



# Shades of Green

## A 'Good Food' Checklist for Looking at the Food System with a Critical Eye

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Interest in environmentally-friendly food products and food production practices is growing. The food and beverage industry has responded to this interest and has created environmentally-friendly marketing campaigns. However, as companies “green” their products or extol sustainable business practices, eaters need to be equipped with the tools to decipher the new marketing trends.

This extends to nutrition and health claims on food products. According to attorney Michelle Simon, “Nutrition advocates who buy into the myth of industry-created solutions do so at their own peril. Praising companies for “doing the right thing” only encourages more food industry-PR (or ‘nutriwashing’).”

Food choices not only influence our health, but also influence the health of our planet. All eaters can make food choices that support a sustainable and resilient food system. One that conserves and renews natural resources, advances social justice and animal welfare, builds community wealth, and fulfills the food and nutrition needs of all eaters now and in the future.

Use the following checklist to determine the “shade of green” of a food or beverage product. The more ✓s, the greater contribution the food product makes to a sustainable and resilient food system.

The producer or farmer who grew the food is known.	
The location of where the food originated is known.	
The food traveled the least distance possible.	
The food is fresh, whole, seasonal and grown without harming soil, water or air quality.	
The food was raised humanely without synthetic hormones or antibiotics.	
The process to produce the food conserves genetic biodiversity and ecological integrity.	
The food company has made a commitment to sustainability, social responsibility and environmental best practices.	
The farm workers, processors or food service workers earned a fair wage, worked in safe conditions and were not exploited in the making of this food.	
The nutritional value of the food is maintained and it is free of artificial ingredients.	
There were no or low environmental impacts as a result of processing and transporting the food.	
The food packaging is minimal, made from renewable resources and is recyclable.	
The label on the food product directs you to find more information. Product labeling is transparent.	
The name and any claims of the food product are specific, meaningful and logical.	
The food product has a legitimate and reputable third-party seal or certification.	
The local, national and global implications of this food product are known.	

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### Resources:

- Hargroves, K. and M. Smith (Eds.) 2005. *The Natural Advantage of Nations: Business Opportunities, Innovation and Governance in the 21st Century*. ISBN 1-84407-121-9, 525 pages. Earthscan/James&James. (See the online companion at [www.thenaturaladvantage.info](http://www.thenaturaladvantage.info)).
- Hemmelgarn M. *Digging up Dirt: Finding Food Truth with the Food Sleuth*. July 2008.
- Simon M. *Appetite for Profit. How the Food Industry Undermines Our Health and How to Fight Back*. New York, NY: Nation Books; 2006.
- TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc. *The Six Sins of Greenwashing. A Study of Environmental Claims in North American Consumer Markets*. November 2007. Available at [www.terrachoice.com](http://www.terrachoice.com).