

## Press Release

### **Now you can be green AND clean: Some cleaning myths dispelled**

Keen to be green *and* clean? There's a surprise in store. If you thought that doing your bit for the environment ended at the check-out, think again.

Increasingly sustainability is an important issue both in terms of environmental impact and energy use. With regard to energy use the choice of laundry product that we make are, according to the experts, only 20% of the process. How we use the products has the most impact on sustainability<sup>1</sup>. The reality is that, by law, all detergents have to be biodegradable and safe for the environment. So there goes **myth number one.**

**Myth number two: choice of product matters most.** Of course, what you buy is a matter of personal choice. But remember, it's what you do when you have that chosen laundry product back home which counts. Selecting lower temperature washes, for example, 30 degree not 40 or higher on the washing machine<sup>2</sup>, affects sustainability far more than what you buy. The same is true when it comes to how much of a product you use: choosing to use less each time<sup>3</sup> will also have a positive effect. In fact, 80% of the impact you make when using cleaning products is in the home not at the checkout.

**Now for myth number three: more is better.** Again untrue. It's a classic case of 'less is more' when it comes to using laundry cleaning products. It will come as a surprise to most people that here is an Industry that wants to get consumers to use *less* of its products and not more but the truth is that by encouraging sustainable usage, the Industry will become stronger. So everyone's better off in the long-run.\* To optimise performance, it's a good idea to read the instructions on the laundry product label.

And use a dose of common sense too: for example, when laundering, you might need more product for heavily soiled items and you might wish to wash bed-linen and towels at higher temperatures (for instance, if someone in the family is ill) for improved hygiene.

So next time you shop for Laundry and cleaning products and then dash home to do the laundry, wash those dishes or tackle the myriad of other tasks that keep you and your family safe, clean and wholesome, remember a few simple rules:

- **Just because products do not use environmental benefits as a key marketing stance, does not mean they are less environmentally-friendly than those that do.**
- **Being 'green' does not lie with decisions we make about what to buy nearly so much as how we use the products. Point of use matters more than point of purchase.**
- **Use less – less product, less packaging by buying concentrated products when available, less heat and less water. It'll make a big difference to your purse as well as the planet.**

Of course manufacturers are doing their bit<sup>4</sup> by constantly reviewing the amount and type of packaging used and introducing concentrated products where possible (which reduces transport emissions as well as packaging) but it's down to you, as the end users, to think about not just what we buy but how we use cleaning products.

- Ends -

## Notes to Editors

The Charter for Sustainable Cleaning (see footnote 4 below) combined with improved product development have had a significant positive impact on the Industry and its products. There follows some of the evidence to support the comments made about the myths regarding household cleaning and laundry products.

### <sup>1</sup> Consumers' role in sustainable cleaning:

#### Example:

By running the 50°C / 55°C / automatic programme on a dishwasher instead of a higher temperature wash, there can be a saving of up to 84 kWh of electricity per year, enough for eighty extra cycles – that is the equivalent of three months of free dish-washing; and up to 1,497 litres of water per year which in turn is sufficient for 43 showers (at moderate use rates).

Source: AISE Save Water and Energy Initiative

#### Scientific evidence:

A published scientific paper – LCA case studies/Laundry Detergents – *A Database for the Life-cycle Assessment of Procter & Gamble Laundry Detergents* by Erwan Saouter and Gert van Hoof, published in September 2001 in *The International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment*. <http://www.scientificjournals.com/sj/lca/Abstract/ArtikelId/4408> - concluded that "the product use stage is the most important one; most of the emissions and therefore most of the environmental impact scores are driven by how the consumer uses the detergent. Most of these emissions are generated during the production of energy to heat the water." The researchers state that: "more than 80 per cent of the energy consumption occurs during the consumer use stage."

**CO2 footprint of consumers:** According to one source, 13%\*\* of UK household's CO2 footprint is attributable to 'household'. (Source: the Carbon Trust's Carbon Footprints in the Supply Chain). Of this 13 %, 60-70% occurred during the end-use phase, and only about 30% during the manufacturing phase. (Source: AISE)

Much of the life-cycle impact of cleaning is thus determined by the consumer at the point of use. It was this realisation that led to the Code of Good Environmental Practice, endorsed by the EU Commission, and now the Charter, the 'Washright' campaign etc.

### <sup>2</sup> Heat and energy

The biggest slice of the total energy consumed in the whole business of making, packaging, transporting and using laundry detergents, including making the ingredient raw materials, is that used by the consumer to heat the water for washing. Emissions to air parallel this because they are dominated by CO2 etc released in energy generation. Solid emissions are also heavily under the influence of the consumer - while packaging waste impacts in the final phase, about 55% of total solid waste again arises from energy generation in the consumer phase in the form of ash produced in power stations.

### <sup>3</sup> Product 'dosage':

The consumer ultimately determines what dosage of product will be used to do the job - say to wash 1kg of laundry. If effective dosage is increased either by overdosing (vs instructions) or by washing part loads, then every other impact in the life cycle is increased pro-rata in per kg laundry terms - raw materials, energy, packaging, waste etc. These considerations highlight the importance of the 'Washright' campaign which started under CoGEP (Code of Good Environmental Practice) and continues under the Charter which have led to huge reductions in the amount of product needed. E.g. by 2003 the standard dosage for powder laundry detergent in normal washing conditions had been progressively reduced from 150gms in 1996 to 100 gms. (Source: AISE - see 1<sup>st</sup> Sustainability Report downloadable from the AISE website)

However, the track record of impact reduction goes way back before this. Some 'snapshot' examples include.

- In the 1970s, the boil wash at 95 deg C was still relatively common - now it is largely unused. Much of the improvement results from clever chemistry: for example, bleach activator systems such as TAED that make the peroxygen bleach work at low temperature; and increasingly effective enzyme systems that digest a wide variety of soils and stains rather than relying on washing them away.
- Prior to the start of CoGEP, packaging weight per wash was reduced between 1991 and 1995 by around 40% by a whole range of measures.

#### **<sup>4</sup> The Charter for Sustainable Cleaning**

On 9 February 2007, the UK Cleaning Products Industry Association (UKCPI) welcomed the support of major UK retailers for the Industry's new voluntary Charter for Sustainable Cleaning.

The Charter embodies a common approach for all companies in the soaps, detergents and maintenance products Industry in Europe, aiming to promote and demonstrate continual improvement in the Industry's sustainability profile.

Designed to bring benefits for society and the environment, the Charter is a life-cycle based framework for promoting a common Industry approach to sustainability practices and reporting. It covers a wide variety of activities and initiatives ranging from, for example, the human and environmental safety of chemicals and products, eco-efficiency to integrated product policy. Going beyond current legislative requirements, **the Charter aims at driving the Industry towards continual improvement in sustainability.**

Companies participating in the Charter will apply sustainability thinking at all phases of the product life-cycle, from product design, through manufacture, to use and disposal. This means they will not only be active in reducing impacts on the environment but also in guarding the health and well-being of customers and consumers, in operating with high ethical standards and in contributing to economic advancement.

The Charter, coordinated across the entire European Union by the European Cleaning Products Industry Association (AISE), is a voluntary initiative by cleaning product manufacturers, aiming to promote and demonstrate continual improvement in the Industry's sustainability profile, at all stages in the product life cycle. Further information can also be found on the Sustainable Cleaning Website <http://www.sustainable-cleaning.com/>

What the Charter seeks to do in one sense, of course, is to move from individual 'campaigns' of improvement mainly focused on laundry detergents, to an ongoing formal commitment to continuous improvement across the whole product range, tracked by audited performance indicators.

In the consumer sector, with the sign up of the major retailers who have own brands, over 90% of products are now entitled to use the Sustainable Cleaning logo. UKCPI is a member of AISE – the European representative body for the Industry. Products made by companies not on the list obviously aren't entitled to use the logo.

#### **Press Office Contacts:**

##### **For further information please contact:**

UKCPI Press Office c/o Axiom Communications

☎ 020 8347 8206

✉ [press@ukcpi.org](mailto:press@ukcpi.org)