



Congress Ponders Greenwashing

--Sarah F. Kessler. 26 June, 2009.

Of all the products claiming to be ecofriendly, 98 percent of them are guilty of greenwashing, according to [TerraChoice](#)'s survey of 2,219 consumer goods in the United States and Canada. And now Congress knows it, thanks to the [testimony](#) of TerraChoice Vice President Scot Case.

Case was invited earlier this month to testify before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection at a hearing entitled "It's Too Easy Being Green: Defining Fair Green Marketing Practices." The meeting addressed environmental marketing claims and included [testimony from five witnesses](#).

Monitoring green marketing practices is a job that's becoming increasingly difficult. As interest in protecting the planet is grows among consumers, interest in creating misleadingly planet-friendly labels grows among manufacturers. Some common greenwashing practices include being so vague that the claim is meaningless, advertising claims with no proof, and creating images that falsely imply that the product has gone through a certification process. TerraChoice has labeled these and other greenwashing practices "[The Seven Sins of Greenwashing](#)."



The Federal Trade Commission created [guidelines for environmental marketing](#) in 1992, [but it's done little to enforce](#) the rules since then. One of the goals at the hearing was to discuss the FTC's continuing role in ensuring fair and effective green marketing practices.

While Case acknowledged the FTC guidelines as a good step, he called for "a single, unifying environmental label to make 'buying green' easy for U.S. consumers." Right now, more than 300 environmental labels are used worldwide, some of which sell green certification for a flat fee.

"Without the ability to compare products with a standardized, transparent process, the market-based environmentalism approach that relies on consumers to buy greener products from greener companies does not work," Case said in his testimony.

For more tips about how to spot greenwashing, [click here](#).