

## Green products on the rise, report says

By Dana Flavelle

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It could be the bug spray that says it's made from "all natural ingredients. Or the firelog that claims to be "environmentally helpful." Or the laundry detergent with the word "green" in its brand name.

They're among a growing number of products making environmentally friendly claims, according to a report by Ottawa-based environmental marketing firm TerraChoice.

Consumer demand is driving the growth. But more than 95 per cent of so-called "green" products are still not getting it totally right, according to the report called *The Sins of Greenwashing, Home and Family Edition, 2010*.

Manufacturers commit a variety of "greenwashing" sins, including making vague, uncertified and even misleading statements about the product's environmental benefits, the report says.

"One of my favourites is "all natural." Just because something's all natural doesn't necessarily make it green. Plenty of things that are all natural – plutonium, cyanide, mercury, lead – aren't good for you," said Scott McDougall, president and chief

executive officer of TerraChoice and author of the Greenwashing report.



A customer shopped for cleaning products at a Canadian Tire located in Toronto. Green products are on the rise, according to a new report. LUCAS OLENIUK/TORONTO STAR

He cited another example of an aerosol can that proclaimed it is CFC-free. And while that's a good thing as CFC depletes the ozone layer, it's been illegal to use CFC in consumer products since the 1980s so the claim is irrelevant, he said.

The firm, which manages the federal EcoLogo program, North America's best known environmental standard, also advises corporate clients how to develop and communicate green product strategies.

The number of "green" products on store shelves has jumped by 73 per cent over last

year, the report said, based on its survey of 5,269 products carried in 24 stores in Canada and the U.S.

And although greenwashing is still a significant problem, the proportion of products that avoided making any misleading claims is also rising, the report found.

Products that avoided making any greenwashing claims now stand at 4.5 per cent, up from 2 per cent a year ago and 1 per cent in 2007, the study found.

The numbers prove consumers can have an impact on the marketplace, said McDougall.

Given a choice, consumers are better off buying products that make green claims than the ones that don't, he said.

"Our whole point is consumers really can change the world. So, don't give up," he said.

The study also found large national chains stock more "green" products and more products that provide legitimate environmental certifications than smaller stores and even specialty "green" boutiques.

Products that had been certified by an Ecologo type program were 30 per cent sin free, compared to just 4.4 per cent of all green products surveyed, the study found.

Companies that want to win consumers' trust should do as much as possible to make their claims easy to verify, the report said.