

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE



www.ethicalconsumer.org



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Welcome to Ethical Consumer

This booklet introduces you to our magazine and websites and to the concept of shopping ethically. It includes a bit about the philosophy behind what we do and some background to the main issues that we look at. It also gives you some guidance on getting started as an ethical consumer and explains the different ways that you can make a difference when you go shopping. We show you how we rate companies and what other services we provide. There's also an introduction to our buyers' guides and how you can use them to inform you. This booklet should be a helpful resource and we suggest that you keep it available for future reference.

More detailed information on all the subjects covered here is also available on our websites at www.ethicalconsumer.org and www.ethicscore.org

Who are we and what are we doing here?

Ethical Consumer is the UK's leading alternative consumer magazine. We're also behind two online databases; www.ethicscore.org and www.corporatecritic.org

In the magazine, we tell you everything you need to know, from the social and environmental impacts of a product to the ethical records of the company behind it. www.ethicscore.org is our subscriber website which contains over 170 reports with daily-updated ethical scores so you can find the best overall ethical product. Research Reports on our subscriber website contain the most detailed information about the ethical records of companies. Using one or more of these resources can help you make a difference when you go shopping and ensure that you are able to shop in a way that fits in with your own values.

History

The magazine and databases are produced by the Ethical Consumer Research Association (ECRA). We were founded in 1987 and the first magazine came out in 1989. ECRA is a not-for-profit, multi-stakeholder co-operative. We're proud to be an independent organisation

and are funded by subscriptions to the magazine and databases, by consultancy work and by advertising from ethically vetted companies.

Our core beliefs

We exist to promote:

- Universal human rights
- Environmental sustainability
- Animal welfare

.... By providing information on consumer issues which empowers individuals and organisations to act ethically in the marketplace.

What do we cover?

We look at anything and everything, from the everyday products that you'll find in your shopping basket each week, to the big purchases like cars, washing machines and fridges. We also look at financial products such as mortgages and bank accounts. The magazine also includes the latest news on campaigns, human rights, environmental and animal welfare issues and in-depth features on ethical talking points and dilemmas.

Why look at companies?

Some websites or magazines just look at products, but Ethical Consumer is the only organisation which looks at the companies behind the brands. After all, isn't it better to buy a cruelty-free product from a company that doesn't test its other items on animals, or recycled toilet paper from a firm that isn't cutting down virgin forests for its other ranges? A company-based approach allows consumers to influence decisions company wide. It also highlights those firms that try and promote themselves as ethical, while at the same time being involved in activities that might concern many customers.



Where does our information come from?

As we are a very small organisation, Ethical Consumer does not carry out a lot of primary research. Instead, most of our information comes from previously published sources. These sources include publications and reports by campaign groups like Oxfam, Friends of the Earth and War on Want. We look at the daily newspapers, public records on pollution and health & safety prosecutions and use directories on the arms and nuclear industries. We also request information directly from the companies on their environmental policies and reporting, and other policies, such as their attitude towards animal testing and to workers in their supply factories.

What gives us the right to tell you what to do?

At Ethical Consumer, our aim is to give you the information so that you can make your own decisions when you go shopping and buy products according to your own priorities and principles.

What do I get as a subscriber?

Your subscription to Ethical Consumer buys you the following:

Six issues of Ethical Consumer magazine in print or online

Our bi-monthly magazine will help you build up a comprehensive library of the ethics behind a broad range of consumer products.

Each year we aim to cover a variety of different, every-day items from coffee to chocolate and washing powder to nappies. We also look at some of bigger purchases such as fridges, cars or washing machines. With the most popular and common products, we aim to update our magazine reports every two or three years.

As well as our unique reports, we also publish in-depth features and also have pages covering consumer boycotts and news on all things ethical.

You'll get full access online to electronic version of the latest magazine, as well as our archive of back issues. These also include live web links.

If you prefer not to receive a paper magazine, you can just have an online subscription which gives you access to the full magazine in PDF form.

Access to our ethiscore subscriber website

Our ethiscore website has special, simplified ratings tables on over 170 different buyers' guides. These are accompanied by the original article and Best Buys from the magazine. The ethiscore tables are directly linked to our database so that when information about a company or product is changed or added, this is reflected online on the ethiscore table within twenty-four hours. This means that the website holds the most up to date information on all the products covered in our magazine.

The ethiscore website also allows you to customise the ratings. For most of the time in the magazine, all issues are weighted equally, giving a product a total ethiscore based on the information from our database. However on the ethiscore website, you can change the way that this score is calculated by customising the ratings according to your own personal ethics.

A standard subscription to Ethical Consumer will only allow one



Brand	Rating (out of 10)
Brand A	10
Brand B	10
Brand C	10
Brand D	10
Brand E	10
Brand F	10
Brand G	10
Brand H	10
Brand I	10
Brand J	10





computer at a time to be logged onto the subscriber website. If you are using our magazine and website as a teaching resource, you may apply to have multiple access to our sites. See the 'Schools and library subscriptions' section above for more info.

Instant downloads of all our in-depth Research Reports

The Research Reports are especially useful for people who want to go into much more detail on the companies.

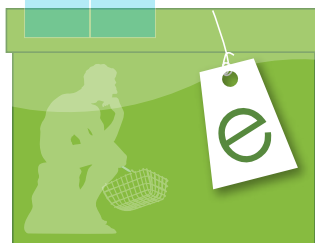
Your subscription allows you to download PDFs of all our in-depth Research Reports from the ethiscore subscriber website. These reports include:

- A detailed ratings table showing how the brands score in each of our criticism categories
- The stories from our database that we've used to rate the brands
- Details of company ownership and full contact details
- Live links to all the websites in the Research Report.

School & library subscriptions

The magazine and ethiscore database is an ideal resource for teachers of citizenship and business studies as well as many other subjects. If you are a teacher and wish to use Ethiscore as a resource and would like more than one computer to be logged in at a time, please get in touch. To action your upgrade, we need the name of your school or college and the lesson you plan to use our information in. We can allow a maximum of 30 users to access Ethiscore at the same time. Please give us up to ten days to make this change, which we offer at no extra cost to you. Only one set of saved settings is permitted with multiple users. This means that if one user customises the ethiscore ratings, the scores will be changed for all users.

For more information about this and other multiple login options for teachers visit: www.ethicalconsumer.org/PremiumAccess/schools.aspx



Gift subscriptions

If you know someone who you think would be interested in our magazine or in ethiscore, then why not buy them a year's gift subscription? Call us on 0161 226 2929 to order.

Reading beyond the labels

An introduction to being an ethical consumer

What is ethical consumerism?

Put very simply, Ethical Consumerism means adopting a different perspective on our disposable income. Instead of seeing money as a means to buying us status, luxury goods or an improved quality of life, we also need to consider our money as a vote which we use every time we go shopping. Buying cheap clothes which have been made in sweatshops is a vote for worker exploitation. Buying a gas guzzling 4X4, especially if you are a city dweller, is a vote for climate change. Even small, everyday purchases, such as coffee, tea, breakfast cereal, bread or bin-bags are a vote for something. Favouring organic produce is a vote for environmental sustainability and Fairtrade, a vote for human rights.

Taking other costs into account

In the UK, the cheapness of our food, clothing and electrical appliances can make headline news. Yet it's important to remember that while we might be saving money, there's always a cost somewhere down the line. It could be an environmental cost - cheap, throwaway electrical goods

cost us dearly in terms of landfill, chemicals leaching into our soil and in their environmentally destructive production. It could be a human cost. Cheap clothing produced in East Asia or Central America comes at a cost to those making the clothes, earning barely enough to survive. Factory farmed animals, meanwhile, may make cheap meat but it comes at a price of the quality of life of the animal. When it comes to supermarkets, the cost can be to our high streets and local shops. Considering ethical issues when we go shopping means taking impacts like this into account.

Putting the pressure on

It's not just the links between the product and its impact that ethical consumers need to consider, but the activities of the company behind the brand. A small number of multinational companies own a large proportion of our favourite brands. Many of these companies are involved in a range of unethical activities. By withdrawing our custom from those companies, we can let them know that we don't approve of those activities - especially if, at the same time, we let them know WHY we're withdrawing our custom.





Using the power in our wallets

As consumers, we have a great deal of power in our pockets and we've already effected change. We just need to look at the example of how the supermarkets and food companies responded on the issue of genetically modified food. The threat of withdrawing our custom can, and already has, changed company policy.

Yet, even if it doesn't change a company's ways, your choices are no less worthwhile, especially if you are supporting smaller, more ethical companies at the same time. And happily, despite mergers and takeovers of smaller brands, there are still plenty of alternatives and a growing number of smaller companies which are as concerned with making the world a better place as they are with making profits. This is the positive side of ethical consumerism. It is just as much about supporting the 'good' companies and products as it is withdrawing our support from the 'bad' ones.

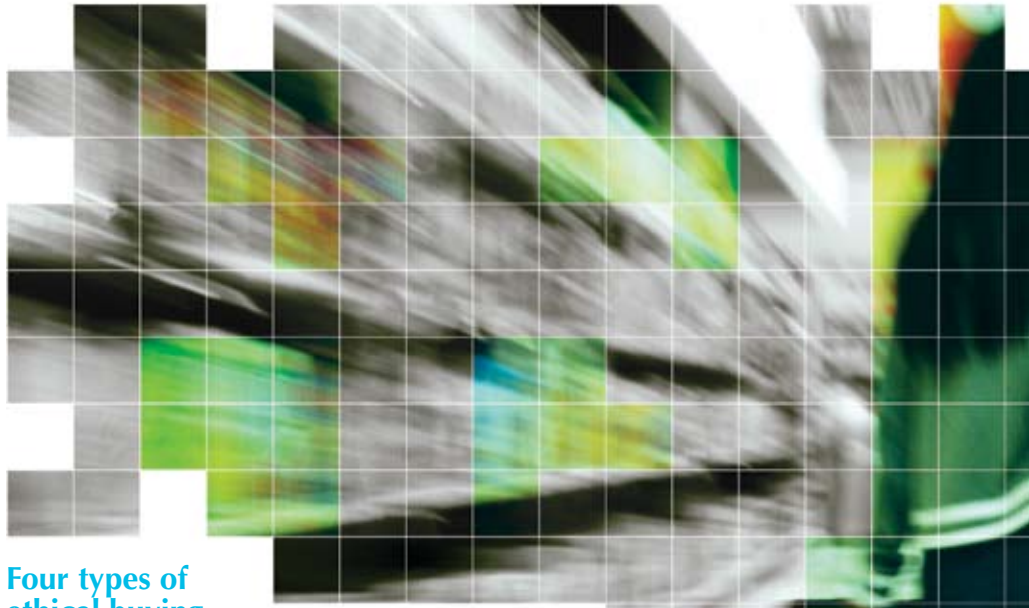
Making your vote count

It's often easy to get overwhelmed by the scale of the problem and by the number of changes that

you could make. This is where Ethical Consumer comes in. By pulling together and evaluating all the different kinds of advice and information that we get from campaigners and companies, we can present clear conclusions about the best options. It's important to remember that small steps can lead to bigger ones, and it's better to take a few small steps than no steps at all. Every vote counts. Awareness of global poverty, animal welfare and green issues are at an all time high. If we can carry this awareness into our shopping basket, we can all work together to help make the world a better place, and make sure that companies start treating it, and us, with more respect. While money may make the world go round, deciding how we spend our money might just save it.

What is ethical?

There's no one universal definition of 'ethical', but broadly speaking when Ethical Consumer talks about an ethical product, we mean something which has not harmed or exploited humans, animals or the environment. Sometimes, we would go further and say that an ethical product or company is one that actively benefits humans, animals or the environment.



Four types of ethical buying

Positive buying.

This means favouring particular ethical products, such as energy saving lightbulbs.

Negative purchasing.

This means avoiding products that you disapprove of, such as battery eggs or gas-guzzling cars.

Company based purchasing

This means targeting a business as a whole and avoiding all the products made by one company. For example, the Nestlé boycott has targeted all its brands and subsidiaries in a bid to get the company to change the way it markets its baby milk formula across the world.

Fully screened approach

This means looking both at companies and at products and evaluating which product is the most ethical overall. This is exactly what we do in the magazine and the Best Buys that we recommend are essentially the most ethical, 'fully-screened' products that we can find.

What to prioritise when I go shopping?

Obviously, we all know that price is important when we go shopping. But to be an Ethical Consumer, you need to start taking other factors into account when you buy things. There are, of course, many different issues to consider. Just like religion, ethics aren't universal, and what may be important to one person, may not be as important to another.

Not black and white

Sometimes the choices aren't always straightforward – is it better to buy organic vegetables flown in from overseas, or non-organic vegetables from a local farmer? In these cases, you often have to decide which is more important to you right now. We often discuss these kinds of dilemmas in the magazine, and where we can, give guidance. It's

also important to realise that sometimes, there is no one right answer.

What issues are important to me?

You want to start to try and shop a bit more ethically, but don't know where to start? Your first step is to decide what issues you are most concerned about. You might decide that one area or issue (such as climate change or animal welfare) is of utmost importance to you, or you might decide that all are equally important. Everyone's priorities are different. You can then use our tables to check out which companies have received criticism in those areas.



The difference between an ethical product and an ethical company

This is where it gets a little more complicated. When Ethical Consumer first started, things were a lot clearer because, in the main, companies who made ethical products did so because they had belief in those issues.

These days, it seems that everyone has jumped on the bandwagon. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's encouraging that the big companies are making ethical products and investing in ethical brands. Some products might be considered 'ethical' – such as an organic t-shirt - but the company that owns the brand might not be. This can make it a bit harder to sort the wheat

from the chaff for those consumers who want to avoid big companies which have dubious ethical records. This is where the tables in the magazine, or our online databases, come in. You can see which companies own each brand, and their ethical record across all the different categories. To help you find the most ethical product, we also have special product sustainability columns on our table. These columns let you know which products have positive qualities – such as being fairtrade, organic or made from recycled paper.

Best Buys

We consider all the issues, from company behaviour to product sustainability, and try to recommend as many best buys as we can. Sometimes, these are made by smaller companies and their products may not be that easy to find if you don't live in a big

city. In these cases, we'll also try and recommend a more widely available alternative as well. Very occasionally, you'll find that companies that score well on our tables may not be best buys, while those which look like they have bad ethical records might be recommended. This can happen for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, companies that have made the most progress ethically have been under the spotlight more and so have attracted more criticisms under our categories. This is most common with clothing manufacturers and shops. We can also often find that companies haven't attracted any criticisms but haven't really made any positive steps either. Another time when this might happen is when we consider a product to have been made particularly ethically, in which case we'll recommend it, even if a company has criticisms in our ratings. Once they've been awarded 'best buy' status, ECRA may invite them to use our 'Best Buy' label which is designed to help you easily identify recommended products when you're out shopping.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR WHEN I SHOP?

At the moment there isn't one universal 'ethical' label, although companies that receive 'best buys' in our magazine may be invited to use our logo on those products. The main labels to look for are becoming more and more widespread. These are:

Organic

The jury may still be out as to whether organic foods are demonstrably better for your health, but organic crops are far superior for our environment. Organic farming improves biodiversity and is more beneficial for local wildlife. It isn't just edible crops that benefit from organic farming. Cotton is a major consumer of pesticides, using around a quarter of the world's insecticides and more than 10% of the pesticides. Pesticide use isn't just detrimental to the environment but also has serious health implications for those working with these crops. Organic products, including organic clothing, are more readily available than ever before. Find out more from the Soil Association 0117 314 5000 www.soilassociation.org



Fairtrade

The Fairtrade mark is an independent label which guarantees that disadvantaged producers in the third world are getting a better deal than they would do otherwise. For a product to display the mark, it must meet special Fairtrade standards, which are the same all over the world. These standards are inspected and independently assessed. Those producing Fairtrade products receive a minimum price which covers the cost of sustainable production. This is because these prices can often fluctuate on the open market, meaning that sometimes, especially with commodities such as coffee or chocolate, producers can get paid less for their crop than it costs them to produce it. As well as the set minimum, with the Fairtrade logo, producers also receive an extra premium which is invested in social or economic development projects. The



Fairtrade symbol is found on over 3000 UK products from coffees to flowers. Find out more from www.fairtrade.org.uk

Vegetarian Society



This symbol, licensed by the Vegetarian Society, tells you that a product is suitable for vegetarians. It is found on over 6400 products in the UK. The Ethical Consumer 'best buy' logo is only available for products which have received a best buy in our magazine. It was registered as a Trade Mark in September 2007. Like other labels it should make life easier for people who want to consume more responsibly. Unlike other labels, it's more holistic. A product displaying the best buy logo will have been produced by a company with the best environmental, social and animal ratings, and the product itself should also be sustainable too.





Vegan Society

This symbol is licensed by the Vegan Society and means that a product is suitable for vegans. A vegan is someone who in addition to not eating any meat, fish or poultry, doesn't eat or use other animal products, including eggs, dairy products, honey, leather and fur.

Find out more from the Vegan Society 0121 523 1730 www.vegansociety.com



Forest Stewardship Council

Old-growth forests around the world, from the Amazon in Brazil to ancient forests in Indonesia, continue to be logged, often illegally. The best way to ensure that a wood or paper product has come from a sustainable source is to look out for the Forest Stewardship Council's logo



or buy recycled products. You'll find the FSC logo on a range of products including garden furniture, shelving and even toilet paper. Visit www.fsc-uk.info for a list of FSC certified products.

The Humane Cosmetics Standard

This 'bunny' logo is awarded by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection and is found on products which haven't been tested on animals. In order to be approved companies have very strict guidelines to follow, rather than just issuing a policy statement. The standards require companies to prove their claims and to undergo independent audit through the supply chain to make sure that the criteria are met throughout. For more information visit www.gocrueltyfree.org



The Ethical Consumer also has a 'Best Buy' label which is available for products which have received a best buy in our magazine.

Things to think about

• Consume Less

Shopping ethically isn't enough. We also need to reduce the amount of stuff that we buy, use and throw away. Before you go shopping ask yourself a few simple questions – do I need this? Will I use this? What's going to happen to it when I've finished with it?

• Get campaigning

It's important to look at whether campaigning politically is also necessary to achieve a particular set of goals. In our product reports we almost always suggest contacts for taking additional political action. This action can include signing online petitions, contacting your local MP or other politicians, attending demonstrations or getting involved in more direct action campaigns.

• Shop locally

Our local shops are in decline, and our high streets are becoming a sea of chain stores and supermarkets. Shopping locally can reduce car use and support local communities too. You might find it harder to find more ethical brands – but many shopkeepers are responsive to requests and you might find that you can persuade them to stock your favourite ethical products.

• Ethical Money

It's not just where you spend your money that counts, it's where you put it too, in banks, investments or savings accounts. We cover money issues and products in the magazine.

• Recycling and second-hand

You don't always have to buy new. Recycled and second-hand products save precious resources and reduce pressure on landfill sites.



Rating Companies in Ethical Consumer

We split all the criticisms we receive into five main headings: Environment, Human Rights, Animal Rights, Politics and Positive marks. Then we further split those areas down into different categories which we look at in this section. ▼



Environment

There are lots of things you can do to have a positive impact upon the environment, or at least to minimise your 'ecological footprint'. In our features, we try to include tips on how you can reduce your overall consumption as well as guide you to the best environmental choices out there. That can mean favouring an A++ rated electrical appliance, or finding a shampoo with the least packaging. Because the 'environment' is a very broad area, when we look at company activities we split up the criticisms into five different categories;

environmental reporting, nuclear power, climate change, pollution & toxics and habitats & resources.

Environmental Reporting

We've been asking companies for their environmental policies and reports for years. Initially, if they responded at all, they provided us with vague statements about 'minimising impacts'. These days, many companies produce much more detailed reports looking at precise impacts and setting goals for reducing them. We think that all companies need to be looking ahead and making realistic reductions across all areas of their business. We also think

The full technical definitions for each category is found on the loose insert that comes with this guide. If yours is missing, please contact us and we can send you a replacement. It's also on our website on the following page: <http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/OurRatingsSystem.aspx>



This column allows consumers to make up their own mind and, should they wish to, avoid companies with interests in the nuclear power industry. To read more arguments against nuclear power visit <http://nonewnukes.ukrivers.net/background.html>

Climate Change

Climate change is no longer theoretical. It's with us now. We caused it and it's up to us to do something about it. We all need to do our bit for the environment. Some sectors contribute particularly heavily to climate change. These include the airline and oil industries. Companies making products that have a higher contribution to climate change than other products in the sector (such as cars with low mileage per gallon) will be criticised here, as will companies making misleading claims about climate change.

Pollution and Toxics

Pollution isn't just about big oil spills or chemical disasters like Bhopal. There are tens of thousands of synthetic chemicals in regular use in a wide range of products from shampoo to computers. Many of these chemicals can pollute both the environment and our bodies. Some chemicals are known as bio-accumulative, which means that they can stay stored in our body fat for years. Some chemicals – like PVC – have a heavy toll on the environment, not just when

they're being produced, but during their lifetime and then later on, when they're disposed of. Many of these chemicals have been singled out by campaigners like WWF and Greenpeace as particularly worrying. Ethical Consumer therefore includes the use of such chemicals in our pollution column. Some companies are phasing out the use of chemicals but we need to keep the pressure up on those that are lagging behind. Pesticides and herbicides also come under this category. Our best buys will always, where possible, be free of harmful chemicals and so will be the healthier alternative, for our bodies, our children and for the environment.

Habitats and Resources

This category looks to specific environmental destruction or exploitation of habitats and resources – whether it's palm oil plantations which threaten the Orang Utan with extinction, pollution incidents which kill off marine environments or the use of trees which haven't come from sustainable sources. It's more important than ever to conserve existing environments and prevent the further extinction of plants, animals, birds and fish. If you want to make sure your shopping doesn't threaten environments, look out for FSC certified wood and paper, buy recycled paper, and avoid products with palm oil in where you can. If you eat fish, only buy fish that has been certified by the Marine Stewardship Council.

that companies need to have these targets and reports verified by independent organisations. The only time we 'let companies off' is if they are small or medium sized enterprises aiming to provide environmental or social alternatives, and only if they have a turnover of less than £5 million.

Nuclear Power

Although the green movement may be split about the necessity of nuclear power, we remain unconvinced. It's true that nuclear power might be a low-carbon alternative. Yet campaigners argue that nuclear power has intrinsic accident and radiation risks and of course produces nuclear waste, which remains dangerous for thousands of years and which we still don't know what to do with.

Some of the green campaign groups working on these issues:

Greenpeace

www.greenpeace.org.uk
020 7865 8100

Friends of the Earth

www.foe.co.uk
020 7490 1555

WWF

www.wwf.org.uk
01483 426333

Marine Conservation Society

www.mcsuk.org
01989 566017

Animals

Concern with how animals are farmed and slaughtered has meant that the farming industry has made some efforts to improve standards over the past two decades. It has also meant that more of us have become vegetarian or vegan. Even if you can't go the whole hog, forgoing one meat meal a week will make a difference. If you can't, or don't want to, avoid meat altogether, choose organic meat, as organic farming has higher animal welfare standards. Contact the Vegetarian or Vegan Society for more information about how to make changes. Vegetarian Society www.vegsoc.org 0161 925 2000 Vegan Society: www.vegansociety.com 0121 523 1730.

Our animal columns are divided into three main areas. These are:

Animal Testing

In the 1980s, animal experimentation became a 'hot topic' as cosmetics companies testing their products on animals suddenly became a big 'no no'. Even nowadays, the testing of products and ingredients on animals continues, despite the fact that it's outlawed (for cosmetics and cosmetic ingredients) in this country. Companies that test products on animals, or have an inadequate policy on animal testing, are criticised here. Other products that also get tested on animals are household products and pet food. We also include animal testing for medical products in this column. To find out more about the arguments against animal testing, contact the BUAV (British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection) on www.buav.org 020 7700 4888

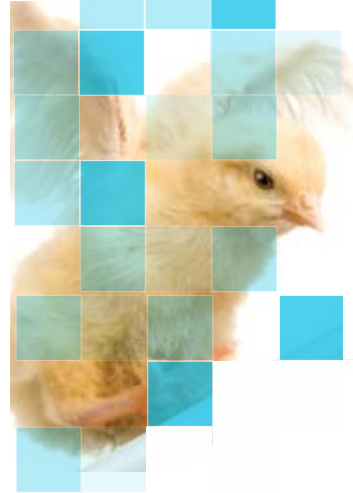
Factory Farming

Much of modern farming is industrialised and intensive and can often be termed 'factory farming' because of the philosophy of mass production. With this type of farming, many animals are crammed together in the smallest possible space and their health and wellbeing suffer as a result. Animal rights campaigners argue that if we have to farm animals, then we should be treating them with compassion and respect and that these values are incompatible with factory farming methods. Companies which sell factory farmed meat, or products with battery eggs, will be criticised in this category. Organic farming in general is much better for animals and so companies with organic meat and dairy products are not criticised in this column.

Compassion in World Farming is working towards improving the lives of farmed animals. Contact it on www.ciwf.org to find out more. 01483 521950

Other Animal Rights

Companies that have been accused or prosecuted for cruelty to animals are criticised here. Farmers or producers of organic meat will also receive marks here to enable those consumers wishing to avoid any company involved in animal exploitation to be able to make that choice. Also found here are activities that might lead to animal suffering - such as zoos and circuses, or using animals to advertise products. It also includes the use of slaughterhouse by-products, such as leather or gelatine. This column therefore brings together animal welfare and animal rights concerns.



Further information on animal issues can be obtained from:

Animal Aid

www.animalaid.org.uk
01732 364546

Campaign Against the Fur Trade

www.caft.org.uk
0845 330 7955

International Fund for Animal Welfare

www.ifaw.org
0207 587 6700

PETA

www.peta.org.uk
020 7357 9229

Uncaged

www.uncaged.co.uk
0114 272 2220

Viva!

www.viva.org.uk
0117 944 1000

People

This is of course an extremely broad area and we've split it up into five different categories.

Human Rights

In this column, we include companies which have subsidiaries or operations in countries which we call 'oppressive regimes'.

This list of countries is updated every few years by us, taking into account research by a number of different human rights organisations. We last updated the list in 2006 using research from Human Rights Watch, War on Want, Survival International, Amnesty International and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Also in this column are criticisms relating directly to human rights abuses – such as forcing people off their land to build a pipeline or hiring security services which have perpetuated human rights abuses. Pornography distributors or publishers also appear in this column.

Workers' Rights

In 1911 a fire in a garment factory in New York killed 500 workers. They were working in inhumane, unhealthy conditions and poorly paid. You'd think, almost 100 years later, that things might have improved, but workers worldwide are still subject to sweatshop conditions. In 2005 a fire in Bangladesh killed 250 people. The doors of the factory were locked so they could not escape. In this category, we include all types of worker abuses – whether it's being forced to work over 60 hours a week, low wages, cases of harassment or a company ignoring health & safety legislation.

Supply Chain Policy

Many of the products that we buy are manufactured overseas in factories which may not even be owned by the company itself. Even so, we think that the companies ought to be responsible for the kinds of conditions those workers find themselves in, so we ask all companies sourcing from overseas to supply us with a 'supply chain policy'. This is a document set out by a company detailing how the workers in their supply factories must be treated. Like environmental policies, these used to be documents with broad statements about "abiding by country laws". Nowadays, the supply chain policy can be a sophisticated document outlining lots of different conditions and may also include results of factory audits. Companies which are members of 'multi-stakeholder initiatives', such as the UK's ETI (Ethical Trading Initiative) have to abide by the ETI's own code. Companies making certified Fairtrade products will receive a top rating from us in this category. Unfortunately, the existence of a good code doesn't mean that it's being adhered to, and we can find huge contradictions, so that companies with the best policies sometimes receive the

most criticisms for workers' rights abuses.

Irresponsible Marketing

This column highlights companies that have marketed their products in a way that has been criticised for causing physical harm, or is detrimental to health. The most famous company that has consistently been criticised in this area is Nestle which has been condemned for the way that it markets its baby milk products. It's not the only one to use unsavoury practices to promote its baby milk products, though it is one of the most persistent. To find out more visit www.babymilkaction.org 01223 464420. Other examples of irresponsible marketing include drug companies which have been criticised for putting products on the market even after negative results.

Armaments

This column not only includes companies that supply weaponry to the army, but also those supplying any goods or services to the military (though the severity of the rating is different!). The sale of handguns is also included in this column, which is why you might find a famous US owned supermarket receiving a bad rating here.

Campaign groups working on human rights issues include:

Amnesty International

www.amnesty.org.uk
020 7033 1500

Christian Aid

www.christian-aid.org.uk
020 7620 4444

Oxfam

www.oxfam.org.uk
0300 200 1300

War on Want

www.waronwant.org
020 7549 0555

World Development Movement

www.wdm.org.uk
0207 820 4900

Politics

Our fourth area is called politics.

Genetic Engineering.

Although you'd think that this column should go in the environment section, it comes here for other reasons too. Some of the world's leading genetic engineering companies have lobbied their governments for specific trade rules which now govern the cross-border transfer of genetically modified (GM) crops, most notably, patents. Campaigners have argued that patenting crops reduces the ability of poorer farmers to save seeds for future use, as it enables a company to own the rights to re-use seed. These companies have also lobbied against international biosafety standards to govern the potential environmental impact of GM crops in case these standards restrict a company from exporting its GM crops.

Some of the campaign groups working on these issues:

ETC Group (or Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration)
www.etcgroup.org

GRAIN www.grain.org
+34 933011381

Transparency international
www.transparency.org.uk/
020 7785 6356

Tax Justice Network
www.taxjustice.net

Boycott Call

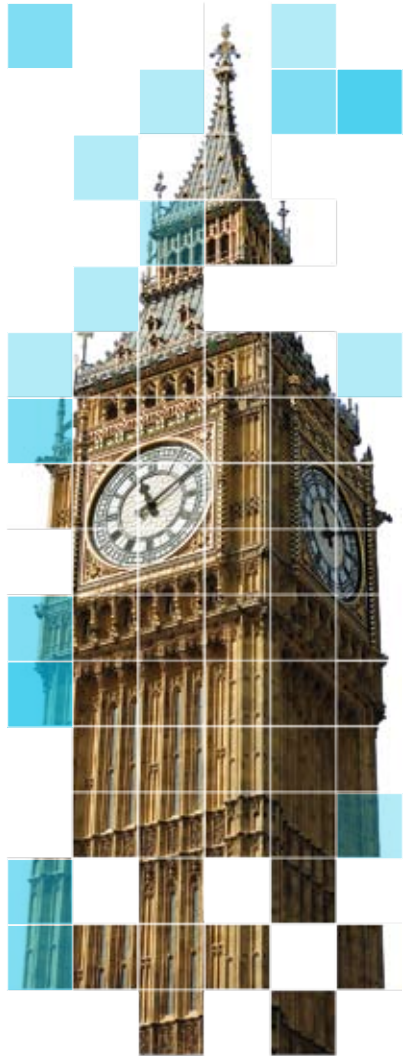
Companies may have boycotts called against them for lots of different reasons. At Ethical Consumer, we report on all the boycotts we receive which have a registered headquarters. We don't necessarily endorse all of the boycotts which we report. Some campaign groups think that boycotts aren't a good idea in case a company withdraws its business from a factory overseas, causing lots of workers to lose their livelihoods. Others believe they can be very effective. We think it's up to you where you spend your money.

Political Activity

We think that companies have too much influence over governments through lobby groups or donating to political parties themselves. This column is for companies that donate money to political parties, or to groups that lobby political parties or to companies involved in persuading governments and institutions, through international lobbying organisations, to change policy.

Anti Social Finance

Some companies avoid paying tax, but make huge profits. Others have been criticised for fixing prices, insider trading or paying bribes. We also include 'excessive director's pay' over £1 million under this section. Why? Well, just because we think it's unfair for directors to receive such large payouts.



Positive marks

For years, Ethical Consumer magazine's ratings were all about the negatives. We always figured that the good news can always be found elsewhere. However, in recent years, we've decided that it's worth rewarding companies for making a positive difference and so we introduced some positive ratings too.

Company Ethos

Back in the 1990s, ethical products tended to be made by ethical companies. These days it's not so easy to tell what an 'ethical' company is, just by the products that it makes. This column rewards those companies which demonstrate an ethos committed to sustainability across their whole business. Included are companies with not-for-profit trading structures, fully vegan companies, and those which only sell organic or fairly traded products.

Product sustainability

This column rates the product itself. Positive marks are awarded for a range of different sustainability areas including organic products, fairtrade products, good energy efficiency ratings, or products certified as vegan or vegetarian.

The Ethiscore

The Ethiscore is Ethical Consumer's unique numerical rating system. The rating, out of 20, means consumers can easily identify the most ethical product from a given list. It is a simple calculation which is based on the number and types of criticisms we have received on an individual company. All companies start with 14 points, and have a point deducted for each full mark they would receive on the tables that we print in the magazine. We also add points for positive product attributes (up to a maximum of 5) and for positive company

attributes (up to a maximum of 1). Companies cannot score below zero. Because of the way that we score positive product attributes, it's unusual for a product to score more than about 16 or 17 points. The maximum a company can score (not taking into account any product details) is 15. Broadly speaking the guidelines to reading ethiscores are as follows:

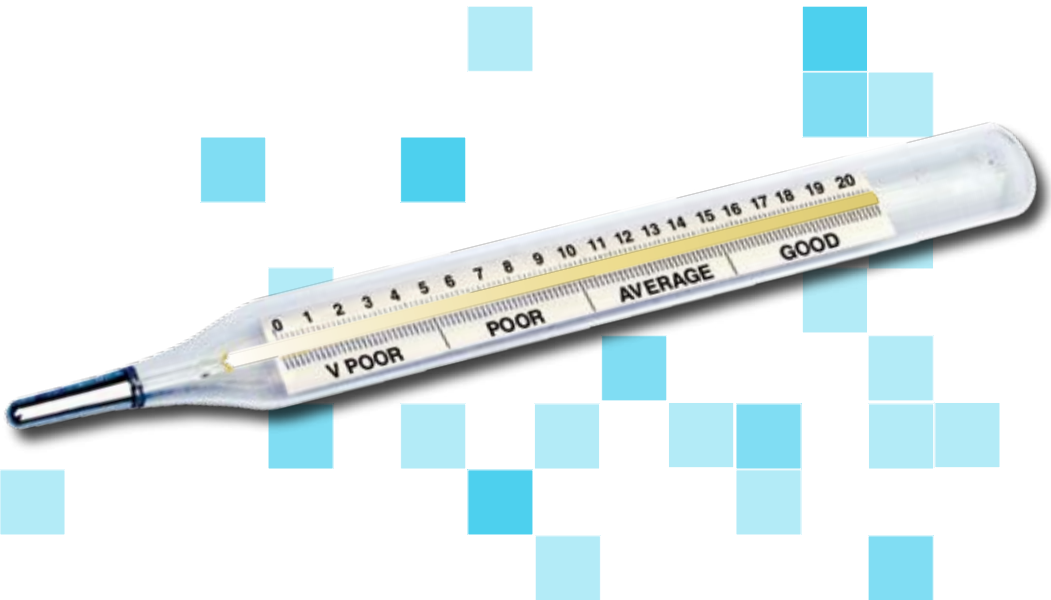
Above 15: excellent. This product is likely to be ethically made by an ethical company

11 – 15: average

6 – 10: below average

0 – 5: poor

However, it's worth bearing in mind that some companies just haven't attracted any criticisms from campaigners and so could receive a relatively high ethiscore, without being particularly 'ethical' in their outlook or activities.



COMPANY TABLES EXPLAINED

A unique feature of Ethical Consumer is our Buyer's Guides which give our readers the lowdown on a particular product or service. It could be everyday products such as bread, toothpaste, toilet paper or coffee, or larger purchases like cars or washing machines. The table is intended to show, at a glance, which companies own which brands and what areas they have been criticised in. In order to make it simple for consumers, the brands and companies with the highest scores will be at the top. Those with the lowest will be at the bottom.

**Laptops/Notebooks
Jan/Feb 07**

BRAND	Ethicscore (out of 20)	Environment		Animals		People			Politics			+ve	COMPANY GROUP							
		Environmental Reporting	Nuclear Power	Climate Change	Pollution & Toxics	Habitats & Resources	Animal Testing	Factory Farming	Other Animal Rights	Human Rights	Workers' Rights			Supply Chain Policy	Irresponsible Marketing	Armsaments	Genetic Engineering	Boycott Call	Political Activity	Anti-Social Finance
Aries	12	●																		Watford Electronics
Evesham	12	●																		Evesham Tech Holdings Ltd
Viglen	12	●																		Amshold Securities Plc
Advent	11.5	●																		DSG International
Dell	10.5	○		○																Dell Inc
AsusTek	10	○																		AsusTek Computer Inc
Lenovo	10	●		○			●	●	●	●										IBM, Lenovo Grp Ltd
ACER	9	●			●			●	●	●		○								Acer Inc
Apple MacBoo	9	●		○				○	○	○										Apple Computer Inc
Compac Presario	8.5	○		●				●	●	●										Hewlett-Packard Company Inc
Toshiba	7.5	●						●	●	●	○									Toshiba Corp
Sony VAIO	7	●			●			●	●	●	●	○								Sony Corp
Samsung	6	●			●			●	●	●			○							Samsung Group
Fujitsu-Siemens	5.5	●	●	○				●	●	●			○							Siemens AG, Fujitsu Ltd

KEY ● bottom rating ○ middle rating □ top rating (no criticisms found) **Company Sustainability:** ■ full mark □ half mark

Product Sustainability: companies can receive a maximum of five positive marks for this category. **Ethicscore:** the higher the score, the better the company across the criticism categories (see www.ethicalconsumer.org/magazine/buyers/categories.htm or "Introduction to Ethical Consumer" booklet for more details).

Brand names

Within the guides we try to include the brands which have the majority of the market share, plus include a few of the ethical alternatives. However, we can't include every brand on the market – there just isn't the space. Short buyers' guides will have a maximum of 18 brands, while the longer guides have about 25.

Marks

Full circles represent the worst level of involvement in each category. Empty circles represent lesser criticisms and a blank space indicates that we haven't found any criticisms. If you want to find out exactly which criticisms are behind the marks, you can download our in-depth Research Reports from our website. All this information is also held in our online database - corporate critic (www.corporatecritic.org).

Companies which we rate differently

Most companies are rated on their own records but we rate two sectors slightly differently; retailers and banks/financial institutions. Retailers don't just get rated on their own records, but we also look at what products they stock. Consequently, a retailer which sells non-organic meat will get a mark in the factory farming column, and one that sells animal tested cosmetics will receive a mark in the animal testing column, even though the retailer itself might have a good animal testing policy. Similarly when we look at banks and financial institutions, we also try and look at where their money goes. So, a bank that invests in the oil industry will receive a climate change criticism, and one that gives money to finance environmentally damaging projects will receive criticisms for that. If we know a bank has a financial relationship with another company with criticisms on our database, it may inherit that company's criticisms.

Best Buys

The Best Buy advice is a summary of the report. Best Buy brands have the lowest social and environmental impacts and are made by the companies with the cleanest records. We recommend one or more overall Best Buys, and a 'best of the widely available brands' in acknowledgement that the smaller brands are often harder to obtain. Best Buy brands appear at the top of the table as well as in their own box in the report. We may also recommend 'environmental' best buys for products that will have the lowest environmental impact. These may not necessarily be made by companies which are the most ethical across all areas.

Company group

In this column we list the ultimate holding company (UHC), the top level of corporate ownership or 'parent' company, which may often be different from the brand owner. For instance, the Silver Spoon brand name is owned by British Sugar, but British Sugar is owned by a holding company called Wittington Investments. This is therefore the UHC and appears in this column. It is important to note that the marks on the table represent those of the company group as a whole, so where Silver Spoon is listed on the table the marks refer not just to Silver Spoon but to Wittington and/or other companies owned by Wittington Investments. The exception to this is under the "Environmental Reporting" category where marks can refer to the specific subsidiary's environment report and the "Supply Chain Policy" category. When one company buys another, the new company is deemed to have inherited the past record of the other, unless there is clear evidence that the take-over has seen a change in policy and practice.

Our research

Ethical Consumer has been creating a database of ethically-related data on companies since 1989. We now have more than 60,000 abstracts on nearly 25,000 companies. Our information sources are varied and international. We reference reports, campaign group publications, directories and public records. We also request information directly from companies on a number of issues. Individuals or groups can access a version of the database online at www.corporatecritic.org

which, in a global market driven by profit, rewarded the least ethical producers and punished the best. This, we believed, was a system failure which we wanted to address, and we believed that it was essential to change the culture of 'price-only buying'. If the majority of consumers were asking more questions than just 'how much is it?', then the tendency to reward the most efficient employer of child labour simply melted away.

Globalisation

Since World War II, more of what we buy has been produced or manufactured overseas. At ECRA we argue that this 'globalisation of production' is one of the primary causes of the huge growth of ethical consumer behaviour. Globalisation means that people concerned about social or environmental issues can no longer, in many cases, just lobby their own government. The UK government simply has no power to ban child labour in Pakistan or prevent whaling by Icelandic fishing boats. Because of this, campaign groups concerned about such issues have been increasingly looking for active consumers to help put pressure directly on the companies involved. Pressure groups such as Christian Aid or Greenpeace have been the key players in the movement towards ethical consumerism.

The growth of consumer power

Another reason behind the growth of ethical consumerism is that these campaign approaches have actually been extraordinarily effective. When campaign groups opposed to animal testing began to organise consumer boycotts back in the late 1980s, three of the world's four biggest cosmetics

companies were forced to abandon at least some types of testing within three years.

The most graphic example of consumer power in the 1990s occurred when the Shell was forced into a dramatic climbdown over its decision to dispose of the Brent Spa oil platform in the North Sea. Although it denied that consumer pressure affected its decision, it cannot have been coincidental that sales in some German outlets had dropped by 70% during the boycott campaign.

In the UK, consumers' resounding rejection of genetically modified foods in 1999 resulted in a number of large multinationals also rejecting the technology within their UK products, and expanding out into organic products instead.

Since we first started Ethical Consumer, there has been a real change in public understanding of the damaging behaviours of big business. This has partly emerged through high-profile anti-globalisation (now better known as global justice) protests and from high profile films and books such as "Supersize Me" and "The Corporation".

Greenwash?

Since the late nineties, many companies have begun to market their products as ethical and begun to develop, sometimes sophisticated, corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies. Often such claims have rightly been pilloried as greenwash and met with cynicism. Even so, there is still a significant difference between the best and worst multinationals in relation to ethical issues and there definitely is a core of companies whose intentions are

genuine. The old certainty – that all big business is equally bad – is becoming less and less tenable, making ethical purchasing an even more effective tool for change.

A force for change

Despite, or perhaps because of, all the changes that have taken place since our inception in 1989, our core purpose here at Ethical Consumer looks like it will remain as relevant as ever. Since issue 1 we have argued that for individual citizens to be effective political actors, they need good quality intelligence about which corporations are really their friends and which are their enemies. Whether the next ten years brings forth a nuclear era, more biotechnology and nanotechnology, or simply continued gross injustice, we cannot lobby effectively for change if we are simultaneously funding our most pernicious opponents on our trips to the shops.

For as long as markets remain globalised, consumers will need to look beyond price to prevent the most malign corporations from taking the driving seat and from 'capturing' democratic governments along the way. The three-quarters of consumers who tell pollsters that they care about ethical issues enough to purchase ethical products wield huge amounts of spending power. So even though you may think that as an individual you don't have much power over company behaviour, it's important to remember that our combined spending is enormous. By making positive choices when you shop, you can bring about lasting change.

You are not alone


(ethical consumerism in numbers)

It's easy to get the idea that the odds are against us. However, if we look back over the years, we can see that tremendous changes have occurred, from the growth of ethical investment to the shift in company policies on GM foods. We believe that our work at Ethical Consumer has helped to bring out these changes and that there are many other successes worth celebrating.

- **£36 billion** value of UK ethical consumerism in 2008. This compares to just **£13.5 billion** in 1999
- Each UK household spends on average **£251** per annum on green items (2008 figures).
- Spending on ethical food and drink has increased more than threefold from **£1.9 billion** in 1999 to over **£6 billion** in 2008.
- **£1.8 billion** the amount that UK consumers spent on ethical personal products in 2008.
- **£768m** estimated total UK vegetarian foods market in 2008
- **£1.986 million** retail sales of organic food & drink in the UK in 2008
- **£800m** sales of products carrying the Fairtrade mark in 2009
- **7.5 million** people: the number of people benefiting from Fairtrade in Latin America, Africa and Asia.
- **3000** number of Fairtrade retail and catering products available in the UK (doubled from 2007 figures)
- **£172 million** spent on ethical clothing in 2008 (up from 29 million in 2007)
- **March 13th 2007** Date UK Government published its Climate Change Bill



A boycott is normally called by an organisation or group of individuals, asking consumers not to buy a specific product, or the products of a company, in order to exert commercial pressure. This is usually done to get the company to change its behaviour - to cease an activity or to adopt more ethical practices. According to the Co-operative Bank's research, 64% of UK consumers in 2009 avoided a product or service because of a company's behaviour.



Consumer Boycotts

A powerful tool in persuading companies to act more responsibly, boycotts have a proven track record.

supermarkets to stop stocking cruelly-produced meat products such as kangaroo and debeaked duck.

Ethical Consumer publishes a full list of current UK boycotts on its website, and runs a regular boycott news page in each issue of the magazine. At Ethical Consumer, we report on all the boycotts we receive which have a registered headquarters and let our readers know. We don't necessarily endorse all of the boycotts which we report.

Boycott targets

Sometimes a company can become a boycott target simply because it's big (and there is a questionable industry-wide practice) or just because it is vulnerable to consumer pressure. French wine producers were targeted in this way by groups opposing the French government's nuclear tests in the Pacific. However, companies can usually avoid becoming a formal boycott target by anticipating social trends and/or by not being left behind by competitors. A responsible company should be able to achieve this by being

aware of the consequences of its decisions, not just financially, but for people, the environment and animals.

Problems with boycotts

Some types of campaign group have problems with boycotts. For example, development charities, such as CAFOD and Oxfam have contended that boycotts of companies involved in workers' rights abuses could put workers' livelihoods at risk. Some organisations also stress that a boycott over such issues must be supported by the workers themselves in order to be genuinely democratic.

For ECRA, however, boycotts offer campaign groups and/or individuals the chance to exert economic pressure for change and can be particularly appropriate when governments are unwilling or unable to introduce reforms. They are therefore a vitally important extension of our formal 'democracy'. They can also be especially empowering for consumers through the process of actively rejecting something produced or sold in an unethical way.

Companies are sensitive to boycotts because they can have serious financial implications. In the case of a boycott of Barclays Bank for its involvement in South Africa during the time of apartheid, Barclays' share of the UK student market dropped from 27% to 15% by the time it had pulled out.

Boycotts may also affect a company's image. Supermarkets are especially sensitive about this - a fact not lost on Viva! which has had successes in getting

It Can be Easy Being Green

If you're new to environmental issues and want to start reducing your carbon impact then here are a few simple tips to get you started.

1 Eat less meat

Why do it? Livestock production is responsible for a massive amount of global greenhouse gas emissions. Compassion in World Farming estimate that if an average household in the UK cut down its consumption of meat by half, this would cut more emissions than if they'd cut their car use by half.

How do I do it? The Meat Free Monday campaign is trying to encourage people to go vegetarian on just one day a week. The website has some campaign background as well as some recipes to get you going – www.supportmfm.org/index.cfm. The Vegetarian Society is a good place to go for vegetarian inspiration, recipes and support. www.vegsoc.org

2 Invest in a bicycle

Why do it? The average car produces three tonnes of CO2 a year. Cycling, on the other hand, does not produce any at all. Bicycles are cheap to run (and free to use!) and are an excellent form of exercise.

How do I do it? If you don't already have a bike, then it's worth talking to your employer and getting them to sign up to the government's cycle scheme – www.cyclescheme.co.uk. The National Cyclists' Organisation (CTC) has a website with all you need to know about cycling: www.ctc.org.uk/ including information about cycling training and a good links section.

3 Buy an energy monitor

Why do it? An energy monitor will tell you exactly how much electricity you're using. This will not only help you monitor your use, but motivate you into cutting down your energy usage. Research has found that people who fit home energy monitors reduce their energy usage by between 5 and 15% in the first year.

How to do it: Our electricity monitors buyers' guide is available on the ethiscore website at: www.ethiscore.org/reports/electricity_monitors.aspx





4 Draught proof your house

Why do it? Draught-proofing your house is one of the easiest things you can do to improve the efficiency of your home at very little cost.

How to do it: Your local DIY or hardware shop should have plenty of materials. Look for easy-to-fix seals for exterior doors, letterbox covers and sealant to block the gaps between your floorboards and skirting boards.



5 Stop the junk!

Why do it? The average home receives 224 items of junk mail every year. Most of this will end up in landfill. Junk mail is a waste of time, energy and resources. In the UK, 3.5 million trees are cut down every year to produce the masses of junk mail which most of us ignore.

How to do it: Register your name online with the Mailing Preference Service to stop 95% of your junk mail – www.mpsonline.org.uk/mpsr/ Contact the Royal Mail for an Opt Out form to cut down some of the rest of the junk mail – www.royalmail.com/portal/rm/content1?catId=400126&mediaId=500081

Our other services

Corporate Critic Database

Corporate Critic is our main online database which contains detailed information for checking out suppliers and partners. Immediate access is available with the use of a credit card and costs from £25 per day. It contains information on more than 20,000 companies, and you can check free at www.corporatecritic.org whether it holds any data you might wish to see.

Company screening services

...are aimed at people who need more detailed, independent and specific research on a company. They're particularly useful for charities and NGOs who want to screen their sponsors or suppliers, and for ethical investors. Our screening service helps you ensure that your partners, suppliers, sponsors or potential investments won't pose a reputational risk or clash with your own ethics, values and mission. For each screening we'll verify company ownership and update the full structure of the company group. We'll check all the abstracts or stories that we unearth for quality and relevance to your specific needs. We'll also do a bit of further digging to make sure that you'll have the most up-to-date and comprehensive information on the company. Costs from £60 per company.

Bespoke Research

We also offer bespoke consultancy and screening services. We've got over twenty years of experience of research into:

- The ethical performance of companies
 - Business sector analysis
 - Opportunity analysis in the ethical marketplace
- High-profile clients include Amnesty International, International Consumer Research and Testing, Christian Aid and the Co-operative Bank.

We've produced extensive reports for clients on a number of topics including:

- Employment standards in the hotel industry
- Future trends in NGO campaigning
- Retailers' stocking policies on sustainable products
- The environmental impacts of kaolin mining.

For more information visit www.ethicalconsumer.org/ResearchServices.aspx or contact us on 0161 226 2929 to discuss your needs.



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