The pros and cons of 'ecolabels' in cleaning products

EurekAlert!

The environmental certification seals, preferred ingredient lists and consumer product guides appearing on cleaning products in the United States and abroad are the topic of the cover story in *Chemical & Engineering News*. C&EN is the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society.

In the article, C&EN Assistant Managing Editor Michael McCoy explains that cleaning products are at the forefront of efforts to inform consumers about the sustainability and environmental impact of goods used on a daily basis. Supporters of the guides, lists and certifications believe that these resources help manufacturers make safer products and consumers make more informed purchasing choices. However, many manufacturers and suppliers believe that the "ecolabels" also confuse some consumers.

Some companies, for instance, think that the lists and guides take too narrow a view of the eco-friendliness of products. They believe that the lists and guides need to look more into the entire environmental footprint of each product, such as how much energy is involved in its production and usage. Another perceived problem with ecolabels is that they look at the general hazards of the ingredients, not the possible risks associated with the actual use. Still, these labels and guides are slowly but surely catching on with both manufacturers and consumers, the story points out.

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