

You can buy products
that don't cost the earth

THE GREEN CONSUMER



- Baby products • Groceries • Appliances
 - Cosmetics • Gardening supplies
 - Gifts • Much more!
-

JOHN ELKINGTON, JULIA HAILES,
AND JOEL MAKOWER

Foreword by Ben Cohen, Ben & Jerry's Homemade



ABOUT THIS BOOK

We have divided *The Green Consumer* into three parts. Part I offers the broad view of Green Consumerism, the state of the environment, and how your everyday purchases can affect the earth's resources. Part II features a comprehensive guide to what products to buy—and not to buy—including brand names and addresses. Part III is for those who want to learn more or become more involved in environmental issues, including names and addresses of dozens of environmental organizations.

There are two principal ways this book can be of use. One, of course, is through the listings of green products and companies. Understand, however, that a product's inclusion in this book does not constitute an endorsement of this product, nor does it ensure a product's quality and efficacy. The second and equally important use of this book is to obtain a better understanding that will help you to judge *all* products for their potential environmental impact. By learning to include environmental concerns along with price, quality, nutrition, and convenience, you will be very well equipped to meet the demanding task of being a Green Consumer in the 1990s and beyond.

When contacting any of the companies in this book, be aware that each has its own policies and practices. Some sell directly to consumers, accepting phone orders and credit card charges. Others accept orders by mail, accompanied with payment. (Note that prices listed in this book are suggested retail prices and do not include shipping or sales taxes.) Still other companies will refer you to a local retailer that carries their products. Some companies offer catalogs and brochures of their products, while others have no such information; although most of this literature is free, there may be a charge for some, or a requirement to send a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Moreover, all of these policies are subject to change. As this book went to press, for example, several companies that had not previously sold directly to consumers reported that they were considering doing so. Others were preparing—or thinking of preparing—brochures or catalogs for the first time.

We hope you find the information contained in these pages to be valuable. We welcome your ideas, suggestions, and comments, which we will incorporate in future editions of *The Green Consumer*. Please send them to The Green Consumer, c/o Tilden Press, Inc., 1526 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036.

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FOREWORD

*by Ben Cohen, Chairperson
Ben & Jerry's Homemade*

When Ben & Jerry's first started, I used to be a hot ticket on the Rotary Club speaker circuit. The assignment was to drone on a bit after lunch in order to help people digest their meal. Ben & Jerry's was a real small company at the time—we were a homemade ice cream parlor—and we used to do things for the community, like show free movies during the summer on the wall outside our gas station, and sponsor community celebrations, and give away free ice cream on our anniversary. Things like that.

I'd be talking to the Rotary Club about these things and at the end of the talk somebody would kind of lift up his head and say, "Well, you know, those things you're doing for the community—you're just doing them because it's good for business, right?" And I responded, "Well, I don't know, but our reason is that we genuinely believe that business has a responsibility to give back to the community, and we're doing it out of altruism."

That was my old answer. My new answer is, "Yeah, it is good for business. And if you're smart, you'll jump on the bandwagon."

I have been thinking a lot about the influencers of business. One of those influencers is capital—that is, the money that people invest in businesses by buying stocks. Many people are starting to invest their money only in companies whose values they agree with. Businesses need this investment capital in order to survive and prosper. So, as more and more investment capital has these kinds of strings attached to it, companies are starting to be influenced to go along with investors' values. Another influencer is the value of employees. Employees run and operate businesses. So, it makes sense to start educating business school students in the art and science of operating businesses in such a way that they make a profit and proactively support our communities—local, national, and global—at the same time. A third influencer is sales. Businesses need sales to exist, and if companies find that customers will support them more if they adopt a particular social stance, they are going to move in that direction.

That's all fine and good. But consumers need the tools with which to vote with their dollars and decide which businesses to support and which businesses have values that they agree with and

which businesses don't. That's where being a Green Consumer comes in.

The beauty of it is that being a Green Consumer is a really easy thing to do. All you need is some education. You don't have to go out of your way in order to influence companies through your purchasing behavior. When you go into the supermarket, or any store for that matter, you usually have quite a few choices of brands to buy if you're looking for a particular product. In many cases we're talking about products between which there really isn't much difference. You simply choose which packaging you want or which color you want or which one has a slightly better price or a name that rings a bell in your head. Now, with this book, you can add another factor: Is this product and this company environmentally responsible?

Companies that want to survive into the twenty-first century know that they must consider values. At Ben & Jerry's, we operate as a values-led business, a term coined by Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop. We tend to pursue activities based on a particular set of values. So if our value is to create a world that spends less on the military, we will find a way to integrate that message into our day-to-day business activities and influence our government in that direction. If our value is to try to create less economic disparity in our society, we will support organizations that are working in that direction through our purchasing decisions, our investment decisions, and our internal salary structure. If our value is to try to help the environment, we will support that through internal company recycling programs, through externally trying to educate people about recycling, and by working with companies like Community Products, whose purpose is to prove that rain forests can be more profitable as living rain forests than as deforested land.

I think the real problem is that we need to redefine the bottom line for business success. The bottom line has to be in two parts. When we measure our success as a business at the end of the year, we must look at how much money is left over *and* how much of a contribution we made to the community—whether it's the local community or the nation or the world. We have to factor those two things together to determine how well we're doing.

As Green Consumers, you have the right and responsibility to vote—with your dollars—on how well businesses are doing these things: how successfully they are addressing the issues you believe are most important to your life, and to the life of our planet.

As the saying goes, vote early, and vote often. www.tongbook.com

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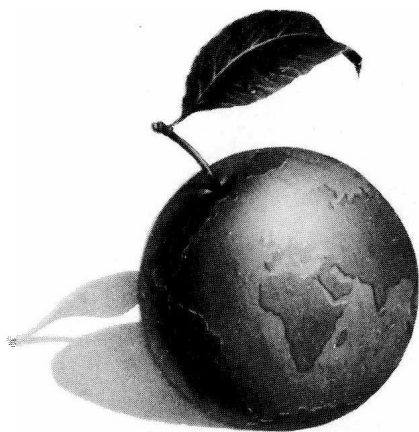
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Part I



T·H·E G·R·E·E·N

C·O·N·S·U·M·E·R

I · N · T · R · O · D · U · C · T · I · O · N

You probably don't realize it, but every week you make dozens of decisions that directly affect the environment of the planet Earth. At work, at home, and at play, whether shopping for life's basic necessities, taking a vacation, or cleaning the house, the choices you make are a never-ending series of votes for or against the environment.

Buy a burger, fries, and a soda and you are probably worsening the already critical landfill crisis. Take your car in for repairs and you may be contributing to the gradual warming of the earth and increasing your chances of getting skin cancer. Do your laundry and you may be fouling America's lakes and rivers, perhaps your own drinking water. Discard your trash and you may be polluting the air, water, and soil, and helping to deplete the earth's natural resources.

But the products and services you buy need not be so destructive to the environment. By choosing carefully, you can have a positive impact on the environment without significantly compromising your way of life. That's what being a Green Consumer is all about.

It wasn't very long ago that being a Green Consumer was a contradiction in terms. To truly care for the environment, it was said, you had to drastically reduce your purchases of everything—food, clothing, appliances, and other "lifestyle" items—to a bare minimum. That approach simply doesn't work in our increasingly convenience- and consumption-oriented society. No one wants to go back to a less-comfortable, less-convenient way of life.

And yet most Americans do care about the state of the earth. Increasingly, according to surveys, people say that their concern

for environmental issues is affecting the way they shop. More than half of the 1,000 adults in a 1989 survey conducted by the Michael Peters Group, an international marketing firm, said they chose not to buy a product in the last year because of concern that it or its packaging might harm the environment. Just over three-fourths said they would be willing to pay as much as 5 percent more for a product packaged with recyclable or biodegradable materials. Sixty-one percent of those in another survey said they were "much" or "somewhat" more inclined to patronize a store or restaurant that showed its concern over the environment by doing such things as reducing its use of plastic containers and utensils, and by recycling other waste materials.

Such concern notwithstanding, there's no question that the jump from environmental concern to environmental consumerism is easier said than done. As is true with so many other parts of our lives—dieting comes quickly to mind—one's good intentions don't always translate readily into effective action. In the case of being a Green Consumer, the problem stems in part from a lack of understanding about how your purchasing decisions can affect the environment, and about what qualities make your purchases "green."

WHAT IS GREEN?

There are two basic ways in which a product can be considered green: it could have more environmentally sound contents, it could be wrapped in environmentally sound packaging—or both. Ideally, a green product is one that:

- is not dangerous to the health of people or animals
- does not cause damage to the environment during manufacture, use, or disposal
- does not consume a disproportionate amount of energy and other resources during manufacture, use, or disposal
- does not cause unnecessary waste, due either to excessive packaging or to a short useful life
- does not involve the unnecessary use of or cruelty to animals
- does not use materials derived from threatened species or environments

In addition, a green product ideally should not trade price, quality, nutrition, or convenience for environmental quality.

The Many Shades of Green. Meeting all these requirements is no small task, although a growing number of companies large and small are finding ways to meet the challenges. There are hundreds of green products introduced each year, with thousands more coming in the foreseeable future.

Unfortunately, few of these products are perfectly green. Most incorporate some improvements in packaging or contents, but do not necessarily meet all of the criteria listed above. One big problem is that there is considerable disagreement even among dedicated environmentalists about whether some purportedly green products truly are less harmful to the environment. For example, is biodegradable plastic a suitable alternative to nonbiodegradable plastic? Some people strongly object to biodegradable plastic because it does not completely break down into benign materials when disposed of in landfills. Others applaud the use of biodegradable plastic, pointing to the fact that while not a perfect solution, it is at least one step better than the nonbiodegradable variety. (More on the debate over biodegradable plastic in "The Problem of Packaging.") Is it better to do something imperfect now or wait for perfect solutions to come later on? The answer is for you to decide.

Equally frustrating is that there are no nationally accepted standards or coding systems for determining what products are environmentally sound. There are no agreed-upon definitions of when something may rightfully be labeled as "biodegradable," "degradable," "recyclable," or "made from recycled materials," among the more common terms now being used on product labels. And there are even less-specific labeling terms, such as "not harmful to the environment" or "environment-friendly."

The result is a mixed bag of green products. There are some environmentally harmful products wrapped in green packaging. Some green products don't clearly state their greenness, while other products claiming to be green are not. To make matters worse, several of the corporations producing green products are among the world's biggest polluters. In short, it's a confusing world, with many shades of green.

How the American Way of Life Is Destroying the Earth

Per-person daily household trash produced in Calcutta, India:
1.12 pounds; in New York City: 3.96 pounds

Barrels of oil wasted annually because the federal government has not
raised efficiency standards for cars by 1 mile per gallon:
420,000

Amount of oil the U.S. would have to import to meet present demand
if the average fuel efficiency of all cars on U.S. roads averaged 42 MPG:
none

Pounds of agricultural pesticides applied each year in California:
80 million pounds

Portion of the 35,000 pesticides introduced since 1945 tested for
potential health effects:
10 percent

Plastic beverage bottles Americans go through every hour:
2.5 million

Styrofoam cups thrown away each year in the U.S.:
25 billion

The Power of Green Consumerism. In the chapters that follow, we will attempt to lead you through this sometimes murky world of Green Consumerism. We have tried to present the different sides to some controversial issues, but it will be up to you to make the final decisions.

While those decisions won't always be easy to make, we urge that it is better to do something than nothing. While perfect solutions are still lacking, there are many companies making some

Americans living in areas with levels of air pollutants the federal government considers harmful:
110 million

Trees wasted each week by Sunday newspapers not being recycled:
500,000

Homes that could be heated by the wood and paper thrown away each year: 5 million homes for 200 years

Scrap tires generated by American drivers in 1988:
246.9 million

Plastic containers dumped overboard daily by commercial fishing fleets:
640,000

Northern fur seals drowned each year by lost plastic fishing net:
500,000

Estimated number of sea birds, marine mammals, and fur seals killed each year as a result of eating or being strangled by plastics:
1 million, 100,000, and 50,000, respectively

Gallons of water that can be contaminated by a single quart of motor oil:
up to 2 million

Grazing area required to produce a single all-beef hamburger:
55 square feet

attempt to improve the environmental quality of their products. Your support of these progressive companies and products will be heard loud and clear in the executive suites of the nation's largest companies, and will encourage other companies to follow these leaders.

You may be surprised at how easy it is to make your voice heard in the marketplace. The marketplace is not a democracy; you don't need a majority opinion to make change. Indeed, it takes only a fairly small portion of shoppers—as few as one person in ten—