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## The Green Girl's a label snob

By Kristi Moyer

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Are you a label snob?

Maybe you should be.



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I don't mean someone who checks out the logo inside your friend's new shoes or the tag on her bag, but there are a few labels you might want to look for when shopping, especially if you're trying to be eco-correct and enviro-smart.

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Here are three common labels you'll see frequently and what they mean to you — and the planet.

**Certified Fair Trade:** According to the Fair Trade Foundation, "Fair trade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world."

Not only are fair trade products good for human rights, they also support environmentally responsible practices. Products labeled Fair Trade might be for you if you want to support businesses that put the lives of workers and the health of the earth at the top of their priority list.

**Organic:** Organic.org defines organic as "produce and other ingredients that are grown without the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms or ionizing radiation. Animals that produce meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products do not take antibiotics or growth hormones."

While sometimes criticized for its ambiguity, the organic label is a fairly good indication of how the item was produced and its environmental impact. The United States Department of Agriculture certifies and inspects farms and companies associated with organic products to regulate the accuracy of the label. If you spot a USDA Organic label, this certifies that product to be at least 95 percent organic, minus salt and water.

**Energy Star:** This label was created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1992. The program highlights energy-efficient products in an effort to decrease our use of non-renewable resources



and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. You will find the Energy Star label on more than 50 product categories, including major appliances, office equipment, lighting and home electronics.

Buying an Energy Star-rated appliance, such as a new refrigerator, air conditioner or water heater, will save you money on your electric bill while helping to save the planet.

According to the Energy Star Web site, "Results are already adding up. Americans, with the help of Energy Star, saved enough energy in 2006 alone to avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 25 million cars — all while saving \$14 billion on their utility bills."

And that's not greenwashing!

So now that you know what's behind a few of those labels, you can feel good about becoming a label snob.

Information supplemented by Carrie Mohanna.

Pine Jog does not endorse the products or companies listed. References are for information only.

Supplemented by staff members of Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, West Palm Beach.

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