



WVE

WOMEN'S VOICES FOR THE EARTH

(WVE) is a national women-centered environmental health and justice organization based in Montana. WVE works to eliminate and reduce environmental toxins that impact human health and to increase women's participation in environmental decision making.

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Why Are We Asking for Full Disclosure of Ingredients on the Label?

1) Consumers, especially women, are increasingly interested in this information.

The overwhelming response to our *Household Hazards* report indicates that consumers want information on the chemicals they are exposed to through the use of products. A new survey of over 600 Washington State residents conducted for the Washington Department of Ecology found that up to 85% of respondents supported requiring manufacturers to label all their products with complete ingredient lists saying that it was very or extremely important for the government to require manufacturers to label all of their products in this way.ⁱ

2) Many consumers have individual sensitivities to chemicals - from allergies, to medical conditions, to precautionary health concerns.

Individuals affected by conditions such as asthma or allergies often look to avoid substances that may trigger or exacerbate their symptoms. Similarly, women who are pregnant, or trying to get pregnant, take extra precautions to avoid exposures that may impact the development of their child. Individuals with chemical sensitivities or various other diseases are also concerned about controlling their exposures to certain substances.

3) The product's label is the best place to provide ingredient information to consumers when and where they need it.

The label is easily accessible by the customer when comparison shopping in the grocery store - whereas the manufacturer's website is not. Similarly, if a person has a reaction to a product - they can immediately identify possible trigger chemicals by checking the label of the product in their hands. Also, certain demographic groups have considerably less access to the internet. According to a 2007 Pew Center survey, age, ethnicity and education level all affect internet access. For example, only 56% of Latinos, 32% of persons without high school diplomas and 27% of those over the age of 71 go online. All of these groups however, are regular users of cleaning products.ⁱⁱ

4) Full ingredient labeling is current standard practice in the food and cosmetic industries - and does not scare away or confuse consumers.

Consumers are already familiar and comfortable with reading labels on products but not always recognizing or understanding all the ingredients. Even foods or cosmetics that are marketed as being "healthy" or "nontoxic" sometimes have scary sounding ingredients. Consumers are used to this and will do their research if they want to know more.

5) Providing a list of ingredients does not reveal the formula for the product.

Companies interested in pirating formulas have more sophisticated methods of copying products if they wish to do so. A simple list of ingredients does not a recipe make.

6) Europe already requires some ingredient listing.

Companies are required to post their ingredients on a website for detergent products they sell to the European market. In addition, companies are required to list allergenic ingredients in fragrance directly on the product label so that allergic people can avoid them.

7) Company-determined screening or certification processes are not useful, as they can be designed to suit the current formulations of the company's products.

Independent third party certification is much more useful and credible to consumers, than a screening process developed by a company to suit their needs.

8) Functional ingredient labeling can be useful to customers, but it is not sufficient without full ingredient labeling.

Ingredients in cleaning products often have long complicated scientific names. It would be useful to some consumers to include explanatory language (such as "plant-based surfactant") for some ingredients. However, this explanatory language alone, without the name of the actual chemical ingredient is not sufficient for consumers interested in avoiding specific chemicals for health or other reasons.

ⁱ Pamela M. M. Jull, PhD, Aaron Ignac, MS, Lucas Snider, Ryan Siu, Rachel Williams, & Christy Shelton, Cascadia Consulting Group, Inc. Department of Ecology Reducing Toxic Threats statewide Household Survey, April 2007.

ⁱⁱ Fox, S, Livingston G. Latinos Online, Hispanics With Lower Levels of Education and English Proficiency Remain Largely Disconnected from the Internet. Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Internet Project, March 14, 2007