Claims:

1. A water-based moisturizing composition comprising an oil in water emulsion having an aqueous phase and an oil phase emulsified in the aqueous phase, wherein the oil phase comprises one or more emollients, and further wherein the composition contains a water-soluble shellac in an amount sufficient to improve the moisturizing properties of the composition.

2. The water-based moisturizing composition of claim 1, wherein the composition optionally contains one or more water-soluble low molecular weight alcohols which have been used for dissolving the shellac during preparation of the composition, these water-soluble low molecular weight alcohols containing 1 to 6 carbon atoms and 1 to 5 hydroxyl groups, wherein these water-soluble low molecular weight alcohols as well as the water forming the aqueous phase of the emulsion each comprise a carrier liquid, and further wherein the composition contains about 5 to 40 wt.% shellac, based on the total weight of the composition excluding the carrier liquids.

3. The water-based moisturizing composition of claim 1, wherein the composition is in the form of a lotion.

4. The composition of any one of claims 1-3, wherein the shellac is dewaxed shellac.

5. The composition of claim 4, wherein the shellac is dewaxed bleached shellac.

6. The composition of any one of claims 1-3, wherein the composition has a pH of about 7.5 to 8.

7. A process for improving the moisturizing properties of a pre-existing moisturizing composition comprising an oil in water emulsion having an aqueous phase and an oil phase emulsified in the aqueous phase, wherein the oil phase comprises one or more emollients, the process comprising adding to the pre-existing moisturizing composition, or to one or more ingredients forming this pre-existing moisturizing composition, a water-soluble shellac in an amount sufficient to improve the moisturizing properties of the pre-existing moisturizing composition.

8. The process of claim 7, wherein the water-soluble shellac is added in the form of a fortifying mixture comprising shellac, water having an alkaline pH and one or more water-

soluble low molecular weight alcohols containing 1 to 6 carbon atoms and 1 to 5 hydroxyl groups.

9. The process of claim 8, wherein the water forming the aqueous phase of the pre-existing moisturizing composition, as well as the alkaline water and the water-soluble low molecular weight alcohols forming the fortifying mixture each comprise a carrier liquid, and further wherein the amount of shellac added to the pre-existing moisturizing composition is about 5 to 40 wt.%, based on the total weight of the pre-existing moisturizing composition after the shellac has been added excluding these carrier liquids.

10. A water-based moisturizing composition comprising an oil in water emulsion having an aqueous phase and an oil phase emulsified in the aqueous phase, wherein the oil phase comprises one or more emollients, and further wherein the aqueous phase comprises at least about 1 to 20 wt.% shellac, based on the weight of the composition as a whole, dissolved in its aqueous phase.