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MARK RYLANCE
Actor & Subscriber

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Milking plants for all they're worth

JOSIE WEXLER looks at the virtues and vices of plant milks.

Almost a quarter of the UK population now drinks plant milk, and there are now a huge range of different plants queuing up at the milking station. Here are some of those on offer:

- The beans: soya, pea, chickpea.
- The cereals: rice, oat, millet, barley, buckwheat, spelt, quinoa, hemp.
- The nuts and seeds: almond, coconut, cashew, hazelnut, Brazil nut, tiger nut, walnut, sesame.

There is now also a massive array of brands out there – sadly, too many for us to cover all of them. However, this guide looks at the most widely available ones, and the ethical issues to watch out for with each milk.

The environmental and social impacts

The climate impacts are discussed separately on page 33.

Soya

It is worth reiterating that most soya is fed to animals and not consumed directly by people.

However, given that soya is associated with deforestation in South America, consumers may want to choose a brand that sources from elsewhere. The companies statements on where their soya comes from can be seen in the box opposite.

For more on the impacts of soya see our feature 'Is soya sustainable' at www.ethicalconsumer.org/food-drink/soya-sustainable.



Rice

Rice has a higher greenhouse gas impact than other cereals due to the methane produced by the flooded rice paddies. However, it isn't really clear if it makes much difference to the carbon footprint of rice milk – some analyses find it somewhat bigger than the other plant milks, but some don't. Either way, it still comes out as better for the climate than dairy milk. (See page 33).

For more discussion of the ethical issues around rice, see our recent guide to rice online.

Coconut

Coconut is largely grown by smallholders, with the biggest

international producers being Indonesia, the Philippines and India.

Coconut is not associated with deforestation like palm oil or soya. However, tree crops (cocoa is another example) grown in the poorer parts of the world are often associated with poverty. One reason is that they take years to establish, and after you've invested in them you're pretty much stuck and have to just keep harvesting them, no matter what you're getting for them. This tends to lead to low and volatile prices, and most coconut farmers are very poor.

Fairtrade, with its floor price and a price premium, was partly designed to help with this issue. Lucy Bee sells Fairtrade coconut milk.

A fully referenced version of this Product Guide is on our website

| Sources soya for plant milks from outside South America | |
|--|--|
| The Bridge, Isola Bio | Soya comes from Italy |
| Sojade, Sojasun | Soya comes from France |
| Plamil | "Our soya milk uses organic soya grown in the EU" |
| Provamel | "Our organic, non-GMO soya beans come from Europe, mainly from France, Italy and Austria" |
| Alpro | "We source our beans directly from farms where soya beans have been grown for many years, mainly France and subject to usual crop rotations. None of these farms are on land that has been reclaimed or deforested. In the past where we did source our beans from Brazil, they were also not from rainforest or deforested areas" |
| ASDA | Says that its beans are sourced from Spain |
| Waitrose | Says that its beans are sourced from the UK |
| Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Tesco | Say that their soya milk is produced in the EU or the UK, but it was not possible to determine whether this refers to the origin of the beans |
| No info | |
| Soya Soleil | No info found, but it is owned by Alpro |
| Rude Health | Describes its soya as "sustainably sourced" but no further information could be found. |
| EcoMil, Granovita, Holland & Barrett, Co-op, Aldi, Lidl, M&S | No info found. |

Oats, peas & chickpeas

Pea is one of the newest plant milks currently gaining a following in the UK. It isn't green – its made from yellow split peas. It has been praised for tasting a lot like dairy milk.

Oats, peas and chickpeas are all grown in cool climates. Their sustainability profile is pretty good. Peas and chickpeas are nitrogen fixing, and so they have a particularly excellent sustainability profile.

The pesticide glyphosate is sometimes sprayed on oats, and the Guardian recently reported on a study by the US-based Environmental Working Group that found glyphosate in most oat-based foods, including organic ones. The situation in Europe is different from the US, but traces of glyphosate have indeed been found in many foods here, including oats, soya beans, peas, buckwheat and wheat.

Oatly guarantees that its oat milk is glyphosate free.

Hemp

Hemp gets a pretty universally good sustainability write up. It is naturally

pest and weed resistant, and it uses little water and nutrients. It has struggled legally due to its brother the cannabis plant, and the US only legalised growing it in 2018.

Almond

Almond milk has been subject to a deluge of negative media articles over the past few years, a lot of them focusing on water use. Over 80% of the world's almonds are grown in California, which has been in a severe drought for much of the last decade.

However, while almond trees are certainly thirsty, it's worth keeping this in proportion. Not only does it also take plenty of water to produce dairy milk (some analyses put it at similar, some more, and some less than almond milk), but the comparison is pertinent to California, which produces more dairy milk than almonds (in dollar terms) and uses less of its water to grow almonds than it uses to grow alfalfa for livestock feed.

Another issue that afflicts almonds is that Californian almond farmers often use a lot of pesticides, including ones that have clouds hanging over their effects on bees and human health.

Luckily, all of the almond milk companies sell organic almond milk apart from Blue Diamond, Aldi, Sainsbury's, Asda and Morrisons. We discuss organic food in general on our website here: www.ethicalconsumer.org/why-shop-ethically/why-buy-organic. The use of bees to pollinate California's almond monocrops is also thought by some to be putting bees under a lot of stress. Many companies specify that they get their almonds from Europe, not California, including Alpro, Provamel, The Bridge, EcoMil and Isola Bio.

Californian almond growing is undeniably problematic in various ways. However, it is hard not to find it slightly weird that so many of the articles on this have headlines aimed specifically at the milk alone: "The deadly truth behind your almond milk obsession"; "Almond milk: quite good for you – very bad for the planet"; "Lay off the almond milk, you ignorant hipsters". Almonds are also used in lots of other foods (it wasn't possible to find figures for the proportions).

The best milk

It isn't very easy to recommend a milk as the best in sustainability terms. The main thing is to get the most ethical version of each one, and remember that they are all substantially better for the environment than dairy milk. Their climate and land impacts are much smaller (see page 33 for details), their water use is less, their impact on biodiversity is less. ●



USING THE TABLES

Ethicscore: the higher the score, the better the company. Scored out of 14. Plus up to 1 extra point for Company Ethos and up to 5 extra points for Product Sustainability.

Green (good) = 12+
Amber (average) = 11.5–5
Red (poor) = 4.5–0
 = worst rating
 = middle rating
 = best rating/no criticisms found

USING THE TABLES

Positive ratings (+ve):

Company Ethos:
 = full mark
 = half mark

Product Sustainability:
 Various positive marks available depending on sector.



Best Buys are highlighted in blue

| BRAND | Ethicscore (out of 14 + 6 extras) | Environment | | | | | Animals | | | People | | | | Politics | | | +ve | | COMPANY GROUP | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| | | Environmental Reporting | Climate Change | Pollution & Toxics | Habitats & Resources | Palm Oil | Animal Testing | Factory Farming | Animal Rights | Human Rights | Workers' Rights | Supply Chain Management | Irresponsible Marketing | Arms & Military Supply | Controversial Technologies | Boycott Call | Political Activity | Anti-Social Finance | | Company Ethos |
| Lucy Bee coconut [O&F] | 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | Lucy Bee Ltd |
| Plamil soya [O] | 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Plamil Foods Ltd |
| Good Hemp | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Braham & Murray |
| Rebel Kitchen [O] | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Craze Foods Ltd |
| The Bridge [O] | 14.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | The Bridge SRL |
| EcoMil [O] | 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Nutriops SL |
| Oatly oat [O] | 13.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Havre Global AG |
| Rude Health [O] | 13.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Rude Health Foods Ltd |
| Sproud pea | 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | WMake AB |
| Granovita soya [O] | 12.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Dr A Stoffel Holding AG |
| Vita Coco coconut | 12.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | All Market Inc. |
| Blue Diamond almond | 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Blue Diamond Growers |
| Koko coconut | 11.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | First Grade International Ltd |
| Isola Bio [O] | 10.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Wessanen/PAI Partners |
| Sojade soya [O] | 10.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Triballat Noyal |
| Sojasun soya | 9.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Triballat Noyal |
| Co-op [O] | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Co-operative Group Ltd |
| Dream [O] | 6.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Hain Celestial Group Inc |
| Holland & Barrett soya [O] | 6.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | LetterOne |
| Co-op soya | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Co-operative Group Ltd |
| Marks & Spencer | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Marks & Spencer Group Plc |
| Dream | 5.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Hain Celestial Group Ltd |
| Alpro [O] | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Group Danone |
| Provamel [O] | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Group Danone |
| Aldi Actileaf | 4.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Siepmann Stiftung |
| Waitrose soya | 4.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | John Lewis Partnership |
| Alpro | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Group Danone |
| Soya Soleil soya | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Group Danone |
| Lidl | 3.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Schwarz Group |
| Morrisons [O] | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Wm Morrison Plc |
| Tesco [O] | 2.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Tesco Plc |
| Sainsbury's | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | J Sainsbury Plc |
| Morrisons | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Wm Morrison Plc |
| Tesco | 1.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Tesco Plc |
| Asda [O] | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Walmart Inc |
| Asda | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Walmart Inc |

[O] = organic certified [F] = Fairtrade certified All the research behind these ratings is on www.ethicalconsumer.org
 Definitions of all the categories are at www.ethicalconsumer.org/our-ethical-ratings.



Best Buys are decided by the editorial team based on the research we have undertaken, the scoring system and the unique insight into the issues that our editorial team has. 9 times out of 10 this will be the brand (or brands) that are top of the table but sometimes an ethical company which is truly innovative scores less well on our rigid scoring system and we use the Best Buy and Recommended section to acknowledge this. A company cannot be a Best Buy if it scores worst for Supply Chain Management.

SHOPPING GUIDE

Plant Milk

WHO SELLS WHAT

| | |
|--|---|
| Almond | Aldi (Acti leaf), Alpro, Asda, Blue Diamond, Dream, EcoMil, Isola Bio, Lidl, Morrisons, Provamel, Rude Health, Sainsbury's, Tesco, The Bridge |
| Barley | Isola Bio |
| Brazil nut | The Bridge |
| Buckwheat | Isola Bio, The Bridge |
| Cashew | Alpro, Isola Bio, EcoMil, Provamel, Rude Health |
| Chickpea | The Bridge |
| Coconut | Alpro, Dream, EcoMil, Isola Bio, Koko, Lucy Bee, Marks and Spencer, Provamel, Rude Health, The Bridge, Vita Coco |
| Hazelnut | Alpro, Isola Bio, EcoMil, Rude Health |
| Hemp | EcoMil, Good Hemp |
| Millet | Isola Bio |
| Oat | Alpro, Asda, Dream, EcoMil, Isola Bio, Marks and Spencer, Oatly, Provamel, Rude Health, The Bridge |
| Pea | Sproud |
| Quinoa | EcoMil, The Bridge |
| Rice | Alpro, Dream, EcoMil, Isola Bio, Provamel, Rude Health, The Bridge |
| Soya | Alpro, Aldi (Acti leaf), Asda, Co-op, Granovita, Holland & Barrett, Isola Bio, Lidl, Marks and Spencer, Morrisons, Plamil, Provamel, Rude Health, Sainsbury's, Sojade, Sojasun, Soya Soleil, Tesco, The Bridge, Waitrose. |
| Spelt | EcoMil, Isola Bio, The Bridge |
| Tigernut | EcoMil, Rude Health |
| Own mix of rice, cashew and coconut | Rebel Kitchen |
| Powders: chestnut, sesame, soya, walnut | EcoMil |

Table highlights

Vegan companies

The following companies are fully vegan: Lucy Bee, Plamil, Good Hemp (Braham & Murray), Rebel Kitchen (Craze Foods), The Bridge, EcoMil (Nutriops), Oatly (Havre Global), Sproud (WMake), Blue Diamond, Vita Coco (All Market Inc) and Koko (First Grade International).

Non-vegan companies

Besides the supermarkets, the following companies are not vegan:

- Sojade and Sojasun are owned by Triballat Noyal which also specialises in French cheese.
- Soya Soleil, Alpro, Provamel are all owned by Group Danone, which also sells both dairy and meat products.
- Dream is owned by Hain Celestial which also owns Linda McCartney, Sun Pat and Tilda rice. It sells a number of meat products, such as Ethnic Gourmet curry.

- Rude Health makes porridge and snack biscuits as well as plant milk, a few of which contain dairy products. Although most of its products are vegan, the company has created controversy by writing blog posts which are very critical of veganism.

- Wessanen, which makes Isola Bio, makes 96% of its revenue from vegetarian products, but not 100%.

- Granovita's parent Hugli also owns Natur Compagnie which sells meat and dairy products.

Palm oil

The milks themselves do not contain palm oil. However, the companies that make them sometimes use palm oil in other things.

Of the companies that get a best palm oil rating, the following are palm oil free: Lucy Bee, Good Hemp (Braham & Murray), Rebel Kitchen (Craze Foods), The Bridge, EcoMil (Nutriops), Sproud (WMake), Rude Health, Blue Diamond, Vita Coco, Sojade and Sojasun.



Our Best buys are **Lucy Bee, Plamil, Good Hemp** and **The Bridge**.



Lucy Bee
17



Plamil
16



Good Hemp
15



The Bridge
14.5

Lucy Bee sells exclusively coconut milk – all of it Fairtrade and Organic. Plamil sells exclusively organic soya milk. Good Hemp sells exclusively hemp. The Bridge sells pretty much everything turned into a milk, all of it organic: almond, oat, soya, coconut, rice, buckwheat, spelt, Brazil nut, chickpea and quinoa.

All of these companies are wholly vegan and have ethics embedded across all of their activities.



Rebel Kitchen, EcoMil, Oatly, Rude Health and **Sproud** also do well.

Plant milk

Those who get a best rating but are not palm oil free are:

- Plamil (all palm oil is “sourced from a non-Asian organic and sustainable RSPO supply chain that has been independently audited”).
- Isola Bio/Wessanen (all palm oil is RSPO certified, and most comes from Latin America where it is not associated with deforestation).
- M&S (all palm oil is certified, most by the more stringent types of certification, and the company is involved in positive initiatives).
- Alpro/Soya Soleil/Provamel/Danone (nearly all of the company’s palm oil is certified, it is involved in positive initiatives and provides details of all of its suppliers).

A coffee curdling problem?

Plant milks may curdle in coffee because it is acidic, which makes the protein molecules clump together. Dairy milk is more tolerant as it contains different proteins, which gives it a higher ‘curdle point’.

Tofu is curdled soya milk – you can basically end up with a coffee con tofu.

There isn’t a single solution because the likelihood of coagulation is affected by an annoyingly large number of things: the type of coffee (some are more acidic than others), how strong you make it, the type of plant milk, the additives in it, and the temperature.

Some brands add acidity regulators like potassium phosphates (dipotassium phosphate or monopotassium phosphate), stabilisers or emulsifiers to prevent the curdling. Calcium, often added to replace the calcium in dairy milk, may also reduce it. Several brands have specific ‘Barista’ versions.

Other suggestions on the Internet include putting a tiny pinch of bicarbonate of soda into the coffee to reduce the acidity, or adding the coffee to the plant milk rather than the other way around to help the milk adapt more gradually.



I'M STILL TRYING TO WORK OUT WHICH MILK IS THE MOST ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND.



Packaging

The vast majority of plant milks are sold in cartons, although there are a few brands that use plastic bottles. Good Hemp, for example, sells in both.

Most beverage cartons are made by the Swedish company Tetra Pak, and the company name has become synonymous with the product. But there are actually some other companies that make them, such as Elopak and SIG Combibloc.

The cartons are about 75% card, but this is layered with plastic (polyethylene) and, in the ones that are designed to preserve liquids outside of the fridge, a thin layer of aluminium.

The environmental impact of the packaging

In terms of carbon, the carton is a small proportion of your plant milk’s footprint. A litre Tetra Pak carton has a carbon footprint of around 40 grams, which is about 3-6% of the footprint of the contents. And it is around three or four times less than plastic bottles, which take much more energy to make.

However, obviously, climate change is not the only issue, resources and pollution issues also matter.

Beverage cartons are recyclable, but not back into cartons. The card can be recycled into paper, and the plastic/aluminium layer can be turned into building materials like roof sheets. Globally, only about 26% of them are recycled (figures are not available for the UK). UK carton recycling facilities have been very poor but have been getting better – the first UK dedicated facility, which is near Halifax, opened in 2013. They are now collected at the kerbside in most of the UK.

Plastic bottle recycling is more embedded, and about 57% of them are recycled in the UK. You can theoretically recycle them back into plastic bottles, but not infinitely – plastic degrades each time you melt it. And they aren’t sturdy enough to withstand the sterilisation that would be required for them to be reused commercially without melting. Most recycled bottles are turned into polyester fibre – used for clothing and furnishings.

Obviously, bottles contain much more



plastic. And while you can save a lot of energy by recycling plastic bottles, in the best-case scenario in terms of the amount of recycling likely to happen, their carbon footprint only attains levels similar to the worst-case scenario for cartons. Overall, it seems pretty clear that cartons are the better option.

However, if you make your own plant milk you can avoid the whole issue of Tetra Paks and plastic bottles. Store your homemade milks in a reusable glass bottle.

Here is a recipe from our website for oat milk.

MAKE YOUR OWN OAT MILK

- Soak one cup of oats in water for at least 15 mins or overnight.
- Drain water.
- Blend oats in blender with 3 cups water, a pinch of salt and a little vanilla essence.
- If you want a sweetened version, add a couple of dates.
- Strain through a sieve (a normal sieve used for baking is fine).
- The remaining oats can be used in pancakes, porridge, smoothies etc.
- Keep the finished oat milk in the fridge in a glass milk bottle or screw top jar.

Nutrition

Mammal milk is intended as the sole food source for young mammals and is therefore uniquely nutritious. As adults we also eat a lot of other things, so we have no real need for the thing we put in our coffee to be some super-charged nutrient fiesta.

However, while you may not think of your cuppa as an important protein source, there are academics pointing out that milk does supply protein, and if you don't get it from there, you will need to get it from somewhere else.

The amount of protein in plant milks varies by brand. But indicative figures can be seen in the table here:

| Grams of protein per 100 ml | |
|--|-------|
| Cow | 3.5 |
| Soya | 3-3.5 |
| Pea, chickpea | 2-3 |
| Almond, cashew, hazel, brazil nut, spelt, buckwheat, millet, barley, quinoa, hemp, tiger nut | 0.5-1 |
| Oat | 0.2 |
| Rice, coconut | 0.1 |

Companies behind the brands

Lucy Bee is a UK ethical retailer that sells Fairtrade organic skincare and beauty products, spices, and coconut-based products, including coconut milk. It was started by Lucy Buckingham (aka 'Bee') to sell coconut oil, before expanding its range. You can buy its coconut milk in various supermarkets, including ASDA and Morrisons, as well as independent shops.

The Bridge is an Italian vegan and organic company which makes plant milks, creams and desserts. Its products are mostly sold by independent shops.

Sproud is a Swedish company, launched in 2018, that makes pea milk and vegan protein supplements. Its pea milk is sold at Waitrose and in independent shops.

Group Danone is the company behind Alpro, Soya Soleil and Provamel. Provamel focuses on organic foods, Soya Soleil on just soya products.

Group Danone is a French multinational which bats on both sides of the animal/plant milk fence. Its other brands include Activia, Actimel, Shape, Cow and Gate, Evian, and Volvic. However, the company did do slightly better in the most recent 'Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare' report, having moved up to tier 2 ("Integral to business strategy") out of 6.

Danone has also been accused of engaging in unethical marketing of infant formula in China, Indonesia, Turkey, and India. Baby Milk Action is thus running a DanoNO campaign aimed at the company.

It also accuses of Danone of dishonest underhand practices using a website called www.first1000days.ie. The website, which promotes breastfeeding, is run secretly by Danone. Readers are asked to sign up to receive emails, and Baby Milk Action claims that the company then uses their data to target them with adverts for formula. ■



nutrition now, matters forever

Climate impact of meat, vegetarian and vegan diets

We compare the climate and environmental impacts of meat with vegetarian and vegan products and find that whichever way you look at it a veggie diet is better for the planet. JOSIE WEXLER explains more.

The greenhouse gas emissions of food, and particularly meat products, is a big deal. Food accounts for roughly a quarter of all human greenhouse gas emissions. Of this, livestock constitutes about 56%, while only providing 37% of our protein and 18% of our calories.

But not all livestock is equal – it is ruminants (animals that chew the cud – mostly cows and sheep) that weigh the heaviest on the climate – they are responsible for about 80% of the livestock figures, although they only produce about 40% of all animal protein.

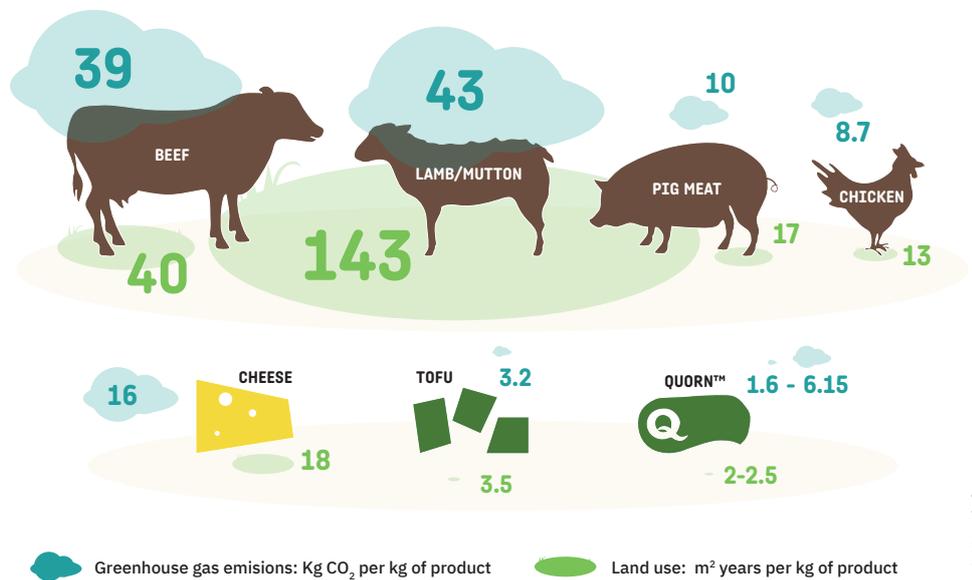
Exactly how bad meat is for the climate depends on what it is, how it is produced, and also how you divide up responsibility for things like deforestation.

Meat is inherently inefficient

As a rule of thumb, the production of meat from plants is inherently inefficient. Each time you go up a level in the food chain you lose energy.

A comparison of the emissions and land use associated with various animal products and substitutes are shown below. The reason that land matters is talked about below.

A comparison of the emissions and land use associated with various animal products and substitutes



In the table below we give the range of the highest and lowest figures we found from remotely reputable sources. The average of these is shown in infographic.

The overall picture that emerges, unsurprisingly, is that veggie options are generally better, and red meat is the super villain.

| | Greenhouse gas emissions: kg CO ₂ e per kg of product | Land use: m ² years per kg of product |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Beef | 39 | 40 |
| Lamb and mutton | 43 | 143 |
| Pig meat | 10 | 17 |
| Chicken | 8.7 | 13 |
| Cheese | 16 | 18 |
| Tofu | 3.2 | 3.5 |
| Quorn | 1.6 - 6.15 | 2 - 2.5 |

WHERE THE FIGURES ARE FROM

All of the figures apart from Quorn are from Joseph Poore at the University of Oxford, the lead author on a major recent study on the area, and personal communication with Poore.

Poore gives both global figures and figures by continent. We have used the European figures for everything apart from tofu, since the bulk of our meat is produced in the UK or in the rest of Europe. We used the global figures for tofu, because most of our soya comes from outside Europe.

The Quorn figures are obtained from elsewhere, and are of more dubious quality.

Land use and inefficient use of resources

The two biggest reasons animal products are bad for the environment are:

- Land use
- Methane

Livestock uses huge amounts of land, both for grazing and for growing feed. One estimate is that if we all went vegan, we could reduce the land used by agriculture by 75%.

There are worries specifically about how much deforestation is being driven by soya cultivation in South America, most of which is used to feed animals.

There is a moratorium on growing soya on recently deforested land in the Amazon, which has had a significant effect, and while deforestation rates have risen over the last decade, they are still vastly lower than the horrendous rates that were being seen in the early years of the century.

But some people argue that soya is still playing a role, it is just being disguised (see our guide to meat substitutes).

The methane issue affects ruminants, which burp large amounts of methane during the torturous process of digesting grass. Methane is a very powerful greenhouse gas.

The overall emissions of diets

Below is one academic estimate of the average carbon footprint of UK diets, calculated from food diaries.

| | Tonnes of CO ₂ e per year |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| High meat eaters | 2.6 |
| Medium meat eaters | 2 |
| Low meat eaters | 1.7 |
| Fish eaters | 1.43 |
| Vegetarians | 1.39 |
| Vegans | 1 |

According to this, going from a medium meat to a vegan diet saves about a tonne of CO₂e per year.

There are some comparisons with other carbon footprint calculations below for context:

| Activity | Tonnes of CO ₂ e per year: |
|---|---|
| The average UK carbon footprint per person per year, including all imported goods (This is the mean, so it will be raised by a few very high consuming people and most people's footprint is lower than this) | 12 tonnes ¹ |
| The median household's electricity use for a year | 0.8 tonnes ² |
| One return passenger flight from London to New York | 0.8 tonnes (1.6 tonnes with 'radiative forcing uplift factor') ³ |

References: **1** Calculated from total UK footprint of 784 million tonnes CO₂e From "Defra – UK's carbon footprint", and population of 65.65 million **2** Calculated from Ofgem's Typical Domestic Consumption Values **3** Calculated from the Defra's greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2019

There is, however, a very important caveat to these figures. And that is that, like nearly all calculations of the impact of animal products, they do not include land 'opportunity costs' – what else you could theoretically do with the land in a best-case scenario for the climate.

Land can absorb carbon if you let it turn back into forest or use it to grow biomass which you can then preserve in some form (such as charcoal). In other words, it can be 'carbon negative'.

If you do include these land 'opportunity costs', the impact of animal products can double (or more) because of the amount of land that livestock uses.

How does Ethical Consumer rate companies on these issues?

Our ratings system addresses these issues in the following ways:

Vegan companies are awarded a positive Company Ethos mark.

Marks can be lost under the Animal Rights and Factory Farming categories for using meat, eggs, dairy or other animal products.

For our Carbon Management rating, we require companies to talk about meaningful ways in which they are reducing their carbon emissions, which can include reducing the use of animal ingredients.

To find more information about how companies are rated on other connected issues, such as Animal Rights, Factory Farming and Animal Testing, you can visit our ratings page.

Myth Busting: Has meat been given an unduly bad reputation?

Climate arguments against meat consumption have been disputed by some who claim that animal products have been given an unduly bad rap. Several arguments have been made by people in the farming industry.



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Argument one: soil carbon and the saviour cow

One of the principle arguments concerns soil carbon. Soil carbon is below-ground ex-plant matter from things like roots and litter from above. It's a big deal – there is more carbon stored in this form than in the plants above the ground.

The quantity varies depending on things like the vegetation on the land and on temperature (heat increases the rate of decomposition), and you can build it up by restoring degraded land, but eventually, like the above-ground carbon in a forest, it reaches a plateau level.

The claim is that grazing livestock can play a huge part in building it up. ●

The most extreme and high-profile proponent of this claim is a man called Allan Savory. Savory was born in Zimbabwe to British colonial parents, and he doesn't have a glowing ecological past: as a young man he argued that elephants were causing desertification, and approximately 40,000 were slaughtered on his advice, to no benefit. However, now wracked with remorse about this, he is pushing a different idea for how to solve the problem: cows.

In 2013, Savory gave a TED talk claiming that grazing cattle can reverse desertification, sequestering so much soil carbon that they could reverse climate change and bring carbon dioxide levels back to pre-industrial levels. The talk went viral – it has now been viewed nearly seven million times.

The cow turns out to not be the saviour

Plenty of scientific analyses have been done of the issues in Savory's talk. And the summary is: there is a grain of truth in it, but nothing remotely on the scale being claimed.

It is true that grasslands, which have huge underground root systems, can store a lot of carbon under the ground – in some areas even more than would be stored on the land, in total, if it were a forest. Grassland does not necessarily need to be grazed (in some places it is just the natural 'climax vegetation'), but it does seem that in some situations cows can help to regenerate degraded grassland – nibbling can encourage root growth for example. However, it can also go the other way – cows can trash the land, and often do.

One huge research project looked into the issue and concluded:

"In some specific contexts, where the climate, soil, land use history, and grazing management are just right, additional carbon [through grazing] can be removed from the atmosphere and sequestered in soils. But realistic rates for this are far below those claimed outside of the scientific literature. And only rarely can sequestration outweigh the greenhouse gas emissions from the grazing animals."

They further concluded that at a global level, the absolute largest possible sequestration potential from grazing management "offsets only 20-60% of annual average emissions from the grazing ruminant sector and makes a negligible dent on overall livestock emissions."

Argument two: animals, ships and packaging

A second argument often used to claim that eating food from animals isn't really bad for the climate is that it is less important than other things, particularly how far the food has travelled.

However, again, the science doesn't really support this. Pretty much all of the research done in the 40 years since the 'food miles' concept was first proposed has shown that transport is generally a small part of a food's climate impact, compared with what the food actually is. On average, it only constitutes around 11%.

The reason is that most of it travels in huge, slow freight ocean liners, whose energy use is very low – up to 250 times less per tonne-km than trucks. In fact, even when food has come from the other side of the world, the last bit of transport, within the UK, can contribute more of the transport emissions.

The same is true of packaging – it's not a huge contributor on the climate front. Milk cartons contribute about 5% of the carbon footprint of milk, for example, and plastic packaging contributes about 4% of the carbon footprint of pork.

That doesn't mean that packaging doesn't matter (for one thing, there are other environmental issues as well as climate change). But it does mean the overwhelmingly important factor in the carbon footprint of your diet is what you actually eat.

Argument three: 'default meat' or 'ecological left overs'

A third argument sometimes used is that it is possible to get some animal products without using dedicated resources. This is sometimes called 'default meat' or 'ecological left overs'.

For example, you can feed pigs on food waste, although it is currently illegal to do so in the UK. There is also a 'sustainable yield' that you can take of wild game that doesn't use extra resources, because you're just acting like a normal predator in the system, and if you weren't taking it, the animals would be expending more energy competing for resources.

The problem is that the amounts we are talking about here are small.

UK post-farm food waste would be enough to make about 6 kg of pork per person per year. (Calculated from WRAP's figure of 150 kg per person for 2018 UK post farm food waste, and a 24:1 conversion ratio of swill into pork,



Deforestation for soya animal feed plantation.

© Stockholm Environment Institute

reported by Simon Fairlie in Meat: A benign extravagance.) In the UK we consume about 24 kg of pork per person per year.

Argument four: soya is causing climate chaos

As above, the amount that soya growing is linked to deforestation in South America is not hugely clear, but it may well be having an impact.

Some people have pointed to vegetarian food as containing a lot of soya. But this is a confusion, because most soya is fed to animals. Per 100grams, animal products contain the following amounts of embedded soya, from the soya used in feed:

| | Amount of embedded soya |
|---------------|---|
| Chicken | about 109 grams (ie. more than the weight of the actual meat) |
| Farmed salmon | about 60 grams |
| Eggs | about 64 grams |
| Pork or beef | about 50 grams |
| Cheese | about 25 grams |

The best way to eat soya may well be to not eat soya.

Conclusion

Individual foods' emissions can vary hugely on how they are produced. But once you've ploughed through a lot of life cycle calculations and case studies and theory, you do get enough of an overall picture that you can discern some pretty solid rules of thumb.

As noted above, it is possible for small amounts of animal products produced in very specific ways to be neutral or beneficial for the climate. But that doesn't ultimately affect the overall picture very much, because it isn't what we're doing. Overall, the climate case against consuming animal products, certainly in the quantities that we do, is really strong. ■

Vegan food brands whose owners sell meat or dairy



Our new research reveals that the UK's vegans are unwittingly supporting companies that are deeply involved in the meat and dairy industries. As you gorge yourself on nut cheese and coconut yoghurt, your money could still be finding its way into the pockets of those who profit from animal exploitation.

If you find the typical life cycle of a dairy cow in the UK unethical, you may want to double-check the ownership of some of the vegan bands you buy.

Below is a table of vegan brands we have found to be owned by non-vegan companies:

| Vegan Brands | Product type | Owners | Meat/Dairy brands |
|---|--|---|---|
| Alpro, Follow Your Heart, Provamel, Soya Soleil, Silk, | Plant based milks and yoghurts | Groupe Danone | Danone; Oykos; Activia; Danonino; Silk; Actimel; Prostokvashino (Russia); International Delight (contains traces of dairy) |
| Cauldron | Meat alternatives | Monde Nissin | Nissin; Dutchy Mill; Quorn (contains small amounts of egg and dairy in most products); Voice and Bingo; Monde; Lucky Mel; Voiz; Mama Sita's; Dutch Mill |
| Linda McCartney, Dream | Meat alternatives, plant milks | Hain Celestial | Yorkshire Provender; Cully & Sully; Hartley's jelly; New Covent Garden Co. |
| Richmond sausages, Pure dairy free spread, Naked Glory meat alternatives | Vegan spread, meat alternatives | Kerry Group | Richmond; Wall's; Fridge Raiders; LowLow; Cheestrings, Dairygold, Charleville Cheese |
| Swedish Glace, Vegetarian Butcher | Dairy free ice cream, meat-free alternatives | Unilever | Ben and Jerry's; Wall's; Hellman's; Magnum |
| Vitalite, Sheese | Vegan spread, vegan cheese | Saputo Dairy (formerly Dairy Crest) | Cathedral City; Davistow; Clover; Country Life; Utterly Butterly; Willow; |
| Violife | Vegan cheese | Upfield (owned by KKR) | None - but KKR invests in pharmaceutical companies which test on animals and a company that produces meat products |
| Mozzarisella | Vegan cheese | Frescolat | Frescolat |
| The Green Butcher | Meat alternatives | Tulip Ltd (owned by JBS, a meat processing company) | Tulip; Danepak bacon; Adam's; Cherry Tree Farm; Alf Turner; Spam; Stag Chili |
| Vivera | Meat alternatives | JBS | Moy Park (huge chicken producer in Northern Ireland) |
| Gosh! | Meat alternatives | Sonae | Food, fashion and electronics |

Danone owns Alpro and Provamel brands

This contradiction is best exemplified by French multi-national Groupe Danone, a company with a 24.4% share in the global fresh dairy products market, who in 2016 completed the purchase of WhiteWave Foods, whose brands include Alpro, Provamel and Soya Soleil.

Alpro, which is by far the UK's best known vegan brand, are now part of a brand roster that includes Activa yogurt, Cow & Gate baby milk and Actimel.

What's more Danone remain subject to multiple consumer boycotts over their aggressive marketing of their baby milk formula.

This £12.5billion takeover left many consumers stunned and outraged.

Many vegans have been left questioning the ethical implications of one of the world's biggest dairy companies owning vegan brands.

With Danone claiming it signifies a move towards sustainability, will consumers see through this greenwashing and realise these multinationals are simply trying to cash in on the global vegan boom?

Other meat and dairy companies that own vegan brands

At Ethical Consumer, we have found other cases of this ethical conundrum for vegans.

Take dairy free spreads such as Pure and Vitalite for example: Pure is owned by the Kerry Group, whose other well known brands include Richmond's sausages, Wall's Sausages, Dairygold and Cheesestrings. ●

Vitalite's owners Dairy Crest (now Saputo Dairy, based in Canada), produce a wide range of cheeses and butters, including Cathedral City, Clover and Utterly Butterly. In 2021 they also bought Sheese (Bute Island Foods), a vegan cheese company based on the Isle of Bute, Scotland. Sheese also make most of the UK supermarket 'own brand' vegan cheese such as Morrisons and Tesco, Sainsbury's and Waitrose) and have been making vegan cheese since the late 1980s. Saputo will reportedly invest £3m in the local community over five years.

We also found links between the meat industry and cornerstone vegan brands such as Linda McCartney, whose public championing of the meat-free lifestyle has

contributed significantly to the current boom in alternative diets.

The brand is currently owned by Hain Celestial, a company who sells poultry products in the US, as well as owning Ella's Kitchen baby food, much of which contains meat.

One of the world's largest multi-nationals, Unilever, also has a stake in the vegan market through their dairy-free soy ice cream brand Swedish Glace. However, the group continue to profit from the meat and dairy industries through their other brands, such as Hellman's, Ben & Jerry's and Knorr.

Although it may be well known that Cauldron is not an exclusively vegan brand, its growing number of vegan

products warrants their inclusion. Their Filipino owners Monde Nissin's other brands include Dutch Mill yogurt and Lucky Me instant noodles (many containing meat).

Our article '10 ethical brands owned by unethical companies' expands on some of these companies, and has been extended to 15 brands, including Vivera by JBS.

Vegan companies producing vegan brands

You will be glad to hear that this is not the case for all vegan products. There are many listed in our plant milk and meat-free burgers and sausages guides that have no links to the dairy or meat industries. ■

10 ethical brands owned by unethical companies

Over the years, many ethical brands have been bought out by unethical companies. In many cases the bigger companies are looking to improve their image or tap into the ethical market. Other brands make ethical claims, but have always been owned by unethical companies.

At Ethical Consumer, we always rate companies based on their ownership so you can be sure you're not buying vegan products from a company involved in factory farming, or your green energy from a company involved in fossil fuels.

We have updated our list of ten 'ethical' companies that are owned by unethical companies, with a bonus five! These additional five companies are at the start of the list, which is not in any particular order in terms of ethics or type of brand.

1. Vivera (JBS)

Meat-free burger company Vivera was bought by the world's biggest meat producer JBS in summer 2021.

Vivera is Europe's third largest plant-based food company, founded in the Netherlands in 1990, with

over 100 products sold in 25 different countries, and available in most UK supermarkets.

Vivera previously scored 12 in our ratings for meat-free burgers and sausages but its score has dropped to a measly one mark following the takeover.

JBS scored our worst ratings across virtually every category.

Numerous investigations have exposed extreme animal suffering at various stages of its supply chain, and it had the highest number of animal welfare violations for any meat company in the USA according to a 2020 report by the Animal Welfare Institute.

It is notorious for links to farms involved in illegal deforestation of the Amazon. Several

supermarkets are boycotting Brazilian beef after investigations linked JBS and other major meat companies in Brazil to illegal deforestation.

It's also been fined for bribing government officials such as the Brazilian Finance Minister, and has

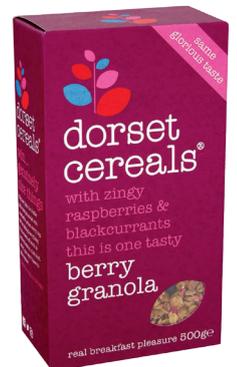
been accused of being linked to modern-day "slave labour". In 2021 it also paid a \$5.5m sum to settle claims that the company harassed workers based on their ethnicity and religion.

2. Dorset Cereals (Associated British Foods)

Founded on sustainable and ethical principles in 1989, Dorset Cereals has changed ownership several times during its lifetime. Its current owner is Associated British Foods who also own Jordons, Ryvita, Primark, Twinings, Kingmill, Allison, Patak's, and more.

ABF scores the 'worst' rating for palm oil sourcing, the 'middle' rating for carbon management and reporting, the 'worst' rating for Environmental reporting and the 'worst' rating for likely use of tax avoidance strategies.

You would not know any of this by looking at the Dorset Cereals website



however, where there is not a single mention of ABF anywhere and instead, it is awash with pretty pictures and their green agenda.

Dorset Cereals score 0 in our guide to cereals.

3. Gosh! (Sonae Food4Future)

Vegan and free-from company Gosh!, which makes ready-made falafel bites, burgers and sausages, was bought by Portuguese mega-company Sonae in September 2021.

Sonae is a multinational company that operates in many sectors, ranging from food to fashion to electronics.



Despite operating in a vast range of industries, Sonae has very little to show when it comes to publishing information about its ethical practices. It seems scant amounts of its 5 billion euro turnover is going towards corporate social responsibility or minimising its damage towards people and the planet.

Sonae scored worst Ethical Consumer ratings in 10 categories, including Environmental Reporting and Supply Chain Management, and has Ethiscore of 0 overall.

4. Follow your Heart (Group Danone)

US vegan brand Follow Your Heart was bought by dairy company Danone in 2021.

Follow Your Heart's best known product is Veganaise, but it also makes a vegan egg replacer, vegan salad dressing and vegan cheeses.

See the entry for Alpro to read more about the international dairy company Danone. It is the number one retailer of fresh dairy products globally.



5. Bute Island Foods (Saputo)

In summer 2021, Scottish vegan cheese company Bute Island Foods, was bought by Saputo Dairy (then known as Dairy Crest), which also produces a wide range of dairy cheeses and butters, including Cathedral City, Clover and Utterly Butterly.

Bute Island is one of the original vegan cheese companies, in production since the late 1980s in its fully-vegan factory in Scotland. Its Sheese brand is also behind most of the UK supermarket 'own brand' vegan cheeses such as Morrisons and Tesco, as well as Sainsbury's and Waitrose.

Following the takeover Sheese's ethical rating dropped from 15 to 8.5.

Saputo Dairy has reportedly been accused of feeding its dairy cattle with soya grown in deforested areas of Brazil and the Amazonian rainforest, via US grain giant Cargill, according to Greenpeace.



6. Green & Black's (Mondelez)

Green & Black's was known as an ethical pioneer, becoming the first company with a Fair Trade certified chocolate bar in 1994. However, in 2005 it shocked supporters when it was bought out by Cadbury, which later became part of Mondelez.



Mondelez receives Ethical Consumer's worst rating for its policy on sourcing cocoa, an ingredient often linked to child labour and other workers rights issues, and in 2019 it was found to be illegally marketing its products to children. The company also owns the Cadbury's, Kenco and Terry's brands.

In 2016, Mondelez was criticised for buying palm oil - a common ingredient in chocolate bars - from the secretive palm oil trading company Olam, which has been linked to deforestation in Southeast Asia and Africa. In 2018 and 2020 the company was again criticised over the issue, with civil society organisations saying that it still had not addressed the problem of 'conflict palm oil' in its supply chains.

Green & Black's has also been criticised for dropping the Fairtrade and organic labels when it launched a new range

in 2017, which is neither organic nor certified with the Fairtrade International certification scheme. The Velvet Edition has Mondelez International's own label, Cocoa Life certification and no organic content.

7. Pukka (Unilever)

Pukka is a B Corp that sells organic and Fair for Life teas. Since 2017, however, the company has been owned by the multinational Unilever. Although Unilever has taken some steps to clean up its act over the last decade, it remains the target of widespread criticism.

In October 2020, Kenyan tea workers filed a UN complaint over alleged human rights violations by a Unilever subsidiary. They stated that the company failed to offer adequate support or protection for workers who were attacked when ethnic violence broke out in Kenya following a disputed election in 2007. Workers say that they were not paid when the plantations were closed following the unrest. At the time, more than 10% of Unilever's global workforce was employed on the plantation. They say that Unilever has avoided redress ever since.

In 2019, the company was also accused by the Food and Allied Workers Union of hiring private security guards who attacked striking workers. The workers claimed to have been attacked with rubber bullets and pepper spray while peacefully picketing.

Unilever owns the 'clean skincare' brand Ren, which



markets itself as free from the toxic chemicals parabens and phthalates, animal ingredients and “pore-blocking petrochemicals”. It also owns Ben & Jerry’s, which was the first ice cream company to use Fairtrade ingredients and is well known for its social activism.

8. Alpro (Groupe Danone)

Alpro may specialise in plant-based milks and yoghurts, but its owner Groupe Danone is far from ethical when it comes to human or animal rights.

Danone is the number one retailer of fresh dairy products globally, through its brands: Danone, Oykos, Activia, Danonino, Silk and Actimel. It has a 26% share of the global fresh dairy products market. The company continues to use factory-farmed animal products, linking it not only to animal rights but also climate issues. According to its most recent position paper on animal testing, it also conducts tests on animals.

Danone faces a global campaign over its unsafe marketing of baby milk formula. According to Baby Milk Action, the company targets health workers and sponsors health worker events and charities, violating international baby milk marketing standards. The World Health Organisation has provided guidance prohibiting the aggressive marketing of formula since 1981, over fears that it was undermining the importance of breastfeeding and risking the health and lives of babies and children.

In November 2021, Alpro’s owner announced they were converting a dairy production plant in France into one which is solely dedicated to making oat milk products under the Alpro brand.

Danone also owns the Provamel, Soya Soleil and Silk brands, which offer vegan products.



9. Ecover and Method (SC Johnson)



Ethical brands Ecover and Method face an ongoing boycott call after they were bought out by SC Johnson in 2017, over the parent company’s links to animal testing.

Ecover and Method are both cruelty-free. But SC Johnson openly admits to testing on animals. The company owns other non-cruelty-free brands including Duck, Shout, Glade, Pledge and Windex. Caroline

Ruane from Naturewatch Foundation, which is behind the boycott call, said: “It’s hugely disappointing to compassionate shoppers when favourite brands compromise their cruelty-free credentials by selling out to multinationals that continue to benefit from animal testing.”

In response to the boycott, Ecover and Method have committed to using their influence to convince SC Johnson to stop animal testing.

Ecover and Method’s ethiscores have also significantly fallen from 11.5 and 12 respectively to just 5.5 due to the takeover. SC Johnson receives Ethical Consumer’s worst rating for likely use of tax avoidance, environmental reporting, carbon management and reporting, pollution & toxics and supply chain management, as well as animal testing.

10. Oatly (10% Blackstone)

In 2020, Oatly prompted boycott calls after welcoming investment from the private equity firm Blackstone. We wrote about this at the time and reviewed their ethical rating score.

Blackstone’s CEO and co-founder Stephen A. Schwarzman donated \$3.7 million dollars towards Trump’s 2020 re-election campaign, propping up his Wall-Street donations. Schwatzman’s donations single-handedly accounted for three-quarters of the contributions from individuals linked to the 31 major banks and investment firms in the US, over an 18 month period.

Blackstone has also been accused of facilitating Amazon deforestation through its stake in Hidrovias do Brasil. Hidrovias is said to be allowing the export of illegal timber through its shipping terminals, and to have been involved in the development of a road through the forest, enabling easier transportation of clear-cut timber and violating Indigenous rights.

The \$200 million investment in Oatly represents a 10% share in the company. However, Blackstone is a passive investor - meaning it has no management control over the brand.

Oatly also caused upset when it attempted to sue a small family business making oat milk in Cambridgeshire, UK, for trademark infringement in 2021. Oatly claimed that Glebe Farm’s PureOatly brand name was too close to Oatly and that it used a similar blue packaging. The High Court judge ruled in favour of the UK farm saying he did not see “any risk of injury to the distinctive character” of the Oatly brand. Glebe Farm is an oat farm run by brother and sister team Rebecca and Philip Rayner. You can buy their oat milk from them via their website.

They will also be included in our updated non-dairy milk guide later in 2022.



11. Innocent smoothies (90% Coca-Cola)

Innocent makes much of its ethical credentials, but the brand is 90% owned by Coca-Cola. The soft drink giant has been accused of everything from being complicit in violence against union members to contributing to a water crisis in El Salvador. The company is also the world’s largest plastic polluter.

In the early 2000s, Coca-Cola faced extended lawsuits from the Colombian food and drink union Sinaltrinal, alongside its Colombian bottling partners. The suit alleged that the bottling company had directed paramilitary security forces who murdered, tortured and unlawfully detained trade union leaders. Coca-Cola



was never convicted.

In more recent years, its subsidiaries in Indonesia, Dominican Republic and the Philippines have all been accused of workers' right abuses, including anti-union violations.

The company has also repeatedly been criticised for siphoning

off vital water supplies in regions facing water shortages. The local Coca-Cola bottling company has been accused of being one of the "biggest industrial water guzzlers and alleged polluters" in El Salvador's region of Nejapa. According to one study, the country will run out of water within 80 years unless radical action is taken.

Coca-Cola also owns Costa Coffee, as well as a number of other soft drinks brands such as Fanta, Sprite, Monster Energy, and Appletiser.

12. Lily's Kitchen (Nestlé)

Lily's Kitchen is a certified B-Corp, meaning that it is legally required to balance profitability

with impact. The brand makes cat and dog food and also has an organic range.

In April 2020, it was bought out by Nestlé, causing its Ethical Consumer rating to drop by a huge 12 points.

Nestlé is one of the most boycotted brands in the UK, over its unethical marketing of baby milk. The International Baby Food Action Network has previously found Nestlé to be responsible for more violations of the World Health Organisation's marketing requirements for baby foods than any other company. The WHO's marketing requirements were introduced after it was found that aggressive marketing of formula milk was undermining breastfeeding, thereby endangering infants and babies.

Nestlé has also been significantly criticised by US and Canadian Indigenous rights groups, over its over extraction of water, which they say "act beyond the boundaries of ecological protection and basic human dignity." The Council



of Canadians says that Nestlé has failed to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of local indigenous communities.

13. KVD Vegan Beauty (LVMH)

In January 2020, KVD Vegan Beauty was bought out by LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SA.



Although the brand itself is vegan, its new owner has been widely criticised for its use of fur, silk and leather.

In 2016, a PETA investigation found that crocodiles, killed for their skins used in LVMH handbags and luxury items,

were being kept in cruel conditions in Vietnam. The animal rights organisation described confined, dirty conditions, and inhumane slaughter and skinning techniques. In 2019, after extended consumer pressure, LVMH published a 'responsible farming' standard for its crocodile skin suppliers. However, PETA dismissed the policy as inadequate.

KVD is cruelty-free. However, LVMH receives Ethical Consumer's worst rating on animal testing.

14. Linda McCartney (Hain Celestial)

Linda McCartney is a pioneer of vegan and vegetarian products, but its owner Hain Celestial, sells poultry and other meat-based products. The company appears to use factory-farmed meat across a wide range of products.

Hain Celestial also scores worst in a number of our ratings, including Climate Change, Environmental Reporting, Supply Chain Management and likely use of Environmental Reporting. Despite having a turnover of more than £1 billion, the company is yet to report on its emissions or set a target



for emissions reductions in line with International Targets.

Linda McCartney Foods launched four plant milks in 2021.

15. Octopus Energy (20% Origin Energy)

Octopus Energy offers renewable energy tariffs, and is part owned by the largest investor of solar power in Europe. However, the company is also 20% owned by Origin Energy, a major fossil fuel company.



Origin Energy is the largest owner of natural gas-fired power stations in Australia, and continues to produce energy from coal, one of the most carbon intensive energy sources. Origin has received repeated criticism over controversial fracking projects.

In October 2020, the chairman of the company dismissed complaints from Indigenous elders regarding its exploration in the Beetaloo Basin, Australia. Elders claim that some traditional land owners have not been adequately heard, calling for negotiations over land rights to be paused. According to Renew Economy, the project could "single-handedly blow through Australia's emissions reduction targets."

In January 2021, The Guardian also reported that Origin had applied for permission to explore the Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre basin in Queensland, Australia, the previous July. The region is part of one of the world's biggest free-flowing river systems. An independent report commissioned in 2019 by the Queensland government called for a ban on unconventional gas exploration in the area. Octopus Energy told us in May 2021: "Origin has indefinitely suspended all fracking-related exploratory activities." ■

Why not stock Ethical Consumer?



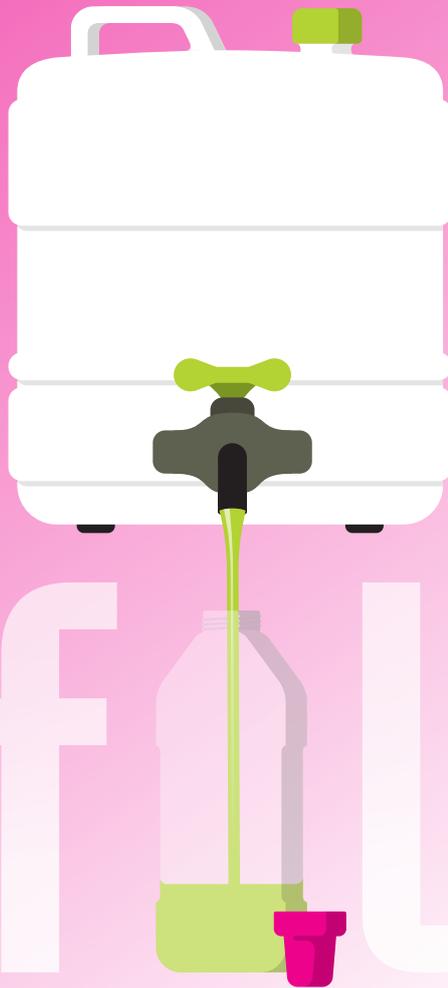
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ethical
consumer

Cleaning products

The
future
is
refill



Alongside the dishwasher and washing machine guides in this magazine, we have also updated our guides to the cleaning products used with them.

Dishwasher, washing-up and laundry detergents are usually all made by the same companies, so you will see a lot of crossover in the brand lists, but also in the associated issues. These introductory pages are relevant to all three guides, and the company profiles have also been grouped together on page 26.

David Attenborough's influential Blue Planet II documentary sparked a huge public interest in reducing plastics. In this update, we have included several new brands which are focused on a refill model, or even packaging-free in the case of washing-up.

The guides themselves look closer at the packaging issues for each type of product, but here we give an overview on the industry-wide issues of what's wrong with plastic packaging, microplastics, biodegradability, palm oil, and animal testing, as well as how companies came out on carbon management.



Plastic packaging – Reduce and Reuse rather than Recycle

Of all the ethical issues surrounding household cleaning products, the most positive development over the last few years has been in the area of plastic packaging. Progressive companies are responding with plastic-free or plastic-lite household cleaning solutions.

Although plastic bottles are now widely collected for recycling in the UK, recent revelations from Greenpeace about UK plastic recycling ending up in incinerators or being dumped abroad adds to the argument that reduction and reuse are the only sensible ways forward.

Many companies, including mainstream ones, have started to increase the recycled plastic content of their bottles and packaging. Some companies are even using plant-based plastic. But whilst both of these may be better than using virgin plastic, the more sustainable solution is to produce less single-use plastic, full stop.

Companies and consumers need to prioritise refilling and reusing over recycling.

The old adage of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle needs to change to Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Refill. Only when those options are exhausted opt for Recycle. ●

Cleaning products

For cleaning products, we noted three main innovations for conscious consumers:

- refills
- bulk buying (less plastic per millilitre of liquid)
- alternative products (packaging-free products)

Plastics inside your cleaners

In 2020 we began rating companies on their policies on micro and liquid plastics or polymers, after a report was released by Codecheck about hidden polymers in cosmetics. We are now applying this same rating to companies making household cleaning products. Ruta Almedom at Codecheck told us:

“In the EU and UK, surfactants used in cleaning products have to be biodegradable. Interestingly all other substances (such as liquid polymers and microplastic) which are not biodegradable, which are even persistent, do not fall under this rule. And there is no intention yet to implement a rule for those. [Polymers’] job is often to merely make a detergent look more opaque or milky, or even just as a ‘filling’ or bulking agent which makes the product look more than it really is.”

Rating for microplastics and liquid polymers

- Liquid polymers found in ingredients: Ecozone, Fill Refill, SC Johnson (owner of Ecover and Method), Smol.
- No clear statement found: Astonish, ecoLiving, EcoVibe, McBride, Prism (Eco-Max), Procter & Gamble, Reckitt Benckiser, Unilever.
- No statement found: ATTITUDE, Easy, Splish.
- Companies that got a best rating: Bentley Organic, Bide, Bio-D, Ecolife, Friendly Soap, Faith in Nature, Greenscents, Miniml, Planet Detox, Sesi, Sodasan, Sonett.

See also our feature on the microfibres that can be released by your clothing, on p34.

Surfactants and biodegradability

‘Surface-active agents’ (surfactants) are the main active ingredient in detergents. They work by keeping dirt suspended in the water. Surfactants can be made from plant oils such as coconut oil, or



sugar, or can be synthesised from waste materials from the petroleum industry. EU law requires that surfactants used in domestic detergents must be aerobically biodegradable (it will biodegrade if oxygen is present) and break down by 60% within 28 days.

The main surfactant used by the detergent industry is LAS (Linear Alkylbenzene Sulfonate) which is derived from crude oil and is ‘ultimately biodegradable’ but not ‘anaerobically biodegradable’ (i.e., it will not biodegrade unless oxygen is present). The alternative surfactants used by companies such as Bio-D are plant-based and ‘readily’ biodegradable.

Remember though, as mentioned above, only the surfactants have to pass biodegradability tests. There may be other ingredients such as liquid polymers used which would not meet the tests, and ideally a company should have a clear statement against these.

Palm oil in your cleaners

We have systematically rated companies on their palm oil use since 2009. By 2016, palm oil had become such a big public concern that we created a column on our tables just for that. 400 global companies made commitments, in 2010, to become deforestation-free by 2020, but that hasn’t happened. This year we’ve made the rating harsher on large companies, so they have to do a lot more than just having certified ingredients in order to get a Best rating.

The upshot of this is, no large companies in these guides were able to score a best rating for palm oil. The two that came closest were Procter & Gamble, and Unilever, as they listed all the mills they bought from, but both lists contained some of the most disreputable producers.

Most companies in these guides are much smaller and the requirements for a

CAMPAIGNING AGAINST PLASTIC



Surfers Against Sewage Beach Clean, Perranporth.

There are loads of groups doing this but here are a noteworthy few:

- **Greenpeace** – campaigning to cut single-use plastic by 50% by 2025 and for a deposit return scheme for drinks bottles
- **Ellen MacArthur Foundation** – promotes a circular economy for plastic in which it never becomes waste
- **Plastic Soup Foundation** – campaign to stop plastic pollution at its source and focus on the relationship between plastics and human health, such as microplastics
- **Surfers Against Sewage** – fight the plastic pollution that blights beaches and the ocean by tackling the throwaway culture and organising beach cleans

best rating are therefore simpler.

- Three were palm oil free (Bide, Greenscents, Planet Detox) with Greenscents actually being certified as palm oil free, by the International Palm Oil Free Certification Trademark POFCAP.
- Several others (Bio D, Faith in Nature, Fill, Miniml, Sesi, Sodasan, and Splosh) scored our best rating for stating that all of their palm ingredients, including derivatives, were certified by the RSPO.

Several small or medium companies scored a worst rating if they had no information on palm-based ingredients, or if they only seemed to use certified palm in one brand but not another, or if they talked about palm oil but not derivatives: Astonish, ATTITUDE, Bentley, Easy, ecoLiving, EcoVibe, Ecozone, Prism, and Smol.

For more information on palm oil and what ingredients to look out for, see www.ethicalconsumer.org/palm-oil

Carbon rating

Since the last guide to household cleaning products, we have introduced a new Carbon Management and Reporting rating which appears in the Climate Change column on the score tables.

We expect companies to be taking meaningful steps to address their key emissions; to be reporting on emissions including those in their supply chain; and to have set emission reduction targets in line with international climate agreements. Small companies could score a best rating if they showed an understanding of their main climate impacts and explicitly discussed ways to reduce them.

In these guides Bide, Bio-D, Fill Refill, Faith in Nature, Miniml, Reckitt Benkiser, Procter & Gamble, SESI, Sodasan, Splosh, Smol, and Unilever scored best ratings for Carbon Management and Reporting.

Astonish, Easy, Surcare, ecoleaf, Ecover, Method and Sonett all scored worst ratings.

Animal testing

Although the testing of 'finished' household products on animals has been banned in the EU since 2015, the testing of ingredients is still allowed.

We have recently introduced an exemption for small companies so they don't have to have a fixed cut-off date (FCO) to get a best rating. A FCO is a specific date, chosen by the company, from which none of its ingredients have been tested on animals. The exemption was given because creating an FCO can require resources that some smaller organisations may not have. Now a small company can get a best rating if it:

- states that none of its products or ingredients are tested on animals and
- has either a narrative explaining how it ensures this, or has all products certified by an animal rights organisation.

Small companies can also score a middle rating if they have a statement against animal testing (just saying 'cruelty-free' isn't considered explicit enough) or are certified by an animal rights organisation.

The following brands scored best ratings for Animal Testing: Astonish, ATTITUDE, Bio-D, Bide, ecoleaf, Ecozone, Faith in Nature, Fill Refill, Greenscents, Miniml, SESI, Smol and Sodasan.

The strongest were companies whose entire product range was assured by one of the following certification schemes:

- Cruelty-Free International (Leaping Bunny)
- PETA (Beauty without Bunnies)
- Vegan Society.

Keep an eye out for these logos when shopping:



The entire range certified brands were ATTITUDE, Astonish, Bio-D, ecoleaf, Ecozone, Faith in Nature, Fill Refill, Greenscents, Sodasan and Smol. ■



Washing-up liquid

Is it time to stop buying washing-up liquid in single-use plastic bottles?

MACKENZIE DENYER looks for innovative alternatives in a market dominated by single-use plastics.

Washing-up liquids come in all colours of the rainbow but finding a truly ethical option is not easy. This shopping guide unpicks a market littered with plastic packaging, pollution and toxics. It also takes a closer look at certifications, and innovations that have the potential to eliminate the need for plastic packaging all together. Our ratings on companies' animal testing and palm oil are discussed on p12 and 13.

Plastic packaging

As household cleaners go, your washing-up liquid is called into action more than most. The mainstream industry's stubborn preference for small single-use plastic bottles is obvious in any UK supermarket, with consumers encouraged to buy small quantities of cheap washing-up liquid regularly rather than promoting sustainable solutions.

For washing-up products, we noted five main innovations for conscious consumers: refills, bulk buying, concentrates, alternative products and make your own.

Refills

Using refill stations, or purchasing refill products, significantly reduces the plastic impact of your washing-up purchases. Once a fringe ethical phenomenon, more and more shops and companies are now offering refills. And it's not just health food shops, alternative supermarkets and zero waste stores. In the months before the Covid-19 pandemic, three mainstream supermarkets – M&S, Asda and Sainsbury's – launched refill station trials. Although these appear to have been limited to Ecover products and have yet to be rolled out nationwide, it is a hopeful sign of things to come.

We've also seen a boom in consumer interest in refill-focused companies, with several subscriber requests prompting the addition of Splosh, SESI, Fill Refill and Miniml to this shopping guide.

Fill and Miniml sell bulk refill sizes directly to consumers, while SESI has a network of refill stations and Splosh send concentrated refill pouches (which you can return to them for recycling) in the post. All of these companies were awarded a positive Company Ethos mark for their focus on refills.

Buying in bulk

Many other companies included in this guide also offered bulk sizes (2 litres to 20 litres) to consumers – ATTITUDE, Bio D, ecoleaf, Eco-max, Ecover, Faith in Nature, Greenscents, and Sonett.

Although the plastic impact of bulk purchasing is lower than buying individual bottles, only Faith in Nature and Greenscents containers can be returned for reuse.

You can also look for bulk containers made from recycled plastics such as

Bio-D's 5l bottles (pictured) or other innovative solutions such as Greenscents' biopolymer bottles made from sugar cane waste.

A recent Which? report stated that large bottles of household cleaning products used 47% less plastic and needed less space to be transported.

Both refills and bulk purchases offer much more suds for your sterling. Most 20l bottles of washing-up liquid cost between £30 and £45 (£1.50-£2.25 per litre) and 5l bottles range from around £10.50-£14 (£2.10-£2.80 per litre). For comparison, a litre bottle of Fairy washing-up liquid costs £2.23 from Tesco.

However, the most ethical bulk washing-up products covered in this guide, produced by Greenscents, which are certified as organic, vegan and cruelty-free, cost significantly more.



A fully referenced version of this Product Guide is on our website

Concentrates

The main ingredient in all washing-up liquids is water. Refilling with a concentrated solution that you dilute at home significantly reduces the amount of water being unnecessarily transported around and therefore cuts down on carbon emissions. Plus, they use less packaging.

Which? magazine assessed the environmental impact of different household cleaning products and found that concentrated products used 75% less plastic packaging and 97% less water. The report also found that refill pouches, like those sold by Splosh, used 85% less plastic.

Once a fringe ethical phenomenon, more and more shops and companies are now offering refills.

The following companies sold dilutable concentrated washing-up liquid – Splosh (1.2 litre concentrated refill pouches) and Bide (also has 100% recycled or compostable packaging).

Alternative products

Even when bought in bulk or at a refill station, in its liquid form, washing-up detergent necessitates a reliance on plastic packaging to some extent. Promisingly, we have found a number of alternative products that offer a completely plastic-free solution to your dishwashing needs.

EcoLiving, ecovibe, Planet Detox and Bide all offer washing-up soap bars which circumnavigate the need for plastic packaging. You can either apply the soap directly to your dishes, or rub the bar with a cloth, sponge or brush until soapy. Although these products don't come cheap, starting at £5.65 per bar, they offer a really interesting solution to the issue of plastics.

Planet Detox also offered a washing-up powder which was simply sprinkled into your washing-up bowl as you fill your sink.

We have awarded a whole positive Product Sustainability mark to these four

companies for offering innovative plastic-free products. It should be noted that there are a number of other dishwashing soap bar brands available online.

Make your own

The other option for consumers looking to reduce their plastic waste is making your own washing-up liquid. If you haven't tried before, it is well worth having a go. DIY dishwashing recipes can be cheap, effective and ethical. There are a whole host of tried and tested recipes available online.

Most of the more sophisticated (and effective) DIY recipes contain soda crystals, castile soap, white vinegar and glycerine which can all be purchased online or at specific high-street shops. Be aware though that glycerine can be derived from palm oil, or animal fat. In order to make the most eco-friendly

washing-up liquid, look for ingredients that are palm oil free, vegan and certified as cruelty-free and organic if possible.

Bear in mind that your homemade concoctions won't make as many suds as you are used to because they don't contain the foaming agent sodium lauryl sulphate, but they will get your dishes clean.

Is my washing-up liquid...

... vegan?

Almost all of the products in this guide are either marketed or certified as vegan washing-up liquids. Only Easy, Fairy and Surcare do not claim to be vegan, which begs the question, what makes a washing-up liquid not vegan? Plant Based News highlights seven ingredients used in household cleaners that can be derived from animal products: Oleyl alcohols, tallow, lanolin, caprylic acid, animal lecithin, animal glycerol, and stearic acid.

We have awarded half a Product Sustainability mark to all products marketed as vegan and a whole mark to those whose vegan claims are certified by a third party. They are both marked with a [Vg] on the score table.

... tested on animals?

The other important animal rights consideration for ethical consumers is animal testing.

The following brands scored best ratings for their Animal Testing policy: Astonish, ATTITUDE, Bio-D, Bide, ecoleaf, Ecozone, Faith in Nature, Fill Refill, Greenscents, Miniml, SESI and Sodasan.

Those whose entire product range was certified as cruelty-free by Leaping Bunny were ATTITUDE, Astonish, Bio-D, ecoleaf, Ecozone, Faith in Nature, Fill Refill and Greenscents.

... organic?

Only two products in this guide were certified as organic, Greenscents and Bentley Organics. They are marked on the score table with [O]. Several companies noted that they used some organic ingredients such as organic essential oils or coconut oil, a number of these even marketed their products as organic. Consumers should always look for formal certification from a third party such as the Soil Association to ensure all possible ingredients come from organic sources. ●

MARIGOLD VERSUS MACHINE

Take a look at our dishwasher guide where we compare the carbon impact of handwashing and machine washing.



SHOPPING GUIDE

Washing-up liquid

USING THE TABLES

Ethicscore: the higher the score, the better the company. Scored out of 14. Plus up to 1 extra point for Company Ethos and up to 5 extra points for Product Sustainability.

Green (good) = 12+
Amber (average) = 11.5-5
Red (poor) = 4.5-0

⊖ = worst rating
 ⊕ = middle rating
 ⊕ = best rating/no criticisms found

USING THE TABLES

Positive ratings (+ve):

Company Ethos:
 = full mark
 = half mark

Product Sustainability:
 Various positive marks available depending on sector.

 Best Buys are highlighted in blue

| BRAND | Ethicscore (out of 14 + 6 extras) | Environment | | Animals | People | | | Politics | | | +ve | | COMPANY GROUP | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Environmental Reporting | Climate Change | Pollution & Toxics | Habitats & Resources | Palm Oil | Animal Testing | Factory Farming | Animal Rights | Human Rights | Workers' Rights | Supply Chain Management | | Irresponsible Marketing | Arms & Military Supply | Controversial Technologies | Boycott Call | Political Activity | Anti-Social Finance | Tax Conduct | Company Ethos | Product Sustainability |
|  Bide [Vg, S] | 16.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1.5 | Bide Planetary Services Limited |
|  Greenscents [Vg, O] | 16.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | Greenscents Ltd |
|  Bio-D [Vg] | 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Bio-D Company |
| Bentley Organic [Vg, O] | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | Bentley Organic Limited |
| Faith in Nature [Vg] | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Faith in Nature Ltd |
|  Miniml [Vg] | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | The Friendly Chemical Co Ltd |
|  SESI [Vg] | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | SESI Food & Household Refill LLP |
|  Fill Refill [Vg] | 14.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Ideal Manufacturing Ltd |
| Planet Detox soap bar [Vg, S] | 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1.5 | Planet Detox Limited |
| Sodasan [Vg] | 13.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Sodasan Verwaltungs GmbH |
| ATTITUDE [Vg] | 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 9055-7588 Québec Inc |
|  ecoleaf by Suma [Vg] | 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Triangle Wholefoods Collective |
| Splosh [Vg] | 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | Splosh Limited |
| Ecoliving soap bar [Vg, O, S] | 12.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2.5 | Ecoliving Trading Limited |
| Ecozone [Vg] | 12.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Ecozone (UK) Ltd |
| Astonish [Vg] | 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Astonish Holdings Ltd |
| Sonett [Vg] | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Stiftung Sonett |
| Eco-Max [Vg] | 9.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Prism Care Corporation |
| Easy | 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Easy Newco Limited |
| ecovibe soap bar [Vg, O, S] | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | EcoVibe Online Limited |
| Surcare | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | McBride plc |
| Ecover [Vg] | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | SC Johnson & Son Inc |
| Method [Vg] | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | SC Johnson & Son Inc |
| Fairy | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Procter & Gamble Company |

All the research behind these ratings is available for subscribers to see on the score tables on www.ethicalconsumer.org
 Definitions of all the categories are at www.ethicalconsumer.org/our-ethical-ratings [Vg] = vegan [S] = plastic free [O] = organic



Pollution & toxics

Given that washing-up liquid finds its way down into the drains and eventually into our waterways, you might think it self-evident that these products should not contain substances that could harm the environment. But most mainstream washing-up liquids contain petrochemical surfactants, whose biodegradability is questionable (see page 12) and synthetic fragrances (see page 23).

We expected all household cleaning brands to have a clear policy against the use of three particularly nasty chemicals – triclosan, parabens and phthalates. In total eleven of the companies rated received our best rating for their toxic chemicals policy.

The issue of microplastics and non-biodegradable liquid polymers was also considered (see page 12 for more detail). Companies which lacked a clear policy around the use of these materials lost half a mark under the Pollution & Toxics category. We also searched companies' websites for commonly used non-biodegradable liquid polymers and found that three companies, SC Johnson,

Ecozone and Fill Refill actually used these substances in their products!

Antibacterial washing-up liquids are quite common in the mainstream brands, but they are no more effective against germs, including COVID-19 than standard washing-up liquid and may contribute to antibiotic resistant bacteria.

SUPERMARKET OWN BRANDS

Supermarkets are a big player in the washing-up liquid market in the UK, with nearly a third of us using supermarket own brands in 2019. Although we have not included the ethical ratings of supermarkets in this guide, given that our best scoring national supermarket (M&S) receives an Ethiscore of 6/20, it is safe to say that buying dishwashing products from the high scoring companies in this guide is a better ethical option, although the prices offered by supermarkets make them tempting!

Our latest ethical guide to supermarkets is available on our website.

WHAT TO BUY

- **Is it a refill product?** If you want to cut out unnecessary packaging and plastic then choosing a refill product is a good way to go.
- **Is it plastic free?** Several companies now offer completely plastic-free products which are well worth a try.
- **Is it palm oil free?** At its most unsustainable, palm oil is linked to massive deforestation and serious violations of human rights. Look for brands that commit to sourcing palm oil sustainably or avoid it completely.

WHAT NOT TO BUY

- **Does it contain toxics?** The long and complex ingredients lists of household products often include toxic chemicals. These are bad for the environment as well as health. The best companies will have clear policies against the use of toxic chemicals such as triclosan, parabens or phthalates.
- **Is it using animal testing?** Although animal testing for finished household products is banned in the UK, lots of companies still use ingredients that are tested on animals. If you want avoid animal testing, we'd advise only buying from companies that ensure ingredients they source aren't tested on animals. ■

Best Buys are decided by the editorial team based on the research we have undertaken, the scoring system and the unique insight into the issues that our editorial team has. 9 times out of 10 this will be the brand (or brands) that are top of the table but sometimes an ethical company which is truly innovative scores less well on our rigid scoring system and we use the Best Buy and Recommended section to acknowledge this. A company cannot be a Best Buy if it scores worst for Supply Chain Management.



Our Best Buys are the highest scoring brands offering solutions to the issue of single-use plastics, as well as receiving a best rating for animal testing:

Greenscents, Bide, Bio-D, SESI, Miniml, Fill Refill and ecoleaf.

SESI, Miniml and Fill Refill have a refill business model.



RECOMMENDED

Plastic-free washing-up soap bars by **Planet Detox** and **ecolving**.

Bentley Organics was a high-scoring organic-certified brand, however it was not considered to be addressing the issue of plastic packaging.

Also, we would recommend **Faith in Nature** and **Splosh** for their bulk or refill products.

BRANDS TO AVOID

Procter & Gamble's **Fairy** is the lowest scoring brand in this shopping guide and demonstrated poor policy in key areas such as palm oil sourcing, animal testing and Supply Chain Management.



Laundry detergent



What's in your wash?

RUTH STRANGE finds some fresh new options.

© Bowonpat Sakaew | Dreamstime.com

There are lots of things to consider if you want to do laundry in the most eco-friendly way. This guide, however, focuses on the sustainability credentials of the detergent products we use, and the companies that make them.

Packaging is an increasingly popular and important issue, so we weigh up the options, from plastic bottles to soluble pods, and lay out the different types of refill models available.

It's great to see so many more options

to minimise plastic waste, and below we look at refill-focused businesses, bulk buying and refill stations.

But plastic doesn't just appear in packaging – it can also be inside the products. On page 12 we discuss which detergent brands are paying attention to microplastics and liquid plastics, which are widely used in the household and personal care industry.

How often you wash your clothes, what temperature, and how you dry your laundry will have the most impact, and can be explored in our guide to washing machines p28.

We also find out which companies and products are vegan, as increasing numbers of people want to avoid ingredients from animal farming and the associated high-carbon emissions. We now assess all companies' on their overall approach to carbon management too. See page 13.

Biodegradability is an issue across our cleaning product guides, as these products obviously end up in our wastewater. Find out more on page 12. We have updated the way we rate companies for palm oil too and you can read more about this on page 12 too.

Packaging and refills – who does what?

Most laundry liquid still comes in single-use plastic bottles. Another option for laundry liquids is pods or pouches. See the dishwasher detergent guide on page 19 for what's wrong with pods and pouches. Suffice to say, none of these packaging options are recommended.

Laundry powder usually comes loose or as tablets in a cardboard box, which, if not from a recycled source, is at least

A fully referenced version of this Product Guide is on our website

renewable and biodegradable.

But new in this guide are several companies which gained a Company Ethos mark for having a business model that was all about refills. All have gone beyond the first step of the 'waste hierarchy' of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Refill focused businesses

- SESI has refill stations for its laundry liquid in zero waste, farm and wholefood shops all over the UK, and picks up the 5l and 20l containers for reuse. Use their 'Find a Stockist' page to search your area. <https://sesi.org.uk/refills/find-a-stockist>.
- Fill Refill sells bags which you can return to them for refilling with laundry liquid (5l or 10l) or powder (10kg). Or they sell glass bottles you can refill at stations around the country (www.fillrefill.co/stockists). For more info see our Companies behind the brands on p26.
- Miniml sells 5l and 20l containers which customers can return (at their own cost) for reuse. Or refill from stockists. (<https://minimlrefills.co.uk/apps/store-locator>).
- Splosh posts out concentrated refill pouches of laundry liquid (which they say reduce plastic by 95%) that can be returned and will either be reused or reprocessed for future products.

Bulk options

Of the brands which mainly sell single-use bottles, some offer bulk sizes that you can use to refill, using less plastic per ml. Bulk sizes are often much cheaper per ml too, but the outlay on the biggest sizes can be a bit much for you alone, or might take you years to get through, unless you share with others.

- ATTITUDE, Bio-D, ecoleaf, Eco-max, Ecover, Faith in Nature, Greenscents, Sonett.

Of these only Faith in Nature and Greenscents take the bottles back for reuse.

Refill stations

Several of these bulk brands are also available from refill stations in alternative shops around the country. Some list these online so you can search for one near you. Some supermarkets have even experimented

with refill stations.

- Bio-D – <https://biod.co.uk/stockists/stores/refills>
- Ecover – www.ecover.com/store-locator
- Faith in Nature – www.faithinnature.co.uk/article/faith-in-nature-refill-stations
- ecoleaf and Greenscents – both used in refill stations but no list found.

Vegan brands

Our Company Ethos scores highlight the vegan companies which use no animal ingredients right across their business.

Our Product Sustainability marks also show which individual products are vegan. Most of the products in this guide are either marketed or certified as vegan. They are marked with [Vg] on the score table. It was only the big companies at the bottom of the table that did not claim to be vegan, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, McBride, Reckitt Benckiser, SC Johnson and Easy.

Cruelty-free brands

Company Ethos scores also show which companies are certified as cruelty-free. These were ATTITUDE, Astonish, Bio-D, ecoleaf, Ecozone, Faith in Nature, Fill Refill, Friendly Soap, Greenscents and Smol.

We have introduced a new exemption in the Animal Testing column for small vegan companies which may not be certified but are clearly committed to avoiding animal testing. See p13.

What are all these ingredients?

Enzymes

Biological detergents contain enzymes that break down protein, starches and fat.

Taken from micro-organisms such as algae or bacteria, these enzymes are naturally occurring and biodegradable. Under testing, enzyme-containing ('biological') detergents are better

at removing stains and are more effective at low temperatures, compared with non-biological detergents.

Those with sensitive skin who are concerned about enzymes can look for the Allergy UK 'Seal of Approval', which indicates products efficient at reducing or removing allergens, or with a significantly reduced allergen or chemical content. The Allergy UK-approved laundry products in this guide are: Bio-D, Ecozone, Ecover Zero, Fill Refill and Surcare.

Perfume and fragrances

Synthetic fragrances are used in most mainstream detergents. The word 'Fragrance' or 'Parfum' on a label represents an undisclosed mixture of various scent chemicals and ingredients, potentially including hormone-disrupting phthalates, synthetic musks, and ethylene oxide. Fragrance mixes have also been associated with allergies, dermatitis and respiratory problems. Alternative products are commonly either fragrance-free or they use essential oils.

Optical brighteners

Optical brighteners make clothes look cleaner than they are by using chemicals called stilbenes which reflect light. However, they do not biodegrade. They pass through the sewage treatment works and are easily detected in our rivers and seas. Stilbenes are also suspected hormone disruptors, are toxic to fish, and may cause allergic reactions when in contact with the skin. Eco detergents don't tend to use optical brighteners which is why they don't perform well in Which? tests where 'whiteness' is a ratings category.

Surfactants and biodegradability

See page 12. ●



SHOPPING GUIDE

Laundry detergent

USING THE TABLES

Ethicscore: the higher the score, the better the company. Scored out of 14. Plus up to 1 extra point for Company Ethos and up to 5 extra points for Product Sustainability.

Green (good) = 12+
Amber (average) = 11.5-5
Red (poor) = 4.5-0

☹ = worst rating
 ☹☹ = middle rating
 ☹☹☹ = best rating/no criticisms found

Ethicscore (out of 14 + 6 extras)

| Environment | Animals | People | Politics | +ve |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|----------|-----|
| Environmental Reporting | | | | |
| Climate Change | | | | |
| Pollution & Toxics | | | | |
| Habitats & Resources | | | | |
| Palm Oil | | | | |
| Animal Testing | | | | |
| Factory Farming | | | | |
| Animal Rights | | | | |
| Human Rights | | | | |
| Workers' Rights | | | | |
| Supply Chain Management | | | | |
| Irresponsible Marketing | | | | |
| Arms & Military Supply | | | | |
| Controversial Technologies | | | | |
| Boycott Call | | | | |
| Political Activity | | | | |
| Anti-Social Finance | | | | |
| Tax Conduct | | | | |
| Company Ethos | | | | |
| Product Sustainability | | | | |

USING THE TABLES

Positive ratings (+ve):

Company Ethos:
 = full mark
 = half mark

Product Sustainability:
 Various positive marks available depending on sector.

 **Best Buys are highlighted in blue**

BRAND

| BRAND | Ethicscore (out of 14 + 6 extras) | Environment | Animals | People | Politics | +ve | COMPANY GROUP |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------|--------|----------|-----|----------------------------------|
|  Bide [Vg, S] | 16.5 | | | | | 1.5 | Bide Planetary Services Limited |
|  Greenscents [Vg, O] | 16.5 | | | | | 2 | Greenscents Ltd |
|  Bio-D [Vg] | 16 | | | | | 1 | Bio-D Company |
|  Friendly Soap [Vg, S] | 16 | | | | | 2 | Friendly Soap Ltd |
| Faith in Nature [Vg] | 15 | | | | | 1 | Faith in Nature Ltd |
|  Miniml [Vg] | 15 | | | | | 0.5 | The Friendly Chemical Co Ltd |
|  SESI [Vg] | 15 | | | | | 0.5 | SESI Food & Household Refill LLP |
|  Fill Refill [Vg] | 14.5 | | | | | 1 | Ideal Manufacturing Ltd |
| Planet Detox [Vg, S] | 14 | | | | | 1.5 | Planet Detox Limited |
| Sodasan [Vg] | 13.5 | | | | | 1 | Sodasan Verwaltungs GmbH |
| ATTITUDE [Vg] | 13 | | | | | 1 | 9055-7588 Québec Inc |
|  ecoleaf by Suma [Vg] | 13 | | | | | 1 | Triangle Wholefoods Collective |
| Smol [Vg, S] | 13 | | | | | 1.5 | Smol Limited |
| Splosh [Vg] | 13 | | | | | 0.5 | Splosh Limited |
| Ecozone [Vg] | 12.5 | | | | | 1 | Ecozone (UK) Ltd |
| Astonish [Vg] | 12 | | | | | 1 | Astonish Holdings Ltd |
| Sonett [Vg] | 11 | | | | | 1 | Stiftung Sonett |
| Eco-Max [Vg] | 9.5 | | | | | 1 | Prism Care Corporation |
| Easy | 9 | | | | | | Easy Newco Limited |
| Surcare | 7 | | | | | | McBride plc |
| Ecover [Vg] | 4 | | | | | 0.5 | SC Johnson & Son Inc |
| Method [Vg] | 4 | | | | | 0.5 | SC Johnson & Son Inc |
| Ariel | 3 | | | | | | Procter & Gamble Company |
| Bold | 3 | | | | | | Procter & Gamble Company |
| Daz | 3 | | | | | | Procter & Gamble Company |
| Fairy | 3 | | | | | | Procter & Gamble Company |
| Woolite | 2 | | | | | | Reckitt Benckiser Group PLC |
| Persil | 0.5 | | | | | | Unilever PLC |
| Surf | 0.5 | | | | | | Unilever PLC |

All the research behind these ratings is available for subscribers to see on the score tables on www.ethicalconsumer.org

Definitions of all the categories are at www.ethicalconsumer.org/our-ethical-ratings [S] = plastic-free packaging [O] = organic [Vg] = vegan



Best Buys are decided by the editorial team based on the research we have undertaken, the scoring system and the unique insight into the issues that our editorial team has. 9 times out of 10 this will be the brand (or brands) that are top of the table but sometimes an ethical company which is truly innovative scores less well on our rigid scoring system and we use the Best Buy and Recommended section to acknowledge this. A company cannot be a Best Buy if it scores worst for Supply Chain Management.

LOW-IMPACT LAUNDRY

If you're looking to reduce the environmental impact of your laundry, some or all of the following can help:

- Wash at 30°C.
- Wash less! Air your clothes after wearing to make them last longer, and wait for a full load.
- Try soapnuts or making your own.
- Dry laundry on the line or clothes horse, not in a tumble dryer.

Alternatives to buying laundry detergent

Leaving out the detergent altogether is the greenest option for laundry. The movement of water and clothes inside a washing machine is enough to release some dirt and freshen up a lightly soiled load. However, water alone cannot compete with detergents when it comes to stain removal.

Soapnuts

Soapnuts contain a completely natural detergent called saponin, and can be composted after use. Soapnuts come from the soapnut tree which grows naturally in India and Nepal, so are a renewable resource. Anecdotal advice suggests that they only work at 30°C if you boil them for 10-20 minutes first.



Wash balls

Wash balls are plastic balls filled with pellets which claim to unleash 'ionic cleaning power' so you don't have to use detergent. They are fragrance-free and rinse cycles aren't needed as there is no traditional detergent to wash away. Ecozone's Ecoballs claim to be reusable for up to 1,000 washes.

There has been much debate about whether they actually work or not or

whether they are any more effective than plain water.

Which? tested wash balls in 2009. They found that they washed less effectively at 30°C than traditional laundry detergents. Most barely cleaned better than water alone. In every case in their tests, the wash balls removed more dirt with extra help from stain removers.

Make your own

A quick and easy way to ensure a more ethical wash is to make your own. This is not only cheaper than buying ready-made detergent, but also easy to do. There are multiple recipes online for laundry powder which are based on a few simple and easily available ingredients:

- liquid soap flakes
- washing soda or soda crystals
- borax substitute
- essential oils (if not already included in the bar soap)
- oxygen booster (optional).



Our Best Buys are all vegan and cruelty-free and in some way reducing plastic:

- Three use a refill model: **Miniml**, **SESI** and **Fill Refill**.
- **Bide** and **Friendly Soaps'** packaging is compostable.
- **Bio-D**, **ecoleaf** and **Greenscents** are available in bulk sizes or from refill stations. Greenscents are also certified organic.

| | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Greenscents laundry conditioner | 16.5 |
| Bide laundry powder | 16.5 |
| Friendly Soap Laundry Powder | 16 |
| SESI Non-Bio Laundry Powder | 15 |
| Bio-D Laundry Liquid | 16 |
| Miniml Laundry Powder | 15 |
| Fill Refill | 14.5 |
| ecoleaf by Suma | 13 |



We also recommend **Faith in Nature**. You can return 5l and 20l containers to them freepost, for reuse and remanufacture. **Planet Detox** is also recommended and uses plastic-free packaging.



The big brands are way behind in terms of packaging, toxic chemicals and animal testing. We suggest avoiding brands from Procter & Gamble (**Ariel**, **Bold**, **Daz**, **Fairy**), Unilever (**Persil** and **Surf**) and Reckitt Benckiser (**Woolite**).

WHAT TO BUY?

- **Is it available as a refill?** Options to avoid using single use plastic packaging are now much more widely available, in zero waste, wholefood and farm shops all over UK.
- **Is it cruelty-free and vegan?** Although animal testing for finished household products has been banned in the UK, lots of companies still use ingredients that are tested on animals. Go for a company with a clear cruelty-free policy and one that doesn't use any animal ingredients.

WHAT NOT TO BUY?

- **Does it contain toxics?** The long and complex ingredients lists of household products often include toxic chemicals. These are bad for the environment as well as health.
- **Does it contain palm oil?** At its most unsustainable, palm oil is linked to massive deforestation and serious violations of human rights. Look for brands that commit to sourcing palm oil sustainably or avoid it completely. ●

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Cleaning products

Companies behind the brands

Reckitt Benckiser owns Finish dishwasher detergent (and other big consumer brands including Bonjela and E45). It has been criticised on numerous occasions for false marketing. One Financial Times article called Reckitt Benckiser an “expert at selling products that seem to deliver less than they promise.” The company falsely claimed some products eased joint pain and stiffness; falsely claimed a pharmaceutical product was safer for children than its competitors’ products; and, during coronavirus, was accused of falsely implying that its products offered better protection than its competitors. In 2020, the company was fined after a worker’s arm was crushed in a bottling machine in the UK. It was also accused by Unite the Union of overworking staff.

Bide is a new entry and has shot to the top of the Ethiscore table. It scored best in every category. Bide lacked a fixed cut-off date but had a statement against animal testing and clarified how it ensured this: it only sources from one supplier, and that supplier is Leaping Bunny certified.

It works with employment charities to recruit people to work at home, such as Working Chance, which works with women who have convictions to find employment. Bide sees its home manufacturing roles as a way for people to get work experience to help them secure future employment (and earn a living wage in the meantime).



ECOVER AND METHOD



Ecover and Method were the best of the widely available brands but, since their takeover in 2018, their score has dropped from 11.5 to 4 and they have a boycott call against them for being owned by a non cruelty-free company, SC Johnson. We therefore felt unable to continue to recommend them as a brand to buy.

Although Ecover and Method have some good policies, SC Johnson got worst ratings for Palm Oil Sourcing, Environmental Reporting, Likely Use of Tax Avoidance Strategies, and Pollution & Toxics. SC Johnson had operations in five oppressive regimes, didn’t disclose director pay, and was involved in lobbying.

In January 2021, Ecover had to issue a product recall for two batches of its 1.5 litre Zero% laundry liquid, which had been on sale since November 2020. They had been discovered to contain excessive levels of potassium hydroxide which could cause the bottle to leak, and can cause serious damage to the skin and eyes.¹

BOYCOTT ECOVER AND METHOD

The Naturewatch Foundation has called for a boycott of Ecover and Method, as they explain:

“US company SC Johnson openly admits to selling animal-tested products. Thousands of people have got involved with our boycott campaign against the company, appalled that profits from Ecover and Method could now flow into SC Johnson.

“We wrote to SC Johnson and the company has since made significant changes to its website, including being transparent about whether animal testing takes place in a product’s development.

They state that they won’t claim a product is cruelty-free if testing has happened further down the supply chain.

“Unless SC Johnson stops testing on animals completely, and deal with the issue of selling in countries where animal testing is mandatory, the Naturewatch Foundation boycott of Ecover and Method will continue.”

TAKE ACTION

Naturewatch is asking stockists to stop selling Ecover and Method. It is asking supporters to:

- Visit your local independent health shop or ethical store and request that they replace Ecover and Method with cruelty-free alternatives.
- Email stockists of Ecover and Method, requesting that they remove both brands from their range until SC Johnson adopts a satisfactory animal testing policy.
- Contact Ecover and Method directly, calling on them to increase transparency about their parent company and the relationship between them.
- Visit www.naturewatch.org to find out how you can help continue the fight against animal cruelty.

Greenscents makes all its products by hand in Somerset. Its products have a vast range of certifications: Soil Association, Cruelty-Free International, Vegan Society – and it's palm oil free. Over 70% of ingredients used by Greenscents are certified organic by the Soil Association.

Sodasan scored best ratings for carbon management, palm oil sourcing, Supply Chain Management, Animal Testing, and all products appeared to be vegan certified.

However the fact it was 25% owned by chemical company Buefa, which scored no best ratings, lost it a few marks.

Bio-D scored best ratings in all categories. It has just begun to publish its annual carbon emissions – a great step for a small company, which shows progress since it was last featured in an Ethical Consumer guide.

Faith in Nature scored best ratings in most categories and offers a broad range of bulk refill products. As it scored a worst rating for Supply Chain Management, it can't, however, be recommended as a Best Buy.

Ecozone may not be so eco after all! It scored worst ratings for Palm Oil, Supply Chain Management and Pollution and Toxics. While some products meet ethical criteria like being palm oil free, these appear in the minority. Ecozone is owned by entrepreneur Van der Molen who allegedly sold his 'collection of classic cars' to start the company Moving Mountains which makes meat-free burgers. He steers clear from the word 'vegan' and says he's working on the meat-free range for health reasons.

Planet Detox is a small business based in Totnes, Devon. The company produces handmade household cleaning products which use no plastic packaging or palm oil and are marketed as vegan. It sells a washing-up soap bar and washing-up powder, as well as a 'wash-up kit' that includes these products plus a natural sea sponge and a wooden scoop. Although these products are not certified or marketed as organic the company says it uses "organic essential oils in our washing-up products and all our coconut oil ingredients are also organic."

Planet Detox stated, "Everything we make is vegan, cruelty free and biodegradable." It didn't clearly meet either requirement for a middle rating for animal testing, so scored a worst. This doesn't mean it tests on animals – it's unlikely any small companies do. It means the company doesn't appear to be putting effort into ensuring that ingredients they source weren't tested on animals.

Fill Refill manufactures all its products in its own factory in Northamptonshire and has grown out of a family business called Ideal Manufacturing which began in 1980. Ideal previously focused only on professional laundry products. It is working with the University of Northumbria on a way to enable professional laundries to wash at low temperatures without chlorine bleach or aggressive chemistry and to reduce microfibre shedding.

Ideal has always taken empty bulk containers back for refill, and this inspired the Fill Refill domestic model. Its 200 litre drums are bought second hand and the 20 litre drums are made from post-consumer recycled material. It has recently developed machinery to wash its 5 and 10 litre plastic liners for reuse too. It works with a zero emissions logistic partner in London – called Planet Minimal, which delivers throughout the city with an electric vehicle, and also with the Milk & More delivery service, using electric vehicles around the country. It donates 1% of its turnover to environmental causes as part of its membership of '1% for the Planet'. It is a Living Wage company and is in the process of becoming both a B-Corp and Leaping Bunny certified.

Smol is said to be the fastest growing UK homecare brand, being used for 10 million washes a month.² This May marked three years since it was launched by two consumer product experts who used to work for Unilever. Its home delivery model, with packages that can fit through a letterbox, has increased its popularity during the pandemic, and its focus on concentrated formulations and using less plastic has given it sustainability credentials.

However, on our ratings system it scored relatively badly and we are not recommending it. No information was found on its website about workers' rights

in its supply chain, nor about its approach to toxic chemicals, palm oil or liquid polymers.

It has just secured a \$34 million investment from Google Ventures, Jam Jar and other investors to expand its range and launch in new markets. ■



References: 1 www.which.co.uk/news/2021/01/product-recall-ecover-zero-non-bio-laundry-liquid-recalled-due-to-safety-issue 2 www.uktechnews.info/2021/05/10/smol-secures-24-million-series-b-investment-led-by-eight-roads-ventures 3 www.theguardian.com/food/2020/feb/09/hold-the-beef-how-plant-based-meat-went-mainstream

Step inside the shoe industry

JASMINE OWENS reviews how high-street shoes brands are faring and discovers the best brands in the eco vegan shoe scene.

This guide highlights key ethical issues in shoe production – a largely toxic industry.

Not just due to the harmful chemicals involved in production – though this is a good place to start. One shoe company in particular has failed to dispose of toxic waste in a safe way, with disastrous effects for the local community – find out which on p.27. We also explain why we have added a policy about sourcing cotton from Turkmenistan to our ratings system.

The guide also features a discussion of the very best eco vegan shoes. The number of brands offering vegan options has increased since our last guide. Find out how they score on sustainable materials and returns policies.

We also venture into another ethical issue in the shoe industry – sexism. It seems like major shoe companies are falling behind on gender equality. Find out more on p.26.



A fully referenced version of this Shopping Guide is on our website

How green are your shoes?

The quest for eco vegan shoes

It's true that leather often lasts a long time. There's a reason for this: the tanning process. Tanning prevents an animal's skin from decomposing. The vast majority of leather available today was made using the chemical chromium – and it's highly toxic. Other harmful chemicals can also be used in leather production, ranging from formaldehyde and arsenic to cyanide.

Many brands are increasingly sourcing leather certified by the Leather Working Group. At the highest “gold” rating, this represents progress on the issue of tannery chemical use. However, you are still left with the hefty environmental impacts of cows, and exploitation of animals.

Vegan alternatives do have an environmental footprint themselves though, and Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) should be avoided. This is a synthetic plastic polymer that cannot be recycled. It contains carcinogenic chemicals, and its production process results in toxic wastewater.

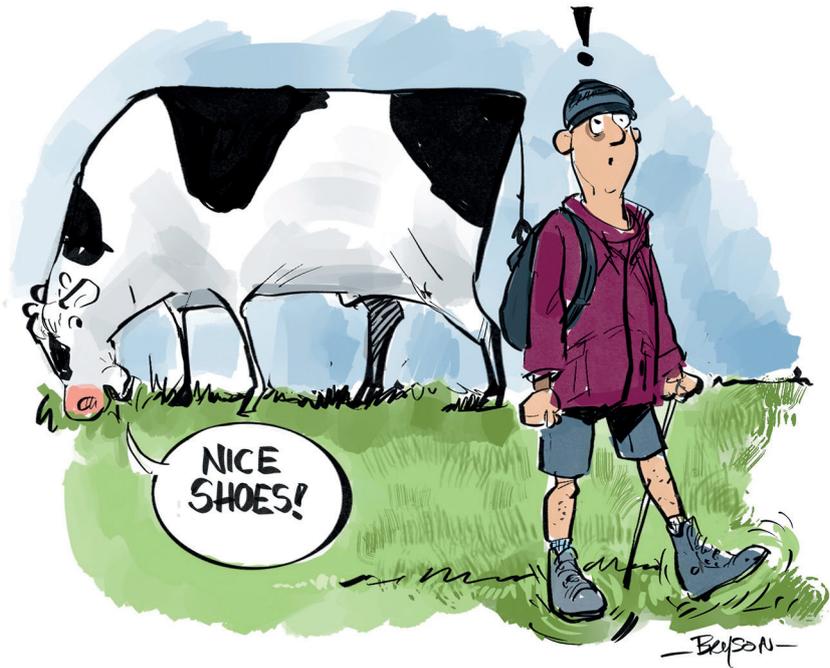
Better leather alternatives and why you should choose them

Polyurethane (PU) is an environmental step up from PVC, although as with most plastic materials, it does not decompose in the environment.

Our last guide to shoes introduced the fruit-based leather alternative Piñatex, which has since become very popular. This is made from 80% pineapple leaf fibre, and 20% polylactic acid (a vegetable-based plastic material which comes from a renewable source). It is, however, coated with PU.

A 2017 report produced by Global Fashion Agenda, the Boston Consulting Group and the Sustainable Apparel Coalition called ‘Pulse of the Fashion Industry’ assessed the environmental impact per kg of leather and synthetic leather, using the Higg Materials Sustainability Index. The index measures chemical use, rate of depletion of natural resources, eutrophication (releases of nutrients that upset the balance in ecosystems), greenhouse gases, and water. Synthetic leather material had, on average, less than half the greenhouse gas emissions and overall environmental impact than real leather per kg, although there are concerns that it may last less long which may counteract some of this.

For more on the environmental impact of cotton and rubber, see page 29.



The brands selling more sustainable vegan shoes

These brands are leading the way in terms of eco leather alternatives:

- Will's Vegan Shoes developed a vegan leather alternative material from a mix of bio oil (from organic cereal crops in Northern Europe), and polyurethane.
- Po-Zu is currently in the process of phasing out all leather and becoming 100% vegan. The company uses Piñatex and also Frumat™, which is made in part from the fibrous waste of the apple juice industry – pretty sweet way to make use of fruit waste, although it is also 50% polyurethane. The company uses a range of alternative materials – coconut husk, cork and natural rubber.
- Some Vegetarian Shoes products use Piñatex, Cork and Vegetan Uppers. The Vegetan Uppers are 70-80% biodegradable. The company also however uses non-biodegradable alternatives including Vegetan suede, micro, active and bucky.

Returns policies

If you're interested in trying a synthetic alternative to leather, have a look at the detail of their returns policies.

Two sellers – Will's Vegan Shoes and Po-Zu – offer a returns period of a whole year. Will's Vegan Shoes states “We want to make it easy to try sustainable, ethical, vegan fashion”. This means if the shoes start to wear out after a few months, you're not stuck with them.

Freerangers, Vegetarian Shoes, Office, Dr Martens, Vivobarefoot, Beyond Skin and Eco Vegan Shoes all allow you to return unworn shoes for at least 28 days.

Identifying vegan shoes

Footwear labels must indicate the main material from which the upper, lining of the upper and insole, and outer sole are made from. This can be in symbols or words.

However, it only need cover 80% of the materials. While labelling might suggest shoes are vegan, small parts of leather or suede might therefore not be included on the label. Shoe glue containing animal-sourced ingredients might also be used.

The best way to ensure a pair of shoes is vegan is to source from a company that labels it as such. All companies offering vegan shoes are listed with (Vg) on our Ethiscore table. ●

WANT YOUR SHOES TO LAST LONGER? HERE ARE FIVE TOP TIPS

- 1. Invest in quality.**
- 2. Buy sole protectors.** Stick these under your shoe to prevent holes developing.
- 3. Give your shoes a spa.** Remove and soak laces, and clean shoes gently with a toothbrush. Don't use a washing machine!
- 4. Keep them dry.** Moisture is the enemy of shoes. Store in a dry place, and swap for wellies when rain is forecast. You can also get waterproof spray.
- 5. Get stuffing!** Stuffing shoes with newspaper can prevent wilting and creasing, especially at the ankles.

SHOPPING GUIDE

Shoes

USING THE TABLES

Ethicscore: the higher the score, the better the company. Scored out of 14. Plus up to 1 extra point for Company Ethos and up to 5 extra points for Product Sustainability.

Green (good) = 12+

Amber (average) = 11.5–5

Red (poor) = 4.5–0

= worst rating

= middle rating

= best rating/no criticisms found

USING THE TABLES

Positive ratings (+ve):

Company Ethos:

= full mark

= half mark

Product Sustainability:

Various positive marks available depending on sector.



Best Buys are highlighted in blue

| BRAND | Ethicscore (out of 14 + 6 extras) | Environment | | | | | Animals | | | People | | | Politics | | | +ve | | COMPANY GROUP | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| | | Environmental Reporting | Climate Change | Pollution & Toxics | Habitats & Resources | Palm Oil | Animal Testing | Factory Farming | Animal Rights | Human Rights | Workers' Rights | Supply Chain Management | Irresponsible Marketing | Arms & Military Supply | Controversial Technologies | Boycott Call | Political Activity | | Anti-Social Finance |
| Blackspot boots [Vg, O, S] | 16.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1.5 | Adbusters Media Foundation |
| Wills Vegan Shoes [Vg, S] | 16.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1.5 | Will's Vegan Shoes Ltd |
| Eco Vegan Shoes [Vg] | 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Eco Vegan Shoes International BV |
| Po-Zu [Vg, S] | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1.5 | Po-zu |
| Beyond Skin [Vg] | 14.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Genuinely not Leather Ltd. |
| Po-Zu [S] | 14.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Po-zu |
| Ethical Wares [Vg] | 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Ethical Wares Ltd |
| Freerangers [Vg] | 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | Freerangers |
| Vegetarian Shoes [Vg] | 13 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | Vegetarian Shoes Limited |
| Allbirds | 11.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Allbirds, Inc |
| Freet [Vg] | 11.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | Freet Footwear Ltd |
| Good News Shoes | 11.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Good News Shoes Ltd |
| Green Shoes [Vg] | 11.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | Green Shoes of Totnes Ltd |
| Freet | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Freet Footwear Ltd |
| Green Shoes | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Green Shoes of Totnes Ltd |
| Vivobarefoot [Vg] | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | Vivobarefoot Ltd |
| Birkenstock [Vg] | 9.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | Birkenstock Orthopädie |
| Russell & Bromley | 9.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Russell & Bromley |
| Vivobarefoot | 9.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Vivobarefoot Ltd |
| Birkenstock | 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Birkenstock Orthopädie |
| Camper | 8.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Forch Med SL |
| Dune | 8.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Dune Holdings Limited |
| Hotter | 8.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Electra Private Equity Partners Lp |
| Pavers | 8.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Pavers Holdings Ltd |
| Wynsors | 8.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | E Sutton & Son Ltd |
| Crocs | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Crocs, Inc |
| Ecco | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Ecco Holding A/S |
| Lilley & Skinner, Shoe Zone | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Smith Family |
| Dr Martens [Vg] | 7.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | Permira Holdings Limited |
| Office | 7.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Truworths |
| Clarks | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | C&J Clark Ltd |
| Dr Martens | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Permira Holdings Limited |
| KangaROOS, Red or Dead | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Pentland Group plc |
| Schuh [Vg] | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.5 | Genesco Inc |
| Teva, UGG | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Deckers Outdoor Corporation |
| Schuh | 6.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Genesco Inc |
| Timberland | 6.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | VF Corporation Inc |
| Hush Puppies, Keds | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Wolverine World Wide Inc |

All the research behind these ratings is on www.ethicalconsumer.org Definitions of all the categories are at www.ethicalconsumer.org/our-ethical-ratings. [O] = organic [S] = made with sustainable materials [Vg] = vegan

Table highlights

Excessive directors' pay

Eleven brands featured were owned by companies that paid directors excessive amounts of money – over £1 million per year. These are KangaROOS, Red or Dead, Hush Puppies, Keds, Teva, UGG, Schuh, Clarks, Crocs, Timberland and Office. The highest paying company was VF Corporation – one director was paid approximately £14 million in 2019.

Likely use of tax avoidance strategies

The owners of the following brands received Ethical Consumer's worst rating for likely use of tax avoidance strategies: Red or Dead, KangaROOS, Keds, Hush Puppies, Dr Martens, Office, Truworths, Ecco, Timberland and Crocs.

Teachers, doctors, hospital personnel, bank employees, and gas and electricity agency staff are forced to pick cotton

Wolverine World Wide (which owns Keds and Hush Puppies) looks particularly suspicious. It has subsidiaries in Delaware, Netherlands, Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands, Hong Kong, Mauritius and Bermuda – all jurisdictions Ethical Consumer considers to be tax havens.

Cotton

Green Shoes, Allbirds, Freet and Crocs do not use significant amounts of cotton. We rated all other companies for their use of GM, pesticides, and sourcing from Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan.

Po-Zu and Will's Vegan Shoes had adequate policies addressing all these issues (Will's Vegan Shoes uses only recycled cotton).

Many companies did not adequately address any of these issues: Dune, ECCO, Office, Clarks, Wynsors, Schuh, Hush Puppies, Keds, Camper, Pavers, Hotter, Beyond Skin and Birkenstock.

Companies with a clear policy against sourcing from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are Po-Zu, Will's Vegan Shoes, Adbusters, Deckers Outdoor Corporation and Timberland.

Forced cotton labour in Turkmenistan

We've reported on the forced labour in Uzbek cotton extensively before, but not so much the issues in the Turkmenistan cotton industry.

Every year in Turkmenistan thousands of public sector employees including teachers, doctors, hospital personnel, bank employees, and gas and electricity agency staff are forced to help farmers pick cotton under threat of dismissal. In September and October, over 50% of teachers are estimated to be sent to pick cotton. Businesses are also forced to contribute labour, under threat of being closed. To fulfil quotas, parents often have to recruit their children's help, despite national and international laws against child labour.

According to the Responsible Sourcing Network (RSN), the entire Turkmen cotton production system is "tainted with forced labour of children and adults" based on the identification of seven indicators of forced labour. These are:

- Coercive recruitment
- Forced overtime
- Limited freedom of movement and communication
- Degrading living conditions
- Pre-existence of a dependency relationship on employer
- No freedom to resign in accordance with legal requirements
- Withholding of wages. ●

 **BEST BUYS**



Our Best Buys for shoes are **Wills Vegan Shoes** (from £65), **Eco Vegan Shoes** (from £81) and **Blackspot** (boots only, £110) as they are top scoring and all vegan companies.



Wills Vegan Shoes
16.5



Blackspot boots
16.5

Eco Vegan Shoes
16



The other high-scoring, vegan companies are also Best Buys: **Beyond Skin** (from £110), **Ethical Wares** (from £56.95), **Freerangers** (from £73.90) and **Vegetarian Shoes** (from £49.95). **Po-zu** (from £165) also scores highly and will be a vegan company by the end of 2020.

For price comparison, the cheapest Clarks shoe was £49.95 and it was not vegan.

The Best Buys all make shoes for men and women, apart from Beyond Skin which only makes womens' shoes. But only Wills Vegan Shoes makes smaller sizes (from 10 UK, 28 EU) for kids. The others' sizes start from 2/3 (34/35).

 **RECOMMENDED**

Birkenstock is our widely available 'high street' recommended buy.

 **BRANDS TO AVOID**

Keds and **Hush Puppies**, brands owned by Wolverine World Wide, are at the bottom of the score table. See 'Companies behind the brands' on page 27 for details of their criticisms.



Best Buys are decided by the editorial team based on the research we have undertaken, the scoring system and the unique insight into the issues that our editorial team has. 9 times out of 10 this will be the brands that are top of the table but sometimes an ethical company which is truly innovative scores less well on our rigid scoring system and we use the Best Buy and Recommended sections to acknowledge this. A company cannot be a Best Buy if it scores worst for Supply Chain Management.

Shoes

In a country marginally better than North Korea for press freedom, reporting on the issue is dangerous. On 6 September 2019, journalist Gaspar Matalaev was freed from prison after serving a three-year sentence for reporting on the cotton harvests.

Avoiding cotton from Turkmenistan

Although cotton is Turkmenistan's largest export, it exports less than 1% of the world's raw cotton. However, there may be a higher chance of it being in European textiles: Turkey is the main investor in Turkmenistan textile production facilities, and the third largest textile supplier to the EU.

The Turkish company Calik Holding has subsidiaries that own textile



Does your cotton come from Turkmenistan?

production facilities in Turkmenistan. A March 2019 report by Anti-Slavery International stated that brands listed on Calik Holding subsidiary websites include

Topshop, Zara, H&M and River Island.

Ethical Consumer has long marked companies down under our Workers' Rights category if they do not have a policy against cotton sourcing from Uzbekistan. We now require a boycott of Turkmen cotton too.

Patricia Jurewicz of the Responsible Sourcing Network (RSN) stated "Things are starting to change in Uzbekistan after many years of engagement. Turkmenistan is a lot like Uzbekistan as it has an authoritarian government that controls the entire cotton industry. We can't feel confident that any cotton produced in Turkmenistan is produced without any forced labour in it."

She added "We are hopeful that changes are taking place [...] I really hope it's not going to take as long to encourage the Turkmen government".

Girls' feet bear the brunt of gender stereotypes



Companies such as Green Shoes make all kids' shoes gender neutral.

In 2017, Clarks came under fire when a mother's Facebook post about Clarks Shoes went viral. Jemma Moonie-Dalton argued that the company sold

boys' shoes that were sturdy and weather-proof – designed with running and climbing in mind. In contrast, girls shoes had inferior soles and poor ankle padding.

This sparked a national debate. A BBC article highlighted how 52 of 78 styles of Clarks girls' shoes were open topped (none of the boys' were). Shortly after, the company announced its Spring/Summer 2018 school shoes line would be entirely unisex. Stereotyped brand names

such as 'Dolly Babe' and 'Leader' were discontinued.

We checked to see if Clarks is still falling behind when it comes to gender

equality in children's footwear. You can filter the 'Girls casual shoes' range according to 'Heel Height'. A range of heeled (2-4cm) boots were found. Unsurprisingly, no boys shoes are listed as having heels.

Freeing children's feet

Francesca Mallen, founder of Let Clothes be Clothes, a campaign organisation calling on retailers to end the design and marketing of children's wear based on outdated gender stereotypes, told Ethical Consumer:

"Recent marketing trends focus on creating mini versions of adult footwear. We're increasingly seeing shoes made for children that are heavily styled around gender stereotypes. In particular this means heels and flourishes for girls; and solid trainer-style shoes for boys.

"Our concerns aren't just the stereotyping and unhealthy pigeon-holing of kids. What we're most worried about is how parents tend to think that if a pair of shoes is sold in a shop, it must be okay for their child's feet. In reality, heels and wedges are extremely damaging to growing feet."

DONATING SHOES DURING CORONAVIRUS

Recyclatex told Ethical Consumer that the government is encouraging all consumers to hold on to any textile household recycling (clothing, household linens, etc) until after charities reopen.

Some people have been leaving items in bags outside closed charity shops and at the side of already-full banks. This is classed as fly tipping. Having it removed costs charities a lot of money.

Some Household Waste Recycling Centres remain open during the crisis. Shoes donated there are taken by companies that resell them for reuse. If you can't reach a shoe donation point now due to the pandemic, hold onto them until you can.

Shoe Aid donates shoes to people in the UK who need them. See their website www.shoeaid.co.uk for where you can donate footwear, or our website for more details on Shoe Aid.

Companies behind the brands

Hush Puppies and **Keds** are owned by **Wolverine World Wide Inc**, a US footwear manufacturer with an annual turnover of £1.6 billion. The company lost marks in the Human Rights category because it also owns the brand Bates, which supplies shoes to the military.

Wolverine World Wide is also licensed to make Caterpillar Footwear, using the Caterpillar construction company's brand name – CAT. Caterpillar bulldozers are regularly used to demolish Palestinian homes. The company was marked down for manufacturing a product that is subject to a Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement boycott call.

Wolverine has been subject to several lawsuits in relation to pollution and contamination. One of the company's old tanneries in Michigan polluted the community's drinking water



Caterpillar's (CAT) equipment is used to bulldoze Palestinian homes and build illegal settlements. In 2003, US activist Rachel Corrie was killed beneath a Caterpillar D9 weaponised bulldozer as she tried to protect the home of a Palestinian family. CAT-branded footwear is made by Wolverine World Wide.

with dangerous PFAS chemicals for several years. Residents maintain that cancer, miscarriages and autoimmune disorders have been caused due to the contamination. In February 2020, a federal judge approved a \$69.5 million settlement for Wolverine to pay for public water extensions in areas affected by PFAS contamination.

The company was also marked down under the Workers' Rights category, due to 2019 accusations from the campaign group Transparentem about a supplier factory called Perindustrian in Malaysia. It claimed that migrant workers were being forced to pay illegal recruitment fees – sometimes exceeding a year's wages, and that the factory had retained their passports, leaving them unable to quit, resulting in forced labour.

UGG and **Teva** are owned by **Deckers Outdoor Corporation**. Deckers sources from the Philippines company 'Pulido Apparel Company Inc', which has been accused of union busting. Pulido closed its factory in December 2018 shortly before collective bargaining was due to take place. A month later, the company began rehiring people, while allegedly blacklisting union officers and members. Workers called for a strike in January 2019. Deckers responded by stating "Deckers Brands has a robust Ethical

Supply Chain Supplier Code of Conduct" but we could not find anything in its supply chain policy guaranteeing the right to freedom of association.

Dr. Martens was acquired, in 2014, by Permira Holdings, a global investment firm. While many still remember Dr. Martens' special place in the history of British subculture, now only 1% of its shoes are made in the UK.

Permira lacked developed policies that most large companies would be expected to have, such as a detailed environmental and supply chain management report.

The company was also marked down under Arms & Military supply because, in 2017, Permira Debt Managers was the sole lender in the acquisition of Dunlop Aircraft Tyres by Liberty Hall Capital Partners, a US sponsor specialising in Aircraft and Defence.

Office Shoes, **Wynsors** and **Schuh** retail Caterpillar or Puma products. These are subject to a BDS boycott call (for more information on the Puma boycott see p.34).

We don't mark companies down for stocking a boycotted brand but those who prioritise human rights may be interested in which companies profit from boycotted produce. ■

Other related vegan content

The negative impacts of our complex food systems on people, animals and the environment are now well understood. What we eat and where we buy our food from can have a huge impact on everything from animal welfare to climate change. Discover more about a vegan and low carbon diets in our food and drink news, features and shopping guides linked below.

RELEVANT GUIDES

[Ethical Beer & Lager >](#)

[Ethical Chocolate - Scroll down to Our Analysis >](#)

[Dairy-free Ice Cream >](#)

[Meat-free Sausages and Burgers >](#)

[Vegan Cheese >](#)

[Skincare - Scroll down to Our Analysis >](#)

[Make-up >](#)

RELEVANT FEATURES

[5 ethical issues behind your cleaning products >](#)

[Climate gap report: food >](#)

[Veganism and ethical consumption >](#)

[What is the most ethical vegan alternative to honey? >](#)

[Why buy... Vegan? >](#)