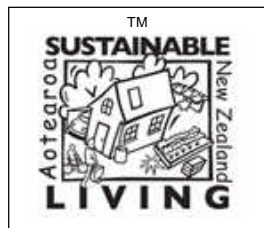


Sustainable Living Programme

2008 Edition

Action on Everyday Shopping Items



So we *all* get caught up in this headlong rush to own the biggest, brightest and best stuff money can buy, *right?* Wrong. In France, alternative consumers are now estimated at no less than 25% of the population, distinct from ordinary consumers (which the French call 'hyper' consumers, due to their frequenting the hypermarche).

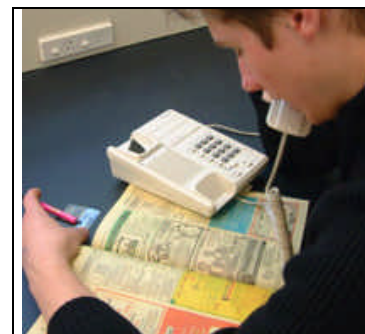
The 'alternative' consumer distances themselves from advertising and brands and is prepared to pay more for products that are environmentally friendly, local, and for e.g. prefer cuts of cheeses to packaged blocks. For them, the car is a way of getting from A to B not a symbol, and carbonated soft drinks are un-cool, even when chilled.

This topic includes a range of sustainable shopping actions you can take to improve the environment and ultimately your quality of life. We have separated these into the following sections:

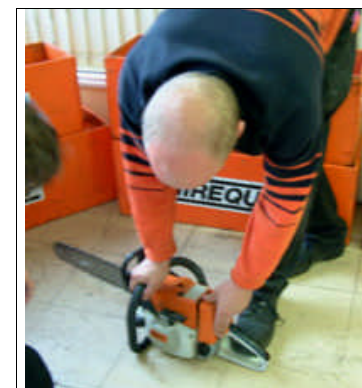
1. Questions to ask when you are considering a purchase
2. Check out the packaging
3. Avoid disposables
4. The case for organic fruit and veg
5. Want to eat lots of meat?
6. Read the fine print.
7. Credit is too easy.

1. Questions to ask:

- **Can I provide it myself?** Is the item I seek available from my garden or backyard, or something I have time to make myself as a hobby activity, such as sewing to make or adjust some clothes?
- **Could I obtain it from a friend or neighbour** by private barter or gift, such as my vegetables swapped for your hens' eggs; or this subscription magazine swapped for that one?
- **Can it be obtained through other members of a formal bartering scheme?** There are many local skills and goods-trading exchanges operating around NZ. Try joining schemes using 'Green Dollars'. People spend and earn dollar-equivalent credits and debits through their trading, usually recorded at a central office. The hundreds of different skills featured can range from cake-making and gardening labour to computer services, crafts and house decorating. Members have access to a directory listing all local members and their skills, allowing them to buy services or goods from one person (for a credit) and sell their product or skills to the same or any another member (for a debit).



Using the phone for free local calls could save you hours in visiting shops, and save vehicle fuel. (Photo by Kathryn Furlong, Papanui High School)



Hire shop staff can show you how to use equipment, and provide aids to you to safety at the same time. (Photo K. Furlong)

- **Is it feasible to repair rather than replace** a broken utensil or appliance? Repair businesses, which are likely to know where to obtain parts, may be recommended by your regular electrician or plumber, and specialists are often listed in *Yellow Pages* directory. Find them under keyword headings such as: Electrical Appliances – repairs and servicing; Lawnmower – service; Leather and vinyl repairs; Sharpening services; Shoe and bag repairers; Stoves – maintenance; Washing machine repairs.
- **Could I hire instead of buying?** There are hire firms listed in *Yellow Pages* and other trade directories. Power tools are a good example – how often in your life do you need some of these specialised tools (such as a concrete mixer, hedge trimmer, floor sander)? Isn't hiring better value than buying and then storing them to use once a year?
- **Can I buy it second hand?** New Zealand has a huge range of goods available in second-hand stores, and it's not just antiques and bric-a-brac. These are good places to look for clothing, for crockery, glassware and cutlery, furniture and small household appliances (but do always check these for electrical safety).
- **Could I own it jointly with a friend?** This could be a good approach for cars, larger gardening and workshop tools (e.g. lawnmowers), tents and tramping gear, ladders, sewing and knitting machines, and bake-ware, specialist cooking pots or food-preserving equipment.
- **Would I buy it only because it may be a bargain?** The most heavily promoted apparently 'discounted' items are not necessarily the best value. Check the bottom shelves in supermarkets for their Own Brand versions to confirm this – they are often cheaper than the advertised supposed bargain. Also check out weekly specials, but with scepticism! Finally apply the reality check – sure

it's cheap, but am I buying it because of the low price or because I really need it? If in doubt, leave it there.

2. Check out the packaging

Here are five ways to reduce the packaging you carry home from shops (packaging which you then have to reuse, recycle, compost or throw out):

- **You can refuse a plastic bag** at the shop checkout or counter, by bringing your own canvas carrying bag, backpack, or even laundry basket (though it won't fit very easily on your bike!). Supermarket plastic bags when re-used will last several shopping trips if you can avoid tearing them). Ask for cardboard boxes, as these will last a few trips in a car and can more easily be recycled. At the very least, ask the checkout assistant to pack more items in a bag than they usually do. New Zealanders use 800 million plastic carrier bags a year – that's over 200 per person. These bags do not decay in the landfill sites!



Lisa buys some foods in bulk, and stores them in re-used jars, to reduce packaging and save dollars. She avoids plastics.

- **Select items that can be bought loose** rather than individually wrapped products or fresh food that is presented on film-covered polystyrene trays. Use bulk bin specialist stores for staple items as they may well be cheaper than supermarkets. Also many supermarkets now have bulk bins as well, which are almost always cheaper by weight than the pre-packaged branded versions.

- **Favour the items in recyclable packaging** (e.g. glass jars, cans, moulded cardboard, but for plastic only codes 1 and 2) over those that are not recyclable (the other plastic codes in most regions of NZ, and composite card-plastic-foil packaging found in the 'block' design of packs).

- **Avoid too much take-away food** as its packaging is often excessive and once grease-soiled that packaging is not recyclable. In the USA over a third of children's spending goes on high sugar or high fat 'junk food'. Urban New Zealand is heading that way.

- **Buy refills of household detergents and other chemicals** in order to re-use your existing pumps and dispensers. You can also re-use those dispensers, once washed-clean, for some home made cleaners (see separate information sheet on home-made cleaners, within the *Waste* topic). One firm making household cleaners for Australia and NZ has recently simplified its packaging into a small number of designs and sizes, promoted the sale of refills, removed potential toxins and sharpened-up its environmental performance in manufacture. Other firms that promote buying detergents in bulk and re-using the dispensers

include the multi-nationals *Amway*, *Maleluca*, and the NZ environmental-award winning *Ecostore* of Auckland (which does mail order from a catalogue: 0800 432 678 www.ecostore.co.nz.)

- **For more tips** on avoiding packaging, check out the useful list of ideas on www.reducerrubbish.govt.nz/shop/tips.html

3. Avoid disposables & excess packaging

- **Is doorstep delivery available in your area?** Kerbside milk in glass bottles has disappeared but it may be possible to obtain doorstep delivery of organic fruit and vegetables, without packaging, in a 'box scheme' based on re-useable crates and minimal packaging (see organics, below), and in a few places also fresh fish delivery. Woolworths supermarket also delivers foods, ordered at their internet site, but remember to compare prices with competitors!



Remember this? (Photo: Matthew Smith)

- **Use alternatives to once-only-use items.** When faced with a party to organise, or holiday travel or a baby to care for, it has become possible to

chase 'one-use-only' disposable items, *supposedly* to save time, reduce weight and aid hygiene. The time spent buying and carrying them home or disposing of them afterwards tends to be overlooked, as is their environmental impact. There are alternatives, such as:

- ✓ China or thicker plastic or metal cups and plates, which are washable and preferable to 'disposable' paper or light plastic
- ✓ If you can not avoid using 'disposables', ask your supplier for bio-degradable plates, ones that can go into compost. These are made in Blenheim from potato starches by The Potato Plate Company ph 03 579 1070 www.potatoplates.com. These companies also supply biodegradable packaging: <http://www.ecogrow.co.nz/bioproducs.php> or www.edengreennz.com
- ✓ Washable cotton handkerchiefs, face-flannels, dinner napkins and cloth nappies are preferable to disposable paper, plastic and cotton ones. Cotton growing often involves large doses of pesticides: see www.sustainablecotton.org.
- ✓ Bleaching of paper and cotton with chlorine compounds is environmentally-damaging, so prefer unbleached cotton if it is available.
- ✓ In households with one baby, disposable nappies make up 50% of the household's total waste. For a city like Wellington, they make up 6% of total waste. They use more trees, oil, energy and waste water (in the production stage) than washable nappies ever will in use. And what's more, they're as much as 10 times more expensive. To cap off the argument, research shows that cloth nappy toddlers are potty-trained six months earlier than those brought up in disposables. For more information on washable cloth nappies see www.thenappynetwork.org.nz or

contact *Nature Baby* shop & mail-order in Auckland (ph 0800 222 920), or search the web for 'Nappy Network' contacts in your area.



Easy-clean washable nappies instead of disposables, to reduce waste volumes!

- ✓ Do you use razors or an electric shaver? An electric razor/shaver is probably preferable to several years' supply of disposable metal and plastic razors, in terms of materials efficiency. However, the traditional hand-held 'safety razor' uses a replaceable blade, so that waste is minimal compared to the one-piece designs which are thrown away. Toothbrush designs are moving towards replaceable brush-heads, too.
- ✓ If you are going to use batteries, then rechargeable ones are the way to go. The energy price tag for disposable batteries can range from \$400 to \$1000 per kilowatt hour, while rechargeable ones are less than \$1 – or free if you use a solar-powered recharger (and can avoid overheating the batteries). See www.worldwise.com/batteries.html for

details on different types of rechargeable batteries.

- ✓ Light bulbs are not normally viewed as disposable, but controlled obsolescence is built into them nevertheless. There's a story that a lightbulb has been burning in Detroit for 70 years, so there's no need for them to die apart from the fact that if they didn't, the lightbulb manufacturers would soon go out of business. The new range of compact fluorescent lightbulbs aren't everyone's cup of tea, but if you can catch one of the deals and pick them up for less than \$10 for a triple pack, they will repay you in reduced energy costs over their lifespan.

4. The case for organic fruit and vegetables

This section discusses the issues of pesticide exposure and genetic engineering, and what you can do if you are concerned about these issues.

- **Let me check to see if this food is poisoned...**By the end of the 1980's the USA Food and Drug Administration had admitted that at least 66 of the 300+ permitted pesticides used in food production were potential carcinogens. The quantity or 'dose' that is hazardous remains under debate between industry experts. However, 'broad spectrum' pesticides such as DDT, lindane, dieldrin, endrin and aldrin, aldicarb, plus the herbicide 2,4,5-T, have since been phased out in several countries. It is important to note that fungicides are used to prevent potentially toxic fungal growths on imported foods during shipment or domestic market storage, and that natural toxins from decay or algae can be dangerous to human health too.
- **So what can I do about it?** Grow your own fruit and vegetables,

selecting pest-resistant varieties in preference to those that depend upon frequent chemical treatment to provide a reliable crop. If you do use pesticides and herbicides, restrict their garden use only to the occasions when you can not weed with garden tools or hand-pick pests (which you could in a few minutes for caterpillars, for example, from cabbages or broccoli). You might sometimes use them if earlier deterrent actions (such as slug barriers of ash, or beer traps; or pheromone traps for Apple Codling Moth), have failed. There is additional information available in the Gardening pack within this series.



Find out if there is an organic fresh-foods weekly subscription delivery (or 'vege-box') scheme operating in your area. (Photo: Rhys Taylor)

Buy 'certified organic' if you can't grow your own, or barter with spray-free gardeners who have the time and land to do so. If you are finding it difficult to locate organic suppliers, try www.organicpathways.co.nz or www.organicproduce.co.nz (0800 567 888) or the South Island's first certified organic grocer: www.sevenfieldsorganic.com/ also check advertisements in *Organic NZ* magazine and stalls at Farmers Markets.

Some regions of the country have a local *Organic Guide* published. An example is one from Organic Garden City Trust, PO Box 327 Christchurch. Food grown without pesticides or synthetic chemicals could carry the certification of *Bio-Gro* or *Demeter* or *Certenz* (*Organic AgriQuality NZ*). Look for the producer's licence number alongside the symbol:

(Note that not all locally-produced food sold in NZ as 'organic' carries one of these certifications. Ask to see evidence of organic certification, which helps to educate retailers too!)



Among non-organic foods, avoid produce with high pesticide residue or those from genetically modified (GMO or GE) crops. The Environmental Working Group, a Washington-based advocacy group, has a guide to pesticide levels in fruit and veges. Kiwifruit comes out on the low side, along with asparagus, avocados, cauliflower, corn and pineapple. Strawberries, on the other hand, can have high levels of pesticide contamination, as do apples, peppers, grapes, peaches

and potatoes in their study. (See www.foodnews.org/walletguide.php)

Also avoid produce that has been modified to create herbicide resistance or to allow use of a systemic insecticide, as such crops could contain higher residues of that pesticide or herbicide. A 2008 checklist of food products which are stated by producers to be free of GE or GMO ingredients is available as a card from *Greenpeace NZ*, Private Bag 92507 Wellesley Street, Auckland 1. Tel. 0800 4 GE FREE. www.greenpeace.org.nz/truefood.

Since 2004, these NZ brands have committed to being GE Free (according to Greenpeace). The list is changing, so for 2008 updates see: www.gefreefood.org.nz or ask your group tutor/facilitator, who has a copy.

- Anathoth
- Aztec and Hansells
- Bean Supreme tofu & sausages
- Bio and Eco eggs
- Butch Pet Food
- Ceres
- Cyclops (Serra Natural Foods)
- Delmaine
- Dolmio and Kantong (EFFEM)
- Eta
- FRENZ Eggs
- George Weston (Tip Top and Burgen Breads, Norths, Holsoms, Ploughmans)
- Goodman Fielder (Vogels, Country Split, Molenberg, Quality bakers, Freyas, Sunrise, Meadowlea, Gold 'n Canola, Logicol, Olivani, Amco, Champion, Elfin, - but *not yet* Bluebird, Ernest Adams)
- Griffins
- Heinz Watties
- Henery eggs
- Kapiti
- Kia Ora juices
- Independent Fisheries
- Lisa's Dips
- Mainland Dairy Products – organic cheddar
- Oak (Heinz Watties)
- Old Fashioned Eggs (Sayes)
- Pal and Whiskas (EFFEM)
- Phoenix
- Promite (EFFEM)
- San Remo e.g. pastas
- Sanitarium (So Good, Cereals, Marmite)
- Sealord

Tegel e.g. chicken
 Unilever (Flora, Olivio, Continental, John West, Raguletto, Cheicken Tonight, Colman's, Streets, Peck's)
 Vitasoy
 Whittakers Chocolate
 Whitestone cheeses
 Yoplait Yoghurts
NB: this list is growing, check for 2008 updates!

• **Eat NZ fresh produce in season**, or preserved (frozen, bottled and tinned) NZ produce out of season, rather than imported Northern Hemisphere fresh produce. One reason is that many of the food imports will have been treated with pesticides and/or fungicides to keep their 'fresh' appearance and to meet NZ's strict bio-security regulations. There is also a large energy cost involved in shipping fruit and vegetables between the Northern and Southern hemispheres, which is an issue for NZ food exports going northwards too. Air-freight of fresh produce to or from NZ is significantly more energy-wasting, per kilogram, than sea-shipping containers - by more than 60 times, according to Oil and Food: A Rising Security Challenge by Danielle Murray, Update 48 on the Earth Policy website, www.earth-policy.org.

• **Peel fresh produce that may have been sprayed** (i.e. non-organic), to reduce your pesticide intake, especially if the skin feels waxy. Non-organically grown food crops very likely to have been sprayed include: lettuce, cabbage, cucumber, carrots, onions, peppers, pip fruits, grapes, and berries.

You are reading notes from the NZ Sustainable Living Programme: www.sustainableliving.org.nz If not already enrolled in a class, you can register interest at the website.

5. Want to eat lots of meat?

Consider this...
 Intensive methods of meat production, (e.g. battery hens, indoor pig feedlots) are becoming more popular in New Zealand, and these tend to require larger inputs of energy, processed foodstuffs and higher levels of pharmaceuticals than outdoor rearing 'on grass'. Previously, New Zealand has been a low-impact, grass-based, sheep, beef and (more recently) deer and ostrich grower, with few livestock food supplements required apart from trace minerals and the vets' pharmaceuticals.

In Europe, the drive for cheap meat from intensive animal rearing, plus mass livestock transport has permitted the recent spread of two diseases, BSE (mad cow) and 'Foot and Mouth', which has devastated the industry. NZ has escaped these diseases so far, but we have important lessons to heed.

Consumption of meat does have associated environmental and health aspects to consider.

The conversion of vegetable protein by cattle into meat or milk is not very efficient: it takes 790kg of grass or hay eaten to create 50kg of beef for us. To illustrate this, farmland the size of five football pitches could, in the same length of time, provide meat to feed two people, or wheat to feed 24, or beans to feed 60. Beans are more productive than wheat as they 'fix' nitrogen from the air and soil, and don't need nitrogen fertiliser when grown in a crop rotation.

Growing numbers of beef and dairy cattle can be undesirable environmentally because of the significant contribution of their gut-bacteria-produced *methane gas* to global warming; and the potential pollution of streams and groundwater by

bacteria and nitrogen in their body wastes.

The environmentally-aware shopper therefore tends to buy and cook relatively less meat and choose more vegetable proteins. Eating proportionately more from lower on the natural food chain may also be the healthiest choice for clear arteries and cancer protection (See Heart Foundation and Cancer Society websites/leaflets; also SPARC). The NZ Vegetarian society can be contacted here: www.vegetarian.org.nz/

The World Cancer Research Fund (which reviewed 4,000 research studies) and the UK Government Committee on the Medical Aspects of Food and Nutrition have both advocated taking more exercise, avoiding smoking or being overweight, and *reducing red meat intake*. They recommend: no more than 80g meat per day on average, compared to 500g of fruit/vegetables and 700g of cereals and pulses.

Eat relatively more fish as it has a lower-fat source of protein than most animal meats, and the oil component is healthy. NZ has a major fish export industry as well as a domestic market. **But check out your fish choices first**, because environmental impacts of harvesting both freshwater or ocean fish are high. Ocean fish stocks have been declining worldwide as hunting them becomes technologically more sophisticated and larger scale (using sonar to track shoals, huge bottom-trawling nets and factory-processing boats, for example).

- Commercial fish harvests also result in many deaths of 'non-target' species, such as albatrosses (from daytime long-line tuna fishing), fur seals (from hoki fishing) and dolphins (from set nets on the coast). For every kg of shrimp that is caught, over five kg of other marine life is killed, including endangered sea

turtles. Such environmental impacts add to the argument for choosing more vegetable proteins and less meat or fish in your diet.



If you are a fish eater, the pocket-size 'Best Fish Guide' by Forest & Bird may interest you. Their 'red list' of fish to avoid is based on their view of over-fished stocks or environment-damaging fishing methods such as bottom trawling.

www.forestandbird.org.nz/what-we-do/publications/-best-fish-guide (2008 edition) and 'bycatch' photos at: www.greenpeace.org.nz/rfmo/oia

- **Slow Down** Enjoy life and particularly your food, more by taking time to select, prepare and eat your food. Taking your time & having a meal with others can enhance your life. The *Slow food* revolution is yours for the taking – see www.slowfood.com

6. Read the fine print

- **Note what food labels tell you.** Labels on processed food packets and cans from Europe carry internationally standard codes to identify the preservatives, additives, colourings etc, that have been included. Since December 2002 Australia and NZ also follow these codes. Fresh food generally does not have such chemicals used on it. The codes are grouped as follows:
 - ✓ E100 to E180 are permitted colours, including 15 that are not recommended for children (E102

- 104, 107, 110, 120, 122, 123, 124, 127, 128, 131, 132, 133, 150, 151, 154, 155, 180). E173 is the metal aluminium
- ✓ E200 to E290 are mostly synthetic preservatives including sulphites (asthma triggers for some), benzoates; E300 to 302, 304 and 306 to 309 are types of vitamins C and E which are natural preservatives. E310 to 321 are also antioxidant preservatives but synthetic
- ✓ E322 to E337 are mostly emulsifiers derived from egg, soya, or seaweeds, used to help mix fats with water. E430 to E450 are synthetic emulsifiers but may be laxatives and gut-irritants for some people too
- ✓ E620 to E637 includes monosodium glutamate and a range of 'flavour enhancers'

For a full list see the free booklet 'Identifying Food Additives' from NZ Food Safety Authority: 0800 693 721. www.nzfsa.govt.nz (use site search) or the 'Official Shoppers Guide to food additives and labels' published by Murdoch Books (\$6).

New Zealand foods carrying a *National Heart Foundation* -approved **white and red tick symbol**, have relatively low sodium chloride (salt) and low saturated fat content. They are higher in fibre (3g or more per serving) and could therefore contribute to a healthy diet.

Since the end of 2002 nutritional labelling has been compulsory for packaged foods. The labels tell you the percentage of key ingredients, such as % meat in a sausage, or % fruit in jam; also the energy content, protein, saturated fat, sugar, and sodium, among other information. Possible presence of common food

allergens is also listed, even if quantities are tiny.

- **Seek-out reputable environmental claims.** A small proportion of the products available in New Zealand shops carry a label to show that they make a reputable environmental claim. Unsubstantiated claims seen on food packs and other products over the years have included variations on 'earth-friendly' or 'has no effect on the environment' or is '100% environmentally safe'. These claims are not acceptable in NZ under the *1998 Advertising Code of Practice for Environmental Claims*. If you think a manufacturer is making a misleading or untrue environmental claim about their product, you can contact The Advertising Standards Authority at 04 472 7852, or email: asa@asa.co.nz (website: www.asa.co.nz).

Look for evidence of independent environmental certification, preferably of the products and company environmental policies, such as the recently introduced *Enviomark*: www.landcareresearch.co.nz/services/sustainablesoc/enviomark/buyers_guide.asp

For manufactured goods, a NZ Government-backed scheme setting standards is *Environmental Choice* www.enviro-choice.org.nz. Your group leader or tutor may be able to show you a recent list of products that have the Environmental Choice label, or you can find it on website www.ianz.govt.nz. Australia has followed NZ's lead by introducing a similar Environmental Choice standard in 2002. Its logo is like the NZ one but with Australia beside the tick. Products include a range of adhesives, recycled rubber tyres and flooring, recycled plastic outdoor

furniture, irrigation equipment, paper and office supplies and civil engineering products. Australian details at www.aela.org.au



In recent years, **Environmental Choice NZ** items have included: some detergents, over 20 *Feltex* wool carpets, *The Warehouse* range of recycled plastic rubbish bags, compost bins and worm farm bins, and over 40 *Resene* paints (a brochure available from 0800 737 363). Others are *Gracefield* 'Elite' toilet tissue, *Huhtamaki Van Leer* moulded paper packaging (such as egg cartons and apple trays) and *Vertex Pacific* recycled plastic drums, pipes and bins. New categories in 2004 include office copier paper and one firm's photocopiers.

A web-based information source on recycled products available (and in many cases manufactured) in New Zealand is 'Buy it Back'. This is a searchable guide to recycled products in metal, plastics and other materials found at www.zerowaste.co.nz.



In plastics it ranges from clothes hangars to cable conduits, benches, clothes pegs and recycling crates.

- **Other Label claims.** An article in *NZ Consumer Magazine*, May 2002, looked at product label claims such as 'hypo-allergenic' and 'anti-bacterial' and found no legal definition nor reliable evidence that household products are better for having this characteristic. For fresh eggs, *NZ Consumer* found no legal definition of 'free range' nor requirement for auditing of farms that claim this, unless they had arranged organic certification, or RNZ-SPCA endorsement, which would be labelled (see <http://rnzspca.org.nz/previous-campaign-battery-cages> (and for a strong critique of battery hen farming see www.safe.org.nz)



In what conditions are your eggs being produced? Labels may give some info. (Photo Kathryn Furlong)

An article in *Organic NZ* magazine July-Aug 2001 and similar one in *The Listener* 20 Jan 2001, looked at **parabens**, which are preservative chemicals, commonly used in cosmetics and sun-tan creams for the past 50 years. Research by Brunel University in the UK suggests (but does not prove) parabens are weak mimics of the human oestrogen hormone. Passing through the skin of pregnant women, parabens *might* have contributed to a decline in male fertility and an increased likelihood of cancers. Sales of paraben-free cosmetics have grown in NZ since those reports. Two exponents of this approach is *Living Nature Skincare* of Kerikeri. Tel. 0508 548 464 www.livingnature.com &

Skinfood of Auckland 09 574 5554 www.skinfood.co.nz .

If you'd prefer to make your own 'fresh' cosmetics so that you know what chemicals are used in them, see the recipes in these publications:

- ✓ Gwen Skinner, *Simply Living – a gatherer's guide to New Zealand's Fields, Forests and Shores*. 1993. Reed, NZ.
- ✓ Roy Genders, *Natural Beauty- The practical guide to wildflower cosmetics*. 1992 (UK)
- ✓ Debra Lynn Dadd, *Non-Toxic, natural and earthwise* 1990 (USA)



The distinctive 'Buy NZ Made' logo.

Look for this when you are selecting goods, including gifts. www.buynz.org.nz

- **Made in New Zealand?** Goods that have not been shipped across the oceans cost less in fossil fuels, but also have the advantage of supporting local manufacturing jobs and economy. www.buynz.org.nz/86574/html/page.html

- **Check those imported goods! Scope for some 'ethical shopping'?** There seems to be a glut of gift shops within the shopping malls these days, stocked with picture frames, boxes, vases, cushions, sculptures and jewellery. Whilst some is NZ-made craft-work, much will have been imported, mostly from Asian countries.

How do you know that the manufacturers are not very low-wage-payers, or have unhealthy working-environments? New Zealand has a High Street ethical trader available: *Trade Aid Importers*, whose shops stock similar gift items, but made

by partner businesses that they know, in 30 countries. A larger proportion of their retail price reaches the makers, *Trade Aid* claims, as they focus on getting a fair income back to the producers and their communities. Since their launch in the 1970s they have been concerned to encourage use of environmentally-sustainable materials, safe production methods, respect for the needs and aspirations of the workers, advocacy against child labour and funding for health and education projects. They protect their partners' traditional craft skills and help to develop new products, which can expand fair trade export markets. To locate your nearest of 30 Trade Aid shops see the Telecom White Pages, or call freephone 0508 872 332



- **Time for a tea or coffee?** One of the Trade Aid imports is a Mexican organic coffee, a commodity which is produced by co-operatives of small farmers. There are an estimated 20 million coffee growers in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Coffee is the second most heavily traded international commodity after oil. Coffee bean prices are set low by Western commodity exchanges.

Retailers and processors make large profits, but NZ Trade Aid returns a higher proportion of the retail price to the growers. They import tea and chocolate, too. Other firms now sell fair trade coffee, too.

- **A final word, on the subject of tea,** starting with a good argument for buying organic tea. Tea leaves can contain residues of up to 30 different pesticides, fungicides and herbicides, to which the tea-workers may also be exposed. Organic growing avoids these. Source: Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka, 1997.

Happier Shopping, perhaps less often, by insisting on pay as you go? Credit is easy to obtain in NZ, and as a nation we have high levels of private indebtedness. Credit cards, charging high interest, are a key part of this spend beyond our means. The inter-national 'Buy Nothing Day' in Nov. encourages shoppers to cut up their credit cards as a clever reminder of the need to control impulse buying.



Cutting up the credit card - an antidote to *Affluenza!* (Seen on 'Buy Nothing Day' website). www.adbusters.org/metas/eco/bnd/

