

The Best COMPANIES TO BUY FROM

Who really, REALLY deserves your dollars?

Our exclusive shopping guide.

Greenhouse gases, sweatshops, child labor, oil spills, toxic waste. You feel helpless to stop it all, but it probably still weighs on your conscience. Well, here's one simple way to do something constructive: Buy from companies that treat their employees and the environment right.

no doubt, that's easier said than done. In shopping malls and supermarkets, you'll find products from thousands of companies and there's no way to tell the good guys from the bad guys. Even if you try to stay up on news about companies that use recycled packaging or support community projects, it's tough to keep score. So we sent a reporter to sort it out. And we're happy to say that we found plenty of companies that are doing the right thing.

To find the real gems, we combed through research from many sources, including the National Green Pages, a directory of nearly 3,000 businesses that support organic farms, use sweatshop-free labor, and try to be socially just, and the Corporate Critic Web site, which rates the social responsibility records of thousands of companies.

We also consulted experts, including Peter D. Kinder, president of KLD Research & Analytics, a research firm that evaluates companies'

environmental and labor records, among other things; Richie Unterberger, co-author of "The Rough Guide to Shopping With a Conscience"; and Ellis Jones, author of "The Better World Shopping Guide." Finally, we talked to our environmental experts at Consumers Union's Greener Choices project, which evaluates green products and more.

Each of the companies we list is a standout when it comes to the environment, labor relations, or philanthropy, but Kinder says, "There's no such thing as a perfect company, like there's no such thing as a perfect person." It's not about perfection, it's about making a genuine effort.

You don't have to be perfect, either. You can make a difference simply by buying products from companies that share your values whenever possible. Supporting the businesses listed in this article is a good start. To find others that deserve your shopping dollars and to put together your own "Best" list, see page 40.

food



BEN & JERRY'S

Though it's now part of Unilever, this Vermont ice-cream company keeps up its do-good reputation with a foundation that makes donations of more than \$1 million annually. It also spends annually on local community projects, and measures reductions in everything from solid waste and wastewater to carbon dioxide to keep a lid on its environmental impact. Ben & Jerry's also started an alliance to help dairy farmers stay in business while improving their environmental practices.



CLIF BAR

The company's Clif Bars and Luna bars are certified organic and packaged in boxes that are made of recycled paperboard and don't have shrink wrapping. The Berkeley, Calif., company is always looking for ways to reduce its environmental impact. Clif Bar moved a distribution center closer to a bakery to reduce its production of greenhouse gases. It's also a great place to work. Employees get paid volunteer time. They can also get money toward buying hybrid or biodiesel vehicles.



KETTLE FOODS

Great Blue Herons have returned to visit the restored wetlands at the corporate headquarters of this Salem, Ore., snack-food company. More important, the company operates one of the largest commercial solar power arrays in the Pacific Northwest, saving 65 tons of CO₂ every year, and buys wind power for the rest of its electrical needs. All agricultural waste is used as composting or animal feed, and cooking oil is converted to biodiesel to power the fleet of company cars.



STONYFIELD FARMS

This New Hampshire company, now mostly owned by Danone, supports many organic family farms and has an award-winning environmental record. It has saved enough energy to power 4,500 homes for a year. Its recycling programs have kept millions of pounds of material from ending up at a dump or incinerator. It also has a tree-planting program to offset CO₂ emissions. Stonyfield gives 10 percent of its profits—that was more than \$3 million dollars last year—to environmental causes.

home & personal products



BURT'S BEES

The North Carolina personal-care products company is on a mission to give real meaning to the word "natural," which is slapped on all kinds of products even though its use is not regulated in any way. Burt's Bees publicizes the standards it follows, including what it means by natural, and lists the ingredients never used in its products. The company also uses packaging made with recycled materials and contributes to environmental charities. It has pledged \$2 million to the Nature Conservancy to help conserve 185,000 acres of forest in Maine.



SEVENTH GENERATION

This Burlington, Vt., producer of green household and personal-care products lends its employees up to \$5,000 to buy a hybrid car or make energy-efficient home improvements. It also reimburses up to \$500 a year in alternative commuting costs for employees and gives them another \$500 to buy low-energy appliances. The company has a number of initiatives designed to promote a greener planet, including a partnership with Greenpeace that offers a course in environmental activism to 200 college students and a reforestation program in New Orleans.



TOM'S OF MAINE

Tom's of Maine was sold to Colgate-Palmolive in 2006, but with an agreement to keep the company's values and programs, so you can still feel good about buying Tom's toothpaste, soap, and deodorant. It gives 10 percent of its profits to nonprofits, lets employees spend 5 percent of their paid work hours volunteering, and sponsors programs that clean rivers and provide free dental care to the poor. Tom's follows an environmental policy that promotes recycling and energy efficiency.

furniture



IKEA

The world's largest home-furnishings retailer is strict about buying materials from companies that don't use child labor. Ikea sends auditors to factories to make sure working conditions are acceptable. It's also working to reduce hazardous substances used in its products, and it does not accept timber from intact natural forests (the company does random checks to ensure compliance). Ikea is also one of the few companies that accepts compact fluorescent bulbs, which contain mercury, for recycling along with used packaging and batteries.

clothing



PATAGONIA

Argentina's newest coastal national park was created in large part with funding and support from Patagonia. And that's just one giant example of how this Ventura, Calif., outdoor clothing company gives to green causes and rallies other organizations to do the same. From its energy-efficient buildings to a program to recycle used garments and an ongoing environmental campaign (in 2007, permanently protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge), Patagonia puts its green issues front and center.



TIMBERLAND

It's good to work at Timberland. There's on-site day care, generous leave options for new parents, and readily available flex schedules. All employees get 40 hours of paid time annually to volunteer in their community, and the Stratham, N.H., company provides a \$3,000 cash incentive to buy a hybrid vehicle. Timberland recently installed one of the 50 largest solar panel systems in the world in its California distribution center, and new lighting at U.S. distribution centers cut electricity use by about 40 percent.

Small gems

Some of the best companies out there are small, and their products might be tough to find. But here are a few worth checking out.

NEW BELGIUM BREWERY

(www.NewBelgium.com) This employee-owned brewery, which sells beers under several labels including Fat Tire, gets its electricity from wind power, uses green building methods, and has given away more than \$2 million to charities since it opened in 1995.

FROG'S LEAP WINE

(www.FrogsLeap.com) The winery uses organic grapes and water-saving farming methods, and is 100 percent solar-powered.



EQUAL EXCHANGE

(www.EqualExchange.com) This worker-owned company, founded 20 years ago, sells organic and sustainably grown coffee, tea, hot cocoa mix, sugar packets, and chocolate bars. All of Equal Exchange's imported products are Fair-Trade certified. That means the products were produced with labor policies that support good working conditions, fair prices, and community development, and environmental practices that preserve ecosystems.



ECOFISH

(www.EcoFish.com) To stem the decline of fisheries worldwide, Ecofish sells only sustainable seafood, free of chemicals and additives. The products Ecofish offers are based on recommendations from an expert advisory panel made up of marine scientists.



INDIGENOUS DESIGNS

(www.IndigenousDesigns.com) Indigenous Designs' natural and organic clothing is handmade in more than 300 artisan cooperatives and knitting groups throughout South America. The company is committed to fair labor practices and partners with nongovernmental organizations to provide worker training, education, and equipment for member cooperatives.

How to make your own "Best" list

No matter what your values may be, there are probably companies that share them. Here's how to use the Web and other resources to find those businesses that are doing the right thing, in your judgment, so you can support them when you go shopping.

■ "The Better World Shopping Guide"

(www.betterworldshopper.com) grades more than 1,000 of the world's largest companies' products based on each firm's positions on human rights, the environment, animal protection, community involvement, and social justice. You'll have to buy the organization's \$10 pocket-size booklet to get its A (best) to F (worst) grades.

■ "The Rough Guide to Shopping With a Conscience"

(www.roughguides.com) Trying to decide what criteria are important to use when deciding which companies to support? "The Rough Guide" (\$16.99) has lots of tips on how to do your own research. And it will help you decide which claims of social responsibility to trust, as well as

the problems and the ethical options involved in your purchases, from coffee to cars, fish to furniture, pension investments to plane tickets.

■ The National Green Pages

(www.coopamerica.org/pubs/greenpages) is an online directory of nearly 3,000 green businesses, with an emphasis on small brands. Businesses pay to join, but the site says companies must be approved by a committee that investigates, among other things, the way they source, manufacture, and market their products. You can search the site's businesses by many different product categories, including gifts and toys, food and drink, and clothing and accessories. Become a

member, and you can get Co-op America's National Green Pages book with company listings.

■ **Domini Social Investments** (www.domini.com) and **Calvert Funds** (www.calvert.com) offer another way to put your money where your values are. They run mutual funds that buy shares only in companies that they think have top-notch corporate integrity, and solid financials, of course. They screen companies based on such factors as environmental records and labor practices. They also screen out companies involved in harmful and addictive activities or products such as gambling, tobacco, or alcohol.

■ **Corporate Critic** (www.corporatecritic.org) rates more than 50,000 companies' social responsibility on a scale of 0 to 15. The criteria it uses include how the firms treat the environment and their employees, their stance on animal welfare, and their production of organic and Fair-Trade products.