

Kao steps up EMEA skincare growth with Curél launch in the Nordics

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- Kao continues its strategic expansion of its cosmetics business by launching Curél, Japan's No. 1^{*1} skincare brand for sensitive skin, in four Nordic countries: Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland.
- Curél will launch exclusively at KICKS and Matas in the Nordics.
- This launch marks a step in Curél's global growth strategy, with Europe positioned as a priority region.

Tokyo/Darmstadt, 25 August 2026 – Japanese consumer goods manufacturer Kao, known for brands including John Frieda, Bioré, SENSAI and Molton Brown, today announced that its global skincare brand Curél will launch across the Nordics in September 2026. The launch further strengthens Kao's skincare portfolio in Europe and reflects the company's broader cosmetics growth strategy, with Curél, SENSAI, and Molton Brown among the six focus brands driving Kao's global expansion.

Backed by Kao's pioneering biomimetic ceramide technology, Japan's cult skincare brand Curél is now available across Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. The Nordic launch marks the next chapter in Curél's European expansion, following successful introductions in the UK in 2019, Germany and France in 2025, and the Netherlands in May 2026.

The European expansion comes at a time when there is growing global interest in J-beauty, as consumers are starting to reject short-term beauty trends in favour of clinically proven formulations that prioritise skin barrier science and focus on long-term skin health.

In the UK, where the brand continues to build strong momentum, retail sales are currently up 24% year on year (year to date) ^{*2}, underscoring the growing demand for Curél's science-backed skincare solutions.

With more than 13,000 patents and globally recognised brands such as Bioré and SENSAI, Kao has built decades of expertise in skin science and innovation.

Developed on this foundation, Curél is Japan's leading sensitive skincare brand. Focusing on the skin's natural barrier function, Curél features Kao's proprietary biomimetic ceramide and combines gentle formulations with proven efficacy, earning the trust of millions of consumers.

Linda Karlin, Senior Director, Marketing & Strategy Consumer Care EMEA at Kao, comments:

"The Nordics represent a highly sophisticated skincare market and a natural next step in Curél's European growth journey. Curél's launch in the region reflects both the strength of the brand and Kao's long-term commitment to advancing skin science. For decades, we have invested in understanding the dry, sensitive skin and developing innovations that address real consumer needs. We are proud to bring Curél's unique expertise to a new audience and continue our mission of enriching lives through science-backed skincare."

Across Europe, Curél focuses on growing the brand through trusted skincare retail channels and partners with retailers known for their skincare expertise, including pharmacies in Germany and France, derma-focused drugstores in the UK, and KICKS and Matas, two of the Nordics' leading beauty retailers.

The Nordic launch is part of Kao's wider plan to grow Curél internationally. The company aims to increase the brand's sales to 1.6 times the 2024 level by 2030 and raise the share of overseas sales to approximately 50%.

Kao's continued investment in its cosmetics business in Europe, including this Nordic launch, forms part of its "Global Sharp Top" strategy. This strategy concentrates resources on differentiated, high-value-added brands and priority categories where the company can build leading market positions and accelerate growth.

Tomoko Uchiyama, Senior Executive Officer and President of Cosmetics Business, Kao, comments:

"As one of Kao's six focus brands, Curél plays an important role in driving the global growth of Kao's cosmetics business. Alongside the quality and technology cultivated in Japan, the brand draws on Kao's expertise rooted in skin science, strengthening its support for people with dry, sensitive skin."

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The Nordic launch is another meaningful step in expanding Curél's presence in Europe and advancing Kao's broader global growth strategy for its cosmetics business."

**1 Based on INTAGE Inc SRI Data, Market for Skincare Products for Sensitive Skin, Jan 2015-Dec 2025, Turnover Value*

**2 Results for the period from December 28, 2025 to June 27, 2026, compared with the same period of the previous year*

About Curél

In Kao's dermatological research laboratory, Japanese scientists identified ceramides as the key to maintaining skin moisture as early as 1985. With the founding of Curél in 1999, a product portfolio was developed that specialises in the needs of people with dry, sensitive skin and builds on the extensive research results of the Kao Institute.

About Kao

Kao, a Japan-based manufacturer of cosmetics, personal care and household products, as well as specialty chemicals, creates high-value-added products and services that provide care and enrichment for the life of all people and the planet. Through its brands such as Curél, SENSAI, and MOLTON BROWN cosmetics, Bioré and Jergens skin care products, Oribe hair care products, Attack laundry detergent, and Laurier sanitary products, Kao is part of the everyday lives of people across Asia, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Combined with its chemical business, which contributes to a wide range of industries, Kao generates about 1,690 billion yen in annual sales. Kao employs about 31,500 people worldwide and has more than 130 years of history in innovation. Please visit [the Kao Group website](#) for additional information.

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