



# Shoppers update

2004

From Friends of the Earth's Safer Chemicals Campaign

Friends of the Earth's latest research highlights the risky chemicals found in everyday products such as plastic bottles, baby bottles, food cans, electronic equipment, home textiles, clothing, PVC floor tiles, paints, cosmetics and toiletries. We sent detailed questionnaires to major supermarkets, department stores, cosmetics retailers and toy retailers. This survey follows on from the survey we carried out in 2002.

Our survey concentrates on eight different groups of chemicals that are of particular concern because they accumulate in our bodies or may affect hormonal systems. For each group, we scored companies on whether these chemicals are in the products they sell, whether they plan to phase them out and by when. We also asked some searching questions on their support for consumers' right to know, their involvement in the EU legislative process on chemicals and their internal policy regarding risky chemicals. All the retailers who replied to our survey said they believed that "consumers have a right to know" about chemicals in products (except John Lewis who did not reply to this question).

Note that some of the chemical categories do not apply to all the companies (for example, supermarkets do not generally stock products which use flame retardants). For each table, only scores from those questions relevant to that sector are included, to allow fair comparisons to be made.

See our league tables and chemical tables inside this newsletter to find out which retailers are saying they are minimising the risk from chemicals – and which ones are not.

## What should I do with this information?

The survey indicates that high-scoring companies are more likely to be working to avoid risky chemicals in their products. Conversely, low-scoring companies not only are not likely to do enough to phase out risky chemicals but are nearly always companies that have not signed our Safer Chemicals Retailers Pledge (see below). Please ask them to do so by going to the web address below and doing a very quick and easy email action: see [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safer\\_chemicals/press\\_for\\_change/league\\_table](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safer_chemicals/press_for_change/league_table)

## The Retailers Pledge

Since July 2002, we have been asking retailers to sign our pledge on safer chemicals. This commits retailers to developing a strategy to deal with risky chemicals (starting with own-brand products but extending to branded products) and reporting publicly on progress. Fifteen retailers have so far signed up, representing over 8000 major stores.



Jennifer Bates/Friends of the Earth

Toys are not usually labelled for chemical content.

They are (in alphabetical order): Argos, The Body Shop, Boots, B&Q, The Co-op, Debenhams, The Early Learning Centre, Focus Wickes Group, Homebase, Ikea, Marks & Spencer, Mothercare, Sainsbury's, Somerfield-KwikSave and Woolworths.

## Chemical Reaction

To help us get strong laws visit [www.chemicalreaction.org](http://www.chemicalreaction.org) and do our easy actions! (More information on back page).

**Note:** This is the last Shoppers Update, as the campaign on retailers is winding down while the Chemical Reaction campaign is taking off.

You may also want to get involved with the pesticides campaign, also on the back page.

You can ask for a copy of our entire research results.

Call our Safer Chemicals Campaign on Freephone 0800 800 1111, or see our website: [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safer\\_chemicals/news/retailer\\_quiz\\_results.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/safer_chemicals/news/retailer_quiz_results.html)

# Who's taking action



## Supermarkets

Our survey asked the major supermarkets about chemicals in a range of products, such as bisphenol A in food cans and jars, artificial musks in cleaning products and toiletries, and triclosan (anti-bacterial) in washing up liquids, liquid soaps, mouthwashes, dishcloths and chopping boards. The higher the score, the more they say they have done to remove risky chemicals from the products they sell.

**Sainsbury's, Iceland, Tesco, Asda** and **Morrisons** failed to answer our questions.

Rank	Rank 2001/2	Company	Total %
1	2	Marks & Spencer	81
2	1	Co-operative Retail	60
3	5	Safeway*	45
4	no answers	Somerfield-Kwik Save*	41
4	6	Waitrose*	41



## Cosmetics retailers

Here we rated cosmetics retailers according to the responses they gave to our survey. Cosmetics can contain artificial musks and phthalates – some of which are known to disrupt our hormones and accumulate in body fat.

Retailers **Iceland, Sainsbury's, Superdrug, Tesco, Asda** and **Morrisons** did not reply to our questions.

Rank	Rank 2001/2	Company	Total %
1	1	Body Shop	84
2	2	Marks & Spencer	83
3	4	Debenhams*	66
4	3	Co-operative Retail*	61
5	6	Boots*	56
6	8	Safeway*	49
7	no answers	Somerfield-Kwik Save*	41
8	10	Waitrose*	40



## Department stores

We asked a range of stores about attitude to risky chemicals - such as brominated flame retardants (used to reduce the fire risk in electrical products and bedding) and phthalates - found in some toys, flooring and cosmetics.

**Ikea, Marks & Spencer** and the **Co-op** scored well in their answers, while **BHS** failed to answer our questions about chemicals in their goods again.

Rank	Rank 2001/2	Company	Total %
1	1	Ikea	86
2	2	Marks & Spencer	80
3	2	Co-operative Retail*	62
4	4	Debenhams*	59
5	6	Woolworths*	44
6	5	Argos	37
7	7	John Lewis*	25



## Toy retailers

Toys are a key area of concern for parents. Some plastic toys contain gender bending phthalates while others may be treated with brominated flame retardants - some of which can accumulate in the body.

Several toy retailers including **Hamleys, BHS, Toys 'R' Us** and **Toymaster** did not answer questions about chemicals in their toys.

Rank	Rank 2001/2	Company	Total %
1	1	Ikea	84
2	2	Early Learning Centre*	59
2	5	Debenhams*	59
4	6	Woolworths*	44
5	4	Argos	39
6	7	John Lewis*	24
7	3	Mothercare*	22

### Notes

- Friends of the Earth has made every effort to score fairly, based on companies' responses, and to ensure that companies are compared in as fair a way as possible. Due to the complexity of the survey and the variable quality of information received, small discrepancies may exist.
- Three retailers were also covered in our survey: 1. B&Q: 71%, 2. Focus Group: 52%, 3. Homebase: no answers. For more information, see pages 3-4 of this briefing and our full report.

\* responses refer only or mostly to own brand – but scoring takes this fact into account

# on risky chemicals?

## Which shops are selling products with risky chemicals and which are not?

**Brominated flame retardants:** may be used in electronic equipment such as TVs, computers, video systems, and home textiles

No (all products)	No (own-brand products)	Yes but limited use	Yes	Not applicable to products
Ikea	Co-op, Early Learning Centre	Marks & Spencer, (sofas), Boots* (hairdryer circuit boards)	Debenhams*, John Lewis*, Argos, Woolworths*, (home & garden textile furnishings) Mothercare*, B&Q, Focus Group (but reduction in use)	Safeway*, Somerfield-Kwik Save*, Waitrose* Body Shop

**Bisphenol a:** may be used in the linings of food cans and lids, plastic bottles and baby bottles

No (own-brand products)	Yes	Not applicable to products
Debenhams, Early Learning Centre	Co-op* (tin cans & baby bottles), Marks & Spencer (tin cans), Safeway*, Waitrose*, Somerfield-KwikSave*, Argos, Ikea (clear bottles), Woolworths*, Boots*, Mothercare*	John Lewis*, Body Shop B&Q, Focus Group

**Alkyltins:** may be used as anti-bacterial agents in home textiles and upholstered furniture, and in some plastics

No (all products)	No (own-brand products)	Yes but limited use
Argos Marks & Spencer, Ikea, Body Shop, B&Q, Focus Group	Co-op, Safeway, Somerfield-KwikSave, Waitrose Debenhams John Lewis, Boots, Mothercare, Early Learning Centre	Woolworths* (shoe insoles mostly)

**Phthalates:** may be used in PVC products (vinyl floor tiles and toys), glues, inks and solvents in cosmetics and toiletries

No	Yes but limited use	Yes but removed from many products	Yes
None	Ikea (PVC in electrical cords)	Co-op*, Marks & Spencer, Safeway*, Woolworths Boots*, Body Shop	Somerfield-KwikSave*, Waitrose*, Argos, Debenhams*, John Lewis*, B&Q, Mothercare* Early Learning Centre Focus Group

**Alkylphenols & derivatives:** may be used in paints, some clothing and some plastics

No (all)	No (own-brand)	Yes (limited)	Yes
Marks & Spencer, Ikea, Body Shop, Argos (unlikely), B&Q	Co-op, Safeway, Waitrose, Early Learning Centre, Debenhams (unlikely), Boots, John Lewis**	Woolworths*	Mothercare* Somerfield-KwikSave* Focus Group

**PFOA:** may be found in stain-resistant fabric, coatings used in cookware and toiletries

No (all products)	No (own-brand products)	Not known	Yes
B&Q Body Shop	Somerfield-KwikSave, Waitrose, Boots, Early Learning Centre John Lewis**	Safeway*, Argos, Woolworths*, Mothercare*, Focus Group	Co-op*, Marks & Spencer, Debenhams*, Ikea (frying pans)

**PFOS:** may be found in stain-resistant fabric, coatings used in cookware and toiletries

No (all products)	No (own-brand products)	Not known	Yes
Marks & Spencer Body Shop	Co-op, Somerfield-KwikSave, Waitrose, Boots, Early Learning Centre, John Lewis**	Safeway*, Argos, Woolworths*, Mothercare*, Focus Group	Debenhams*, Ikea, B&Q

\* responses refer only to own brand \*\* virtually eliminated

**Note** We cannot guarantee that retailers are 100 per cent aware of all uses or of contamination – asking them about chemicals helps you and them!

**Triclosan (not in toothpaste):** may be used as anti-bacterial in washing up liquids, liquid soaps, mouthwashes, dishcloths and chopping board

No (all products)	No (own-brand)	Yes but limited use	Yes	Not applicable to products
Argos, Ikea, Body Shop	Co-op, Somerfield-KwikSave, Debenhams, John Lewis**	Marks & Spencer	Safeway*, Waitrose*, Woolworths*, Boots*, Mothercare*, B&Q, Focus Group	Early Learning Centre

**Triclosan in toothpaste:** may be used as anti-bacterial

No (all products)	No (own-brand products)	Yes but limited number of lines of toothpaste	Yes	Not applicable to products
Body Shop	Co-op, Somerfield-KwikSave, Debenhams, Boots, Waitrose, Woolworths, Mothercare, John Lewis**	Safeway*	Marks & Spencer	Argos, Ikea, B&Q, Early Learning Centre, Focus Group

**Artificial musks:** may be used as fragrances in perfumes, cosmetics, toiletries, laundry detergents, etc

No (all)	No (own brand)	Yes but very limited use	Yes	Not applicable to products
Ikea, B&Q	Debenhams, Woolworths, John Lewis**	Co-op*	Marks & Spencer, Safeway*, Somerfield-Kwik Save*, Boots*, Waitrose*, Argos, Focus Group, Mothercare*, Body Shop	Early Learning Centre

## Chemical Reaction

Chemical Reaction was set up by Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and the European Environmental Bureau in June 2003 to lobby the European institutions on a new legislative proposal from the European Union on chemicals (REACH – for Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals). The next few years will be crucial in the battle to get a safe regulatory system. A global chemical industry lobby, with the help of the US government, is fighting hard against REACH, pushing for almost complete confidentiality about which chemicals are present in products. The industry lobby has already achieved more than a year's delay in getting a new legislation in place.

Chemical Reaction has a mine of information about the chemicals legislation, the workings of the European Union legislative process and recommendations from environmental organisations on how to improve the legislation. The site is multi-lingual covering English, French, German,

Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Finnish and Welsh as well as some Central European languages such as Polish, Czech and Hungarian.

### The actions so far

In June-July 2003, our Declaration for a Toxics-free Future managed to gather signatures from over 23,000 citizens around the world and 480 organisations. The signatures were presented to the Environment Commissioner, Margot Wallström, in Brussels. The Declaration called for the phase-out and substitution of hazardous chemicals, for a full right to know which chemicals are in what products and for the same standards for imported goods.

From March-May 2004, we targeted Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and over 9500 email messages were sent. From mid-May to mid-June 2004, candidates to the European Parliament are being targeted.

### What's happening next

The website will be up and running until the end of the legislative process on chemicals, expected mid-2006. Actions will be aimed at MEPs as well as other targets such as the Council of Ministers. Please go to [www.chemicalreaction.org](http://www.chemicalreaction.org) to register on our e-mailing list and take action regularly.

### Push out the pesticides

Most fruit and vegetables for sale in our shops and supermarkets are grown using pesticides – chemicals that kill pests like insects and weeds. As a result, about half of all UK fruit and vegetables contain pesticide residues (Data from Pesticides Residues Committee 1998 to 2001). Some pesticides may be used just to make sure our fruit and vegetables look cosmetically perfect on supermarket shelves. Their widespread usage is causing health problems: some pesticide residues can bio-accumulate in our bodies or harm our hormone systems. See [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/real\\_food/](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/real_food/) for more information and actions.

Editor: Karine Pellaumail Designer: Deborah Thompson

**Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems which make life better for people**

**Friends of the Earth 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ  
Tel: (Freephone) 0808 800 1111 Fax: 020 7490 0881 Email: [info@foe.co.uk](mailto:info@foe.co.uk)  
Website: [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)**