

OCTOBER 1993

Decorating RETAILER

\$4.50

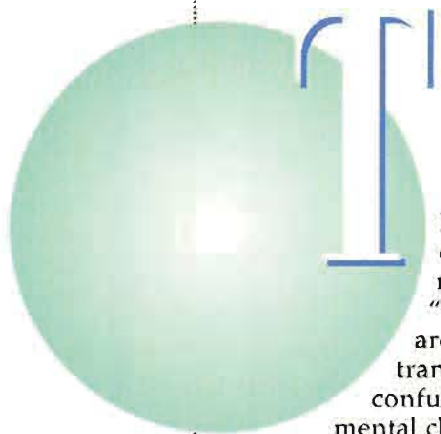
Targeting the needs of the decorating center market



CLEAN
& GREEN

Reflections on a responsible industry

Giving Credence to Environmental Claims



The vast majority of consumers describe themselves as environmentalists, and their tendency to “buy green” is increasing, but they are frustrated in their attempts to translate attitude into action by the confusing and inconsistent environmental claims of product manufacturers.

These and similar consumer survey findings about environmental issues have prompted the formation of two separate organizations—Green Seal and Scientific Certification Systems. Both organizations are dedicated to providing consumers with the information they need to make ecologically responsible buying decisions.

To promote consumer awareness and education, both Green Seal and SCS have created graphic symbols, similar to nutritional labels, to alert shoppers that the products have satisfied certain standards and passed certain tests.

Green Seal’s Certification Mark is a blue globe with a green check mark, which appears on product labels together with an explanation of the basis for the certification. According to Amy Kostant, Green Seal spokesperson, the symbol assures consumers that the product is “environmentally preferable” because

BY JANICE NIEHAUS

ENVIRO-FYI

A 1992 survey by Environmental Research Associates in Princeton, N.J. found that 51 percent of consumers said they "always" or "usually" look for green labeling on products.

it is "significantly less harmful to the environment than other products in the same category."

Because only 20 percent of all products in a specific category will meet the stringent environmental standards set by Green Seal, Kostant said the Certification Mark also signifies industry leadership by the manufacturer. Once a product earns the Green Seal Certification Mark, the manufacturer pays an annual fee for Green Seal to verify continuing compliance through ran-

standards. The emblem is always printed next to the specific claim or claims which SCS has certified as significant and accurate.

SCS also offers manufacturers a significantly more complex evaluation called Life Cycle Analysis. Richard Lindsay, Director of Industry Affairs for the National Retail Hardware Association and Home Center Institute, described the LCA as "a ground-to-ground study of a product, including the energy and resources used in

and solid waste generated. The data uncovered during the LCA is then summarized on an Environmental Report Card, described by Dr. Stanley Rhodes, SCS president, as "the environmental equivalent of a nutrition label. Just as nutrition labels have helped consumers gain a more complete understanding of the nutritional benefits of food products, the Environmental Report Card will help consumers become more informed shoppers when it comes to the environment."

The Environmental Report Card contains a quantitative breakdown of environmental burdens plus a graphic display showing how well the product performs. For example, on the Environmental Report Card accompanying this article, from a can of Plasti-Kote Ultra High Solids Enamel aerosol, the shorter bars indicate less environmental burden or potential damage to the environment, while the longer bars indicate more environmental burden.

According to Linda Brown, vice president of communications for SCS, the International Standards Organization has recognized the Environmental Report Card as a prototype for product informational

labeling, as distinctive from an Environmental Seal of Approval.

Decorating retailers can expect to see an increasing number of products bearing these environmental labels in the months and years ahead. To date, SCS has

Environmental Report Card

Burdens from production, distribution, use and disposal.

PRODUCT & PACKAGING:

TYPE OF BURDEN AMT.*

RESOURCE DEPLETION

WATER	35 kg
WOOD	230 g
COAL, OIL, GAS (non-fuel)	0.4 g
MINERALS	120 g

ENERGY USE

TOTAL ENERGY USED	23 MJ
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AIR POLLUTION

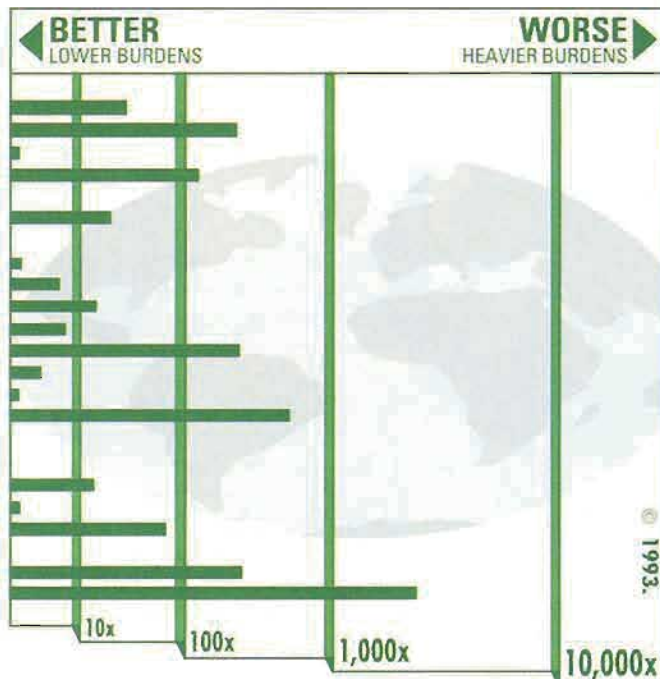
CARBON DIOXIDE	1.2 kg
CARBON MONOXIDE	6 g
SULFUR OXIDES	19 g
NITROGEN OXIDES	7 g
HYDROCARBONS	240 g
PARTICULATES	3 g
UNCLASSIFIED	0.008 g
HAZARDOUS	500 mg
OZONE LAYER DEPLETERS	0 mg

WATER POLLUTION

TOTAL SOLIDS	15 g
OXYGEN DEPLETERS	0.1 g
TOXIC	77 mg

SOLID WASTE

UNCLASSIFIED	260 g
HAZARDOUS	2,600 mg



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 1-800-ECO-FACTS
SCIENTIFIC CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

* PER 122 GRAMS OF PAINT SOLIDS

The Plasti-Kote Environmental Report shows the environmental data for one of its high solids products.

dom, unannounced factory visits and periodic testing of the product.

The globe and cross emblem created by SCS, like the Green Seal symbol, signifies to consumers that the product bearing the emblem has met specific scientific

production, distribution, use and disposal."

Under LCA review, the SCS collects information about environmental costs or "burdens" in five general categories: natural resources depleted, energy consumed, air and water pollution released

certified more than 800 products from more than 150 companies. According to Lindsay, "SCS also offers manufacturers guidance on how to phrase their marketing claims in order to comply with Federal Trade Commission guidelines and most states."

Green Seal, after one year of operation, has published standards for 39 product categories and has awarded its Certification Mark to 10 products. Product categories for which Green Seal standards have been published include tissue paper, water efficient fixtures, printing and writing papers, compact fluorescent lamps, paper towels and napkins, re-refined engine oil and paint.

Glidden was one of the first paint manufacturers to seek and attain product certification. In July 1992, SCS certified Glidden's claims about zero VOC content in its interior latex Spred 2000 and in its companion brand for professional painters, Lifemaster.

In August 1993 Plasti-Kote became the first manufacturer of aerosol paints to receive product certification. Based on the SCS Life Cycle Analysis, four product lines—Ultra Decorator Water Based Acrylic Enamel, Premium Water Based Enamel, High-Solids Rust Not and High-Solids Ultra Enamel—now carry the SCS Environmental Report Card.

Since Green Seal published its standard for paints in May 1993, Kostant reports that several paint manufacturers have begun the Green Seal certification process. The standard does not include stains, clear fin-

ishes or aerosol paints. It addresses environmental and health hazards such as volatile organic compounds, heavy toxic metals and aromatic compounds. It also sets guidelines for the performance characteristic, scrubability, washability and hiding power.

Green Seal and SCS are available to help inform retailers about environmental issues and respond to consumer questions and concerns. Guidance and literature are available also from the Hardlines Industry Environmental Initiative.

Founded in 1984, SCS is a scientific organization with a stated mission "to spur the private and public sectors toward more environmentally sustainable policy planning, product design, management and production through scientific education and certification programs." SCS initiated its program for verifying the accuracy and significance of environmental product claims in 1989.

SCS works closely with the Hardlines Industry Environmental Initiative, which is sponsored jointly by NRHA and HCI and is governed by a council consisting of retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers. The mission of the Initiative, launched in August 1992, is to initiate "hardlines industry policies and programs which support improving the earth's environment through solid waste reduction, energy conservation, pollution reduction and conservation of our natural resources." Efforts focus on four areas: packaging and recycling; education; marketing claims and certification; and legislation.

Green Seal is a not-for-

profit organization led by a board of directors composed of businesspeople, public figures, leaders of major environmental, consumer and other public interest organizations. Green Seal has designated Underwriters Laboratories Inc. as its primary testing and factory inspection contractor.

The certification and labeling programs sponsored by Green Seal and SCS are likely to attract more manufacturing participants and win more environmental and consumer advocates in the years to come, as consumer awareness of environmental issues continues to rise and manufacturers discover the benefits of courting consumers by touting the environmental advantages of their products. ■

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The Green Seal Certification Mark appears on product labels.

ENVIRO-FYI

Two-thirds of the consumers polled in a 1992 survey had elected to not buy a particular brand or product because of environmental concerns.

(Gerstman+Meyers Inc., August 1993)