

Labelling

US packaging covered in false green claims, Congress told

Jill Park, packagingnews.co.uk, 25 June 2009

The US is awash with 'green' labels and logos with empty claims, an environmental marketing agency executive has told the US Congress.

Vice president of TerraChoice Scot Case put his argument on green labels to the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection earlier this month.

The meeting followed shortly after TerraChoice's publication of its Seven Sins of Greenwashing report, which reveals the extent of the use of green labels and the emerging greenwashing problem.

According to the report, more than 98% of the thousands of products that make environmental claims surveyed by TerraChoice commit at least one of the seven sins of greenwashing (read report below).

"Greenwashing ranges from blatant misrepresentation of environmental claims to telling only partial truths about a product's environmental impacts," Case told Congress.

"Manufacturers are making potentially misleading environmental claims about their products because they lack guidance about what claims are legitimate and what kind of evidence they need to support their claims," he added.

Case recommended to Congress that an independent third-party be brought in to support the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) verify the accuracy of a label's claims.

He proposed establishing an office within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to launch a single, voluntary environmental leadership label, which would combine existing standards into one.

There are more than 300 environmental labels used worldwide, according to Ecolabelling.org, which can pose a problem for consumers explained Case.

"How is my mum in Charlotte, NC, supposed to keep track of all of the environmental labels to know which ones are meaningful and when?" he told Congress. "I have 16 years of experience with this issue and I regularly run into labels or claims that I have never seen before."

What do you think of Case's argument? Are there too many green labels? Should his recommendations be applied to the UK? Log in below and let us know what you think.

Click [here](#) to read the Seven Sins of Greenwashing

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