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Consumers: don't be fooled by green promises

Mon Nov 19, 2007 9:17pm EST

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By Rebekah Kebede

NEW YORK (Reuters Life!) - Trying to reduce your carbon footprint? Buying products marketed as environmentally friendly may not do much good -- if any at all, according to a survey by environmental marketer TerraChoice released Monday.

A review of 1,018 products -- from flooring to air fresheners to mouthwash -- carrying 1,753 environment claims showed that the majority of so-called "green" products were labeled in ways that were vague or deliberately misleading.

The report said that of the products examined "all but one made claims that are either demonstrably false or that risk misleading intended audiences."

The Pennsylvania-based firm, which refers to misleading environmental marketing as "greenwashing," said it found "six sins of green marketing" -- hidden trade-offs,

no proof, vagueness, irrelevance, fibbing and the lesser of two evils.

Top of the list was hidden trade-offs, such as paper products marketing themselves as 10 percent recycled.

"The other 90 percent could be from an old-growth forest," said Scot Case, vice president of TerraChoice which does market green products under its own label, EcoLogo.

Another commonly committed "sin" of green-marketing, according to the report, is irrelevance. Labels such as "all natural," the report points out, are meaningless when one considers the fact that arsenic and mercury are also natural.

Similarly, many products have labels declaring them "CFC-free," even though CFCs, or chlorofluorocarbons, which contribute to ozone depletion, have been banned since 1978. [Continued...](#)

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