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TERRACHOICE 2010 SINS OF GREENWASHING STUDY FINDS MISLEADING GREEN CLAIMS ON 95 PER CENT OF HOME AND FAMILY PRODUCTS

*Big box stores emerge as “gentle green giants”
while 100 per cent of toys surveyed get a failing grade*

NORTHBROOK, IL and OTTAWA, ON, Oct. 26, 2010 – More than 95 per cent of consumer products claiming to be green are committing at least one of the “sins” of greenwashing, according to [The Sins of Greenwashing: Home and Family Edition](#), released today by TerraChoice, a leading North American environmental marketing company and part of Underwriters Laboratories’ global network. The study also finds big box retailers stock more “green” products and more products that provide legitimate environmental certifications than smaller “green” boutique-style stores.

Greenwashing is defined as the act of misleading consumers about the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service.

The 2010 study reveals that greenwashing has declined slightly since 2009, with 4.5 per cent of products now “sin-free”, compared to only 2 per cent in 2009. The study also finds that marketers and product manufacturers are getting better, with greenwashing down among those who have been focused on environmentally preferable practices longer than others. The proportion of “sin-free” products is five times greater in “mature” categories like building, construction and office products than in “immature” categories like toys and baby products.

“We found 73 per cent more ‘green’ products on the market today than in 2009,” said Scott McDougall, President, TerraChoice. “This is great news and it shows that consumers are changing the world by demanding greener goods, and that marketers and manufacturers are taking note.”

The TerraChoice study, the third since 2007, surveyed 5,296 products in the U.S. and Canada that make an environmental claim. Between March and May 2010, TerraChoice visited 19 retail stores in Canada and 15 in the United States.

“The increase from just 2 per cent to 4.5 per cent may seem small, but we see it as early evidence of a positive and long lasting trend,” said McDougall. “We are also pleased with the finding that those home and family product categories that are more mature have less greenwashing and more reliable green certification.”

Product categories studied in the 2010 report include baby care products, toys, office products, building and construction products, cleaning products, housewares, health and beauty products, and consumer electronics.

“‘Greenwashing’ is an issue that touches many industries, and education and awareness play a key role in helping to prevent it,” said Stephen Wenc, President, UL Environment. “We’re hopeful that the trends and tips identified in this study will help our business partners confidently and appropriately share their environmental achievements with their consumers.”

The Sins of Greenwashing: Home and Family Edition provides tips to consumers, marketers, and manufacturers about how to identify and prevent greenwashing. On October 27, 2010, TerraChoice will also share tips from its study through a webcast (for details visit www.terrachoice.com).

The Sins of Greenwashing: Home and Family Edition highlights:

- There are 73 per cent more green products on market today than in 2009.
- More than 95 per cent of consumer products claiming to be green are guilty of at least one of the “sins” of greenwashing.
- 4.5 per cent of products now sin-free, compared to only 1 per cent in 2007.
- 100 hundred per cent of toys and 99.2 per cent of baby products surveyed are guilty of some form of greenwashing.
- BPA-free claims are up by 577 per cent since the 2009 Sins of Greenwashing study, appearing more frequently among toys and baby products than any other category studied.
- Phthalate-free claims increased 2,550 per cent since 2009.
- Big box stores are more likely to stock products that are “sin-free” than boutique stores.
- Categories such as building materials, construction and office products contained more “sin-free” products than categories where “green” experience was less developed, such as baby products, toys, and consumer electronics.
- Good eco-labeling helps prevent (but does not eliminate) greenwashing – of the products certified by a recognized third-party certification, more than 30 per cent are sin-free.

About the Study

Researchers documented product details, claim details, any supporting information on labels or store shelves, and any explanatory details or offers of additional information or support. TerraChoice researchers catalogued a total of 5,296 products and a total of 12,061 “green” claims made by those products. Those claims were tested against best practice and guidelines provided by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, the Competition Bureau of Canada, and the ISO 14021 standard for environmental labeling. The “Sins of Greenwashing” framework from the previous studies was used to organize the findings, and researchers looked for other patterns in the results.

About TerraChoice

TerraChoice combines science and business expertise to help genuine environmental leaders build market share and accelerate progress towards sustainability. Clients include Fortune 500 consumer packaged goods companies, energy conglomerates, green entrepreneurs and innovators, and more. Recently, TerraChoice joined UL Environment as part of the Underwriters Laboratories global network providing environmental services to companies around the world. The TerraChoice group of companies consists of TerraVeritas, sustainability validation services; the EcoLogo Program, third-party and multi-attribute certification; and TerraChoice Environmental Marketing, environmental marketing. More info: www.terrachoice.com.

About The UL Global Network

Operating around the globe, the UL family of companies is one of the world’s largest independent testing and certification organizations. UL has been testing products and writing Standards for Safety for more than a century. UL evaluates more than 19,000 types of products, components, materials and systems from more than 66,000 manufacturers each year. More than 20 billion UL Marks appear on products yearly worldwide. UL’s global family of companies and network of service providers – including Underwriters Laboratories of Canada Inc. and ULC Standards – is composed of 68 laboratory, testing and certification facilities serving customers in 102 countries. UL also specializes in providing environmental services, verification services, life and health safety testing, and educational training services through its various business units. By becoming one of the UL family of companies, TerraChoice can leverage the expertise and reach of UL Environment, a full-service environmental solutions company and one of UL’s fastest growing businesses. For more information, visit: www.ul.com/newsroom or www.ulenvironment.com. For consumer safety tips, please visit www.safetyathome.com.

To download a copy of the 2010 *Sins of Greenwashing* study, visit www.sinsofgreenwashing.org.

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