients are for example builders, bleach system, enzymes etc. Preferably the builders in the tablet are predominantly present in the second region. Preferably the bleach system is predominantly present in the second region. Preferably the enzymes are predominantly present in the second region. For the purpose of this invention, unless stated otherwise, the term "predominantly present" refers to a situation wherein at least 90 wt% of an ingredient is present in the second region, more preferred more than 98 wt%, most preferred substantially 100 wt%.

[0032] The above description of the tablet has been given with reference to a tablet constituted by two regions. It will however be understood that each of the regions may be composed of a limited number of discrete regions. For example the first smooth region may be a single discrete part of the tablet but may also be a limited number (say 1-5) discrete smooth parts. Preferably each of these smooth parts are at least 1 gramme, also preferably each of these smooth parts is substantially of the same composition. If reference is made to the composition or weight of the first region it is understood that this concerns the total weight and composition of these smooth parts.

[0033] Similarly the solid second region may be composed of a limited number (say 1-5) of solid parts e.g. separate layers in the tablet. Preferably each of these parts has a weight of at least 10 grammes, also preferably each of the solid parts is substantially of the same composition. If reference is made to the composition or weight of the second region it is understood that this concerns the total weight and composition of these solid parts.

[0034] In addition to the smooth first region and the solid second region the cleaning tablets of the invention may optionally comprise further regions, for example the tablet may be partly or wholly coated.

[0035] Cleaning tablets according to the invention are preferably manufactured by firstly preparing a smooth phase. Advantageously the preparation of the smooth phase may include the heating of the ingredients followed by cooling. Advantageously the preparation of the

smooth phase may involve extrusion.

[0036] Extrusion processes for washing articles are known, for example WO 01/02532 describes the extrusion of washing articles with a pressure of less than 10 bar.

[0037] Preferably extrusion processes for preparing the smooth parts for use in tablets of the invention will involve the forming of an extrudable mass which is then subsequently extruded from an extrusion device and optionally then partitioned into parts of the desired size and weight. Optionally the smooth parts may then be hardened.

[0038] The extrudable mass preferably has an initial elevated temperature for example from 60 to 120 C, more preferred from 70 to 90 C. Preferably the extrudable mass is during the production of the smooth mass cooled e.g. to a final temperature of 20 C. If extrusion is used this low temperature may for example be the temperature at the extrusion die for example from 10 to 40, preferably from 15 to 25, most preferred at ambient temperature (20 C).

[0039] In a very preferred embodiment of the invention the conditions for extrusion are carefully controlled. In particular it has been found that smooth parts which on the one hand contain relatively high levels of soap and non-soap surfactants and on the other hand have the right textural properties (i.e not too soft and of smooth character) can advantageously be produced by an extrusion process wherein no high-shear conditions are applied, in particular under cooling. Particularly it is preferred that the the extrusion takes place under low-shear conditions in the extrusion device. Suitable extrusion devices for this purpose are for example free from extrusion screws. Especially preferred is the feeding of the extrudable mass to a elongated chamber e.g a pipe provided with cooling means but not provided with stirring or shearing devices.

[0040] After the production of the smooth part the cleaning tablet of the invention may advantageously be made by a process comprising the steps of:

- (a) compressing a particulate composition into a tablet mould
- (b) combining one or more smooth parts with the compressed particulate composition.

[0041] In a preferred embodiment of the invention the particulate composition is compressed at a force of 0.1 to 100 kN/cm².

[0042] A tablet of this invention may be intended for use in machine dishwashing. Such a tablet is likely to contain surfactant in a low concentration such as 0.5 to 2 wt% based on the whole tablet, although higher concentrations ranging up to 10 wt% may be used. Such will typically contain salts, such as over 60 wt%, often over 85 wt% of the tablet.

[0043] Water soluble salts typically used in machine dishwashing compositions are phosphates (including

condensed phosphates) carbonates and silicates, generally as alkali metal salts. Water soluble alkali metal salts selected from phosphates, carbonates and silicates may provide 60 wt% or more of a dishwashing composition.

[0044] Another preferred possibility is that a tablet of this invention will be intended for fabric washing. In this event the tablet will be likely to contain at least 2 wt%, probably at least 5 wt%, up to 40 or 50 wt% non-soap surfactant based on the whole tablet, and from 5 to 80 wt% detergency builder, based on the whole tablet.

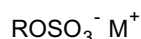
[0045] Materials which may be used in tablets of this invention will now be discussed in more detail.

Surfactant Compounds

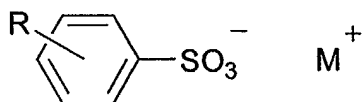
[0046] Compositions which are used in tablets of the invention will contain one or more detergent surfactants. In a fabric washing composition, these preferably provide from 5 to 50% by weight of the overall tablet composition, more preferably from 8 or 9% by weight of the overall composition up to 40% or 50% by weight. Surfactant may be will include cationic and nonionic surfactants but may also be non-soap anionic, zwitterionic, amphoteric or a combination of these.

[0047] Synthetic (i.e. non-soap) anionic surfactants are well known to those skilled in the art. Examples include alkylbenzene sulphonates, particularly sodium linear alkylbenzene sulphonates having an alkyl chain length of C₈-C₁₅; olefin sulphonates; alkane sulphonates; dialkyl sulphosuccinates; and fatty acid ester sulphonates.

[0048] Primary alkyl sulphate having the formula



in which R is an alkyl or alkenyl chain of 8 to 18 carbon atoms especially 10 to 14 carbon atoms and M⁺ is a solubilising cation, is commercially significant as an anionic surfactant. Linear alkyl benzene sulphonate of the formula



where R is linear alkyl of 8 to 15 carbon atoms and M⁺ is a solubilising cation, especially sodium, is also a commercially significant anionic surfactant.

[0049] Frequently, such linear alkyl benzene sulphonate or primary alkyl sulphate of the formula above, or a mixture thereof will be the desired anionic surfactant and may provide 75 to 100 wt% of any anionic non-soap surfactant in the composition.

[0050] In some forms of this invention the amount of

non-soap anionic surfactant lies in a range from 5 to 20 wt% of the tablet composition.

[0051] Soaps for use in accordance to the invention are preferably sodium soaps derived from naturally occurring fatty acids, for example, the fatty acids from coconut oil, beef tallow, sunflower or hardened rapeseed oil. Especially preferably soaps are selected from C₁₀ to C₂₀ soaps for example from C₁₆ to C₁₈ or C₁₂ soaps.

[0052] Suitable nonionic surfactant compounds which may be used include in particular the reaction products of compounds having a hydrophobic group and a reactive hydrogen atom, for example, aliphatic alcohols, acids, amides or alkyl phenols with alkylene oxides, especially ethylene oxide.

[0053] Specific nonionic surfactant compounds are alkyl (C₈₋₂₂) phenol-ethylene oxide condensates, the condensation products of linear or branched aliphatic C₈₋₂₀ primary or secondary alcohols with ethylene oxide, and products made by condensation of ethylene oxide with the reaction products of propylene oxide and ethylene-diamine.

[0054] Especially preferred are the primary and secondary alcohol ethoxylates, especially the C₉₋₁₁ and C₁₂₋₁₅ primary and secondary alcohols ethoxylated with an average of from 5 to 20 moles of ethylene oxide per mole of alcohol.

[0055] In some fabric washing tablets of this invention, the amount of nonionic surfactant lies in a range from 4 to 40%, better 4 or 5 to 30% by weight of the whole tablet.

[0056] Many nonionic surfactants are liquids. These may be absorbed onto particles of the composition.

[0057] In a machine dishwashing tablet the surfactant may be wholly nonionic, in an amount below 5 wt% of the whole tablet although it is known to include some anionic surfactant and to use up to 10 wt% surfactant in total.

[0058] Preferred cationic surfactants are quaternary ammonium salts of the general formula R₁R₂R₃R₄N⁺X⁻, wherein all of the R-substituents are hydrocarbons with or without hydroxy substitution, at least one of the substituents R₁-R₄ is a C₆-C₂₂ alkyl, alkaryl or hydroxyalkyl, at least one of the substituents R₁-R₄ is a C₁-C₄ alkyl or hydroxy alkyl and X is a monovalent anion equivalent.

[0059] The cationic surfactants are preferably the quaternary nitrogen compounds wherein R₁ and R₂ are the same or different C₁-C₄ alkyl or hydroxy alkyl, R₃ is a C₆-C₂₂ alkyl, alkaryl or hydroxyalkyl, R₄ is a C₁-C₂₂ alkyl, alkaryl or hydroxyalkyl and X is a monovalent anion equivalent. Preferably X is a halogen, most preferably chloride or bromide.

[0060] Preferably R₁ and R₂ are methyl. In embodiments of the invention R₃ is preferably C₈-C₁₈ alkyl, more preferably C₁₀-C₁₆ alkyl. In embodiments of the invention R₄ is preferably methyl, C₈-C₁₈ alkyl or benzyl. Thus, the cationic surfactants used can have three 'short chain' radicals such as methyl and one fatty-sol-

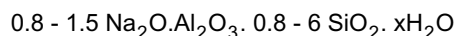
uble 'long chain' radical or two 'short' chains and two fatty-soluble 'long chains', wherein the 'long chains' can be either linear or branched hydrocarbons or contain aromatic rings.

[0061] Particularly suitable cationic detergent-active compounds include Praepagen HY ex Clariant.

Detergency Builder

[0062] A composition which is used in tablets of the invention will usually contain from 5 to 80%, more usually 15 to 60% by weight of detergency builder. This may be provided wholly by water soluble materials, or may be provided in large part or even entirely by water-insoluble material with water-softening properties. Water-insoluble detergency builder may be present as 5 to 80 wt%, better 5 to 60 wt% of the composition.

[0063] Alkali metal aluminosilicates are strongly favoured as environmentally acceptable water-insoluble builders for fabric washing. Alkali metal (preferably sodium) aluminosilicates may be either crystalline or amorphous or mixtures thereof, having the general formula:



[0064] These materials contain some bound water (indicated as "xH₂O" and are required to have a calcium ion exchange capacity of at least 50 mg CaO/g. The preferred sodium aluminosilicates contain 1.5-3.5 SiO₂ units (in the formula above). Both the amorphous and the crystalline materials can be prepared readily by reaction between sodium silicate and sodium aluminate, as amply described in the literature.

[0065] Suitable crystalline sodium aluminosilicate ion-exchange detergency builders are described, for example, in GB 1429143 (Procter & Gamble). The preferred sodium aluminosilicates of this type are the well known commercially available zeolites A and X, the novel zeolite P described and claimed in EP 384070 (Unilever) and mixtures thereof.

[0066] Conceivably a water-insoluble detergency builder could be a layered sodium silicate as described in US 4664839.

NaSKS-6 is the trademark for a crystalline layered silicate marketed by Hoechst (commonly abbreviated as "SKS-6"). NaSKS-6 has the delta-Na₂SiO₅ morphology form of layered silicate. It can be prepared by methods such as described in DE-A-3,417,649 and DE-A-3,742,043. Other such layered silicates, such as those having the general formula NaMSi_xO_{2x+1}·yH₂O wherein M is sodium or hydrogen, x is a number from 1.9 to 4, preferably 2, and y is a number from 0 to 20, preferably 0 can be used.

[0067] Water-soluble phosphorous-containing inorganic detergency builders, include the alkali-metal orthophosphates, metaphosphates, pyrophosphates and

polyphosphates. Specific examples of inorganic phosphate builders include sodium and potassium triphosphates, orthophosphates and hexameta-phosphates.

[0068] Non-phosphorous water-soluble builders may be organic or inorganic. Inorganic builders that may be present include alkali metal (generally sodium) carbonate; while organic builders include polycarboxylate polymers, such as polyacrylates, acrylic/maleic copolymers, and acrylic phosphonates, monomeric polycarboxylates such as citrates, gluconates, oxydisuccinates, glycerol mono- di- and trisuccinates, carboxymethoxysuccinates, carboxymethoxymalonates, dipicolinates and hydroxyethyliminodiacetates.

[0069] At least one region (preferably the second region) of a fabric washing tablet preferably include polycarboxylate polymers, more especially polyacrylates and acrylic/maleic copolymers which can function as builders and also inhibit unwanted deposition onto fabric from the wash liquor.

Bleach System

[0070] Tablets according to the invention may contain a bleach system in at least one region of a tablet, preferably in the second region. This preferably comprises one or more peroxy bleach compounds, for example, inorganic persalts or organic peroxyacids, which may be employed in conjunction with activators to improve bleaching action at low wash temperatures. If any peroxygen compound is present, the amount is likely to lie in a range from 10 to 25% by weight of the composition.

[0071] Preferred inorganic persalts are sodium perborate monohydrate and tetrahydrate, and sodium percarbonate, advantageously employed together with an activator. Bleach activators, also referred to as bleach precursors, have been widely disclosed in the art. Preferred examples include peracetic acid precursors, for example, tetraacetylethylene diamine (TAED), now in widespread commercial use in conjunction with sodium perborate; and perbenzoic acid precursors. The quaternary ammonium and phosphonium bleach activators disclosed in US 4751015 and US 4818426 (Lever Brothers Company) are also of interest. Another type of bleach activator which may be used, but which is not a bleach precursor, is a transition metal catalyst as disclosed in EP-A-458397, EP-A-458398 and EP-A-549272. A bleach system may also include a bleach stabiliser (heavy metal sequestrant) such as ethylenediamine tetramethylene phosphonate and diethylenetriamine pentamethylene phosphonate.

[0072] As indicated above, if a bleach is present and is a water-soluble inorganic peroxygen bleach, the amount may well be from 10% to 25% by weight of the composition.

Other Detergent Ingredients

[0073] The detergent tablets of the invention may also contain (preferably in the second region) one of the detergency enzymes well known in the art for their ability to degrade and aid in the removal of various soils and stains. Suitable enzymes include the various proteases, cellulases, lipases, amylases, and mixtures thereof, which are designed to remove a variety of soils and stains from fabrics. Examples of suitable proteases are Maxatase (Trade Mark), as supplied by Gist-Brocades N.V., Delft, Holland, and Alcalase (Trade Mark), and Savinase (Trade Mark), as supplied by Novo Industri A/S, Copenhagen, Denmark. Detergency enzymes are commonly employed in the form of granules or marumes, optionally with a protective coating, in amount of from about 0.1% to about 3.0% by weight of the composition; and these granules or marumes present no problems with respect to compaction to form a tablet.

[0074] The detergent tablets of the invention may also contain (preferably in the second region) a fluorescer (optical brightener), for example, Tinopal (Trade Mark) DMS or Tinopal CBS available from Ciba-Geigy AG, Basel, Switzerland. Tinopal DMS is disodium 4,4'-bis-(2-morpholino-4-anilino-s-triazin-6-ylamino) stilbene disulphonate; and Tinopal CBS is disodium 2,2'-bis-(phenyl-styryl) disulphonate.

[0075] An antifoam material is advantageously included (preferably in the second region), especially if a detergent tablet is primarily intended for use in front-loading drum-type automatic washing machines. Suitable antifoam materials are usually in granular form, such as those described in EP 266863A (Unilever). Such antifoam granules typically comprise a mixture of silicone oil, petroleum jelly, hydrophobic silica and alkyl phosphate as antifoam active material, absorbed onto a porous absorbed water-soluble carbonate-based inorganic carrier material. Antifoam granules may be present in an amount up to 5% by weight of the composition.

[0076] It may also be desirable that a detergent tablet of the invention includes an amount of an alkali metal silicate, particularly sodium ortho-, meta- or disilicate. The presence of such alkali metal silicates at levels, for example, of 0.1 to 10 wt%, may be advantageous in providing protection against the corrosion of metal parts in washing machines, besides providing some measure of building and giving processing benefits in manufacture of the particulate material which is compacted into tablets.

[0077] A tablet for fabric washing will generally not contain more than 15 wt% silicate. A tablet for machine dishwashing will often contain more than 20 wt% silicate. Preferably the silicate is present in the second region of the tablet.

[0078] Further ingredients which can optionally be employed in a region of a fabric washing detergent of the invention tablet (preferably the second region) include anti-redeposition agents such as sodium car-

boxymethylcellulose, straight-chain polyvinyl pyrrolidone and the cellulose ethers such as methyl cellulose and ethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose, fabric-softening agents; heavy metal sequestrants such as EDTA; perfumes; and colorants or coloured speckles.

[0079] Further ingredients which can optionally be used in tablets of the invention, preferably in the second region are dispersing aids. Examples of suitable dispersing aids are water-swelling polymers (e.g. SCMC) highly soluble materials (e.g. sodium citrate, potassium carbonate or sodium acetate) or sodium tripolyphosphate with preferably at least 40% of the anhydrous phase I form.

Particle Size and Distribution

[0080] The second region of a detergent tablet of this invention, is a preferably a matrix of compacted particles.

[0081] Preferably the particulate composition has an average particle size in the range from 200 to 2000 μm , more preferably from 250 to 1400 μm . Fine particles, smaller than 180 μm or 200 μm may be eliminated by sieving before tableting, if desired, although we have observed that this is not always essential.

[0082] While the starting particulate composition may in principle have any bulk density, the present invention is especially relevant to tablets made by compacting powders of relatively high bulk density, because of their greater tendency to exhibit disintegration and dispersion problems. Such tablets have the advantage that, as compared with a tablet derived from a low bulk density powder, a given dose of composition can be presented as a smaller tablet.

[0083] Thus the starting particulate composition may suitably have a bulk density of at least 400 g/litre, preferably at least 500 g/litre, and perhaps at least 600 g/litre.

[0084] Tableting machinery able to carry out the manufacture of tablets of the invention is known, for example suitable tablet presses are available from Fette and from Korch.

[0085] Tableting may be carried out at ambient temperature or at a temperature above ambient which may allow adequate strength to be achieved with less applied pressure during compaction. In order to carry out the tableting at a temperature which is above ambient, the particulate composition is preferably supplied to the tableting machinery at an elevated temperature. This will of course supply heat to the tableting machinery, but the machinery may be heated in some other way also.

[0086] The size of a tablet will suitably range from 10 to 160 grams, preferably from 15 to 60 g, depending on the conditions of intended use, and whether it represents a dose for an average load in a fabric washing or dishwashing machine or a fractional part of such a dose. The tablets may be of any shape. However, for ease of packaging they are preferably blocks of substantially

uniform cross-section, such as cylinders or cuboids. The overall density of a tablet preferably lies in a range from 1040 or 1050gm/litre up to 1600gm/litre.

Example 1

[0087] 8.6 kg of cationic surfactant (praepagen HY, freeze dried to remove excess water; ex Clariant) and 48.5 kg of nonionic surfactant (7EO branched ex BASF) were mixed and neutralised to a pH of 9 using a 50% NaOH solution.

4 kg Soap fatty acid (Pristerene 4916 fatty acid ex Uniqema), 17 kg of diluent dipropylene glycol (ex Vopak) and 11.4 kg of ethoxylated materials (Tween 40) were added to the mixture. The mixture was kept at a temperature around 80°C until the fatty acid had dissolved and then further neutralised with a 50% NaOH solution to a pH of 11.

[0088] After neutralisation to pH of 11, the mixture was pumped into a sequence of 2 stainless steel tubes by a Maag Sinox P7 pump or a piston pump, type SIBa HK 0501655T4000M000 ex Prominent, Vleuten (NL). Both tubes were double jacketed. The first tube was 2.5m long and had an inner diameter of 73mm. The second tube was 1.5m long and had an inner diameter of 45mm. The tubes were connected by a 10cm long pipe.

[0089] The extrusion was performed via die-head (with inner diameters of resp 24 and 32 mm), which was attached to the second tube.

[0090] The mixture was pumped into the tubes at a temperature of 85°C at a throughput of 4 kg/hr. The first tube was cooled using a water bath at 40°C. The second tube was cooled using a 50:50 weight mixture of ethylene glycol and water. The coolant temperature was -15°C. The material coming out of the second tube had a temperature of about 20°C and was collected and divided into bars of around 0.5m.

[0091] After storage the bars were cut into smooth cylindrical slices (18mm diameter) of comparable quality and 15 gramme each.

[0092] A detergent powder was made by mixing the following ingredients

Powder layer	Wt%
EAG (17% silicone)	3.9
Fluorescer (15%)	2.8
STP	58.0
Na-disilicate (80%)	4.8
TAED (83%)	5.5
Percarbonate	20.3
Dequest 2047	2.4
Minors/ enzymes/colour	to 100

[0093] The tablets were made as follows:

41 grammes of the powder are inserted into a 45 mm die of a tableting machine, optionally followed by a flat-

tening step, followed by addition of a single smooth part on top of the powder bed. After addition of the smooth onto the powder bed or flattened powder, the whole material is compressed at 30kN into a single tablet, followed by ejection of the tablet. This results in a tablet with a smooth part embedded in the cleaning tablet.

Claims

1. A cleaning tablet comprising a smooth phase, wherein the smooth phase comprises 30 to 100 wt% of non-soap surfactants and wherein the weight ratio of cationic surfactants to nonionic surfactants in said smooth phase is from 1 : 1 to 1 : 10.
2. A cleaning tablet according to claim 1 being a multiphase tablet wherein the smooth phase is present and additionally one or more other phases are present.
3. A cleaning tablet according to claim 2 comprising a smooth phase and a solid phase composed of compacted particulates.
4. A cleaning tablet according to claim 3 wherein the smooth phase has a weight of 2 to 20 grammes and the solid phase has a weight of 10 to 50 grammes.
5. A cleaning tablet according to one or more of the preceding claims wherein the smooth phase is substantially free from non-soap anionic surfactants.
6. Method of washing fabrics wherein a cleaning tablet according to one or more of the preceding claims is used.



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 03 07 6740

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	US 6 083 893 A (ZINT DAVID ROBERT ET AL) 4 July 2000 (2000-07-04)	1	C11D17/00 C11D10/04 C11D3/20 C11D1/835
A	* column 1, line 34-67; example 1 * * column 2, line 5,6 * * column 4, line 33 - column 5, line 41 * * column 8, line 61 - column 9, line 7 * * claims *	2-5	

A	US 5 225 098 A (KACHER MARK L ET AL) 6 July 1993 (1993-07-06) * column 2, line 17 - line 45 * * column 14, line 33 - column 16, line 6 *	1,2	

A	GB 2 223 028 A (UNILEVER PLC) 28 March 1990 (1990-03-28) * page 1, line 26 - page 2, line 6; claims; example III *	1-6	

A	WO 99 27064 A (PROCTER&GAMBLE) 3 June 1999 (1999-06-03) * page 2, line 30 - page 3, line 17; claims; examples * * page 8, line 12 - page 10, line 25 * * page 35, line 13 - line 22 * * page 19, line 1 - page 30, line 19 *	1-6	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7) C11D

A	WO 99 24548 A (PROCTER & GAMBLE) 20 May 1999 (1999-05-20) * claims; examples 40-P *	1-6	

The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 25 September 2003	Examiner Loloiu, C
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons ----- & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

EPO FORM 1503 03 82 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 03 07 6740

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

25-09-2003

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date		Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 6083893	A	04-07-2000	CA	2147674 A1	17-11-1995
			TR	28777 A	03-03-1997

US 5225098	A	06-07-1993	AU	3921193 A	21-10-1993
			BR	9306130 A	23-06-1998
			CA	2131310 A1	30-09-1993
			CN	1078251 A	10-11-1993
			CZ	9402302 A3	13-09-1995
			EP	0631613 A1	04-01-1995
			FI	944337 A	19-09-1994
			HU	69334 A2	28-09-1995
			JP	7504935 T	01-06-1995
			NO	943474 A	19-09-1994
			SK	113094 A3	07-06-1995
			TR	26996 A	13-09-1994
			WO	9319158 A1	30-09-1993

GB 2223028	A	28-03-1990	BR	8903144 A	06-02-1990
			PH	26196 A	18-03-1992

WO 9927064	A	03-06-1999	BR	9815064 A	20-11-2001
			CA	2311503 A1	03-06-1999
			EP	1034247 A1	13-09-2000
			JP	2001524590 T	04-12-2001
			WO	9927064 A1	03-06-1999
			US	6391845 B1	21-05-2002

WO 9924548	A	20-05-1999	AT	244296 T	15-07-2003
			AT	241003 T	15-06-2003
			AT	234913 T	15-04-2003
			BR	9813201 A	29-08-2000
			BR	9814021 A	26-09-2000
			BR	9814022 A	26-09-2000
			CA	2296354 C	27-05-2003
			CA	2309251 A1	20-05-1999
			CA	2309252 A1	20-05-1999
			CA	2309614 A1	20-05-1999
			DE	69812403 D1	24-04-2003
			DE	69814911 D1	26-06-2003
			DE	69816112 D1	07-08-2003
			EP	1032642 A1	06-09-2000
			EP	1032643 A1	06-09-2000
			EP	1032644 A1	06-09-2000
			ES	2190120 T3	16-07-2003
			JP	2001522933 T	20-11-2001
			JP	2001522934 T	20-11-2001

EPO FORM P0459

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 03 07 6740

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

25-09-2003

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
WO 9924548 A		JP 2001524552 T	04-12-2001
		WO 9924547 A1	20-05-1999
		WO 9924548 A1	20-05-1999
		WO 9924549 A1	20-05-1999
		WO 9924550 A1	20-05-1999
		US 6274538 B1	14-08-2001
		US 6413928 B1	02-07-2002
		US 6440927 B1	27-08-2002
		US 6486117 B1	26-11-2002

EPO FORM P0459

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82