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**Products**

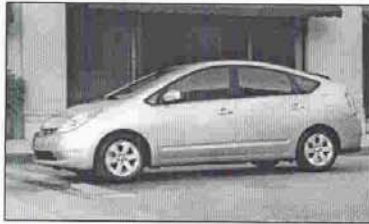
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**Issues**

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Assessing your needs  
Making the right choice  
Getting the most value

**Why it matters****Green Ratings****Green Ratings Autos**

These Ratings can help you choose a car with fuel economy in mind. Consumer Reports fuel economy ratings are based on a series of actual road tests, including city, highway, and country-road driving by at least two engineers to account for variability in driving. EPA's widely advertised mileage estimates are obtained through a machine called a dynamometer where car wheels are moved at the car is stationary. We believe our estimates, which tend to be lower, more accurately reflect the fuel economy each car will get in real life.

Ratings last updated: April 2006

Click for more information

Excellent 
 Very good 
 Good 
 Fair 
 Poor

☐ Make & model 
 ☐ Price as tested 
 ☐ Overall score



0 P F G VG E 100

**Fuel efficient cars**

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### Green Ratings

## Green Ratings Autos

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Excellent 
 Very good 
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 Fair 
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☐ Make & model 
 ☐ Price as tested 
 ☐ Overall score

☐ Fuel economy  
☐ CR overall mpg  
☐ CR highway mpg  
☐ CR city mpg  
☐ Lead (pounds)  
☐ Capacity (gal of people)  
☐ Annual cost

0 P F G VG E 100

## Fuel efficient cars

<b>Honda Insight</b> (manual)	\$21045		• 51 66 36 365 2 \$650
<b>Toyota Prius</b>	\$23780		• 44 50 35 825 5 \$755
<b>Toyota Echo</b>	\$15018		• 38 46 29 775 5 \$875
<b>Honda Civic Hybrid</b>	\$22400		• 37 47 26 850 5 \$895
<b>Volkswagen Jetta TDI</b>	\$24580		• 34 46 24 970 5 \$1140

■ Make & model ■ Price as tested ■ Overall score



#### Small cars (Automatic transmission)

<b>Toyota Prius</b>	\$23780		• 44 50 35 825 5 \$755
<b>Honda Civic Hybrid</b>	\$22400		• 37 47 26 850 5 \$895
<b>Volkswagen Jetta TDI</b>	\$24580		• 34 46 24 970 5 \$1140
<b>Scion xB</b>	\$15220		• 30 37 23 825 5 \$1095
<b>Scion xA</b>	\$14445		• 30 40 20 825 5 \$1110
<b>Toyota Corolla LE</b>	\$17910		• 29 39 20 860 5 \$1140
<b>Honda Civic EX</b>	\$19610		• 28 43 18 850 5 \$1175
<b>Chevrolet Aveo LS</b>	\$13885		• 28 38 19 860 5 \$1195
<b>Mazda 3 i</b>	\$18190		• 27 38 18 850 5 \$1230
<b>Mitsubishi Lancer ES</b>	\$16574		• 26 35 19 825 5 \$1255
<b>KiaSpectra EX</b>	\$16185		• 25 36 18 850 5 \$1300
<b>Suzuki Aerio</b>	\$16494		• 25 32 18 895 5 \$1340
<b>Saturn Ion 3</b>	\$18415		• 25 35 17 900 5 \$1315
<b>Ford Focus ZX4 SES</b>	\$19080		○ 24 32 17 825 5 \$1385
<b>Volkswagen Jetta 2.5</b>	\$23580		○ 24 33 17 970 5 \$1380

Hyundai Elantra GT	\$17589	69	○ 24 33 16 850 5 \$1400
Suzuki Forenza	\$14794	35	○ 24 35 16 875 5 \$1375
Subaru Impreza 2.5i	\$19720	60	○ 23 30 16 830 5 \$1465
Chevrolet Cobalt LS	\$16350	49	○ 23 35 15 890 5 \$1425

■ Make & model ■ Price as tested ■ Overall score



#### Small cars (Manual transmission)

Honda Insight	\$21045	31	● 51 66 36 365 2 \$650
Toyota Echo	\$15018	63	● 38 46 29 775 5 \$875
Scion xB	\$14420	55	● 32 36 25 825 5 \$1040
Honda Civic EX	\$18810	81	● 31 40 22 850 5 \$1080
Scion xA	\$13045	42	● 31 38 22 825 5 \$1060
Mazda 3 i	\$17290	78	● 30 42 21 850 5 \$1100
KiaSpectra EX	\$15185	61	● 28 35 20 850 5 \$1180
Suzuki Forenza	\$13994	39	● 27 36 19 875 5 \$1235
Chevrolet Aveo LS	\$12925	30	● 27 36 19 860 5 \$1200

■ Make & model ■ Price as tested ■ Overall score



#### Family sedans

Toyota Prius	\$23780	68	● 44 50 35 825 5 \$755
Honda Accord Hybrid (V6)	\$31540	87	● 25 37 18 850 5 \$1300



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## Getting the most value

In addition to buying a fuel-efficient car to begin with, these tips can save gasoline and money:

**Maintain your car.** A clogged air filter alone can cause up to a 10 percent increase in fuel consumption.

**Get going.** These days you don't have to let a car sit and "warm up" started; engines warm up faster while you're driving.

**Take it smooth.** Steady driving makes best use of your fuel. Try to avoid acceleration or braking. Keep your speed reasonable--gas mileage drops rapidly at speeds above 60 mph.

**Don't be a drag.** At highway speeds, more than half of your engine's power goes to overcoming aerodynamic drag. A loaded roof rack can decrease efficiency by 5 percent.

**Be a regular guy or gal.** If your car owner's manual specifies regular oil, premium is a waste of money.

**Pump it up.** A tire that is under-inflated by only 2 pounds per square inch can increase fuel consumption by 1 percent. Check your owner's manual for recommendations.

**Forget fuel boosters.** Products that promise better fuel economy (and better gas mileage) don't always deliver, according to *Consumer Reports* tests. For the lowdown, click here.

You can read more about stretching your fuel dollars for free from *Consumer Reports* by clicking here.

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## Household energy



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## You can make a difference

## ANATOMY OF YOUR HOME ENERGY BILL AND HOW TO SAVE

This section looks at the environmental impact of our energy consumption and some simple ways to use less of it, and the many positive benefits that result.

**Home heating and cooling: 45 percent**

In most households, heating and cooling account for the biggest share of your energy bill. The good news is there are many ways to cut those costs.

*Choose energy-efficient furnaces or air conditioners that are the right size for your home.*

*Properly insulate your home (especially the attic), including the ductwork.*

*Contact your utility company for a free energy audit. If your utility company doesn't offer free audits, try the do-it-yourself tool, from the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency.*

*Programmable thermostats, insulated windows, and ceiling fans can all help lower your energy bill. A programmable thermostat, for instance, can reduce heating and cooling costs as much as 20 percent when you use it to reduce the temperature 5 degrees at night and 10 degrees during the day when you raise it an equal amount when cooling).*

**Hot water: 11 percent**

Overall, water-heater technology hasn't changed much in recent years, but there are, however, newer, instantaneous heating models (with no tank) that can help reduce energy costs.

you up to \$50 a year in energy costs, although they cost more initially. Water heaters are gaining in popularity as an alternative for or supplement to conventional water-heating units. For more information, visit the Department of Energy online or National Center for Photovoltaics.

*Set your water heater to 120 degrees*, it can save up to 10 percent heating costs compared to a 140 degree setting.

*Wrap an insulation blanket* around your hot water pipes and storage tank.

*Replace a showerhead that is more than 10 years old* with a low-flow showerhead. It can save up to half the hot water used for showering.

#### **Washers and dryers: 10 percent**

New high-efficiency appliances are much better for the environment and your family finances. These tips can also help:

*Wash laundry in cold water*, which can save up to \$63 a year.

*Consider a front-loading washing machine* if you're in the market for a new one. *Consumer Reports* tests show that the most efficient front-loading machine cut water consumption by about 25 percent compared with the worst tested.

#### **Lighting: 7 percent**

*You can reduce lighting costs by 67 percent by using compact fluorescent bulbs* instead of incandescent bulbs. They cost less than \$10 each but cast much more light than a 100-watt incandescent while using only about 25 watts. They therefore take less energy to do more. Compact fluorescents also last 10 times as long as standard bulbs. You can save even more by installing electronic photocell on-and-off switches and electric timers to turn lights on and off automatically when you don't need them. However, compact fluorescents do contain mercury and should be carefully disposed. For more information, visit [www.lamprecycle.org](http://www.lamprecycle.org) for a listing of state departments that can give you information on where to recycle your compact fluorescent bulbs. Local Earth911.org's zip code searchable directory.

#### **Refrigerators: 6 percent**

Thanks to federally mandated minimum-efficiency standards, this finicky hog now has one of the daintiest energy appetites in the house. Here are still ways to reduce its consumption:

*Choose a top-freezer model* (the most efficient) over a side-by-side refrigerator (the least efficient).

*Icemakers add to energy consumption* and potentially to repair bills. Refrigerators with icemakers are the most repair-prone according to *Consumer Reports*.

#### **Household electronics: 4 percent**

Your TVs, DVD player, VCR, and all the rest each contribute to your energy tab. Running a computer and a monitor 24 hours a day (and



people do) uses some 1,100 kilowatt hours annually. If electricity in costs 8 cents per kilowatt hour, for example, that translates to \$88.

*Putting them on sleep mode could save more than 80 percent of the and cut CO2 emissions by up to 1,250 pounds a year, the EPA say*

**Dishwashers: 2 percent**

New high-efficiency appliances are much better for the environment and family finances. This tip can also help:

*Wash full loads in your dishwasher, skip the special cycles (like sanitize), load the machine correctly (for example, heavily soiled items at the sides).*

**Miscellaneous: 15 percent**

Products such as home-security systems, cell phones, PDAs, small mounted vacuum cleaners, toys, and even those clocks built into stoves all consume energy.

*AC power supplies* (power cords with a bricklike appendage that convert power back to DC) used on all manner of devices consume a surprising amount of energy--more than 58 billion kilowatt-hours annually, much of that for products they power are not even in use. That's equal to the annual output of large power plants. It also translates into 40 million tons of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere each year, according to ERM Consulting, an environmental consulting firm. [Click here to learn how to reduce energy waste.](#)

Increasingly, many products consume energy even when they're off. According to The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), standby power on many types of consumer electronics accounts for 5 percent of total household energy consumption, or about 450 kilowatt-hours per year, and costs the average consumer some \$36 annually.

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### Climate



You can make a difference

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### You can make a difference

**Your choices have a measurable impact.** The decisions you make on electricity use and transportation, as well as the waste you generate, affect global climate change. According to EPA estimates, about 32% of greenhouse gas emissions are within the direct control of individual consumers (the energy consumption of homes, offices, agricultural uses, and so forth). In the U.S., where more greenhouse gases are emitted per person than in any other country, this is an important step. By making the right choices, you can reduce your contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and often save money at the same time.

**Choose energy-efficient appliances.** You can reduce your personal contribution to global warming by using energy-efficient products in your home. *Consumer Reports* has tested a variety of appliances and has ranked them for energy efficiency. Visit our Green ratings section to find evaluations for dishwashers, washers and dryers, refrigerators, and air conditioners.

**Choose compact fluorescent light bulbs over standard bulbs.** This step can reduce power-plant carbon dioxide emissions about 100 pounds per year. Compact fluorescents last six to 10 times as long as standard incandescents and reduce lighting costs by about 67 percent, according to the EPA. However, compact fluorescent bulbs do contain mercury and should be handled carefully. For more information, visit [lamprecycle's](#) clickable map for state details that can give you information on where to recycle your compact fluorescent bulbs locally or check Earth911's zip code searchable directory.

**Driving a fuel-efficient car is the single largest step you can take to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.** By choosing a more fuel-efficient car, you can save money on gasoline while reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

about it in the Autos section. To see Consumer Rep. Data for efficient cars, check out our Green Ratings.

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## Waste



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## You can make a difference

### Reduce

**Plan before you buy.** Before you buy anything, you may want to consider if there are other, less material-intensive ways to meet your needs. While these are obvious, they're all worth a mention:

- Ask yourself if you could you borrow (or pay to rent) the item instead of buying it.
- Consider sharing ownership with your neighbors of seasonal equipment like snow blowers or lawn mowers.
- Determine if a broken item can be repaired instead of replaced. Be aware, however, that this might not make environmental sense for some products (like refrigerators and air conditioners) that have increased in efficiency over time, often better simply to replace.
- Look for features that will make products easy to upgrade if your needs change.
- Plan your food purchases. A new study from the University of Arizona's Contemporary Archeology Project in Tucson estimates that an average household currently tosses out \$590 per year in spoiled or uneaten meat, vegetables and grain products.

**How to curtail the extra mail.** About 4 billion pounds of paper go into producing direct-mail catalogs each year. You can remove yourself from direct marketing lists by registering online or by sending a postcard



name, home address, and signature to Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512. Contact the service then know to take your name off their mailing lists. You can also contact a company directly and ask to be taken off its list.

### Reuse

**Use rechargeable batteries.** When possible, replace the regular dry-cell batteries in radios, toys, cell phones, watches, laptop computers, power tools, and remote controls with rechargeables. Currently, Americans use 3 billion dry-cell batteries each year. Using rechargeable batteries reduces the amount of metal and plastic that is needed to make new ones. When disposing rechargeables, make sure to recycle them which will keep the batteries out of landfills and incinerators, which is especially important for those that can contain lead, mercury, and cadmium.

**Choose reusable products over disposables.** You'll not only reduce waste but can often save more money. For example, *Consumer Reports* found that disposable mops and new vacuum-style mops cost more than \$115 per year, compared with \$50 for replacement heads and a traditional sponge mop (and that's on top of the initial cost of buying the kit). Plus the used components add to the solid waste burden.

Likewise, using a sponge or rag for routine clean-up chores will save money on towels, which can be reserved for cleaning cutting boards, counters, and spills. You can keep sponges clean by tossing them in the dishwasher with them in diluted bleach, or rinsing them and then heating them in the microwave for 60 seconds at full power.

*Consumer Reports Online* subscribers can learn more about how to clean cleaning cloths and mops held up in our tests.

**Find someone who can use what you no longer need.** Online exchanges, such as freecycle, eBay, and Craig's List (along with its honored outlets as yard sales and thrift shops), make it easier than ever to find a home for unwanted, but still useful, items.

**Extend the life of your current computer.** By some estimates, as much as half of all retired computers are still in good working order when they are replaced to make way for newer technology. Sometimes simple upgrades, or repairs can help you extend the life of a computer beyond the usual life of just three to five years. To learn more about steps you can take, see *Consumer Reports' New Lives for Old Hardware*.

**Donate your used computer.** Consumers, schools, and nonprofit organizations can often use computer equipment that no longer meets the original needs. Several national and many local organizations facilitate the donation of electronic equipment. The National Cristina Foundation is one such group.

**But before you donate or buy certain used items, check to see**

**been recalled.** This is especially important for products designed for other young children, which may be unsafe. Consumer Reports Online has recall notices on its Web site.

### Recycle

**Make sure your recycling bin contains only the materials accepted by your local program.** Contamination of recycled stock with nonrecyclable materials can compromise the quality and marketability of glass, plastic, and metal. Glassmaking factories that accept recycled bottles, for instance, must go to great lengths to remove contaminants such as windowpane glass and light bulbs that, because of their different melting points, can ruin entire batches of glass.

**Large appliances and autos have their own special recycling programs.** Many states have banned these items from local landfills, and global scrap steel makes recycling them a lucrative proposition. To find out how to recycle these items where you live, use the zip-code search directory offered by Earth 911, or call your local sanitation or public works department. Many charitable organizations accept donations of used cars (as well as boats and even planes), and you may be able to take a tax deduction. The IRS recently tightened these rules, however. For the details, click on the link below.

Turn yard and kitchen wastes into compost. For composting tips and information on the equipment you need (which is minimal), visit our page on Composting.

### Pay special attention to recycling potentially hazardous products

For example:

- Recycling used motor oil helps keep it out of the waterways. Many states require filling stations to collect used motor oil for recycling.

- Car batteries are extremely hazardous because they contain large amounts of lead. Most states now require retailers selling new lead batteries to take old ones back. For more information on how to handle these and other hazardous items, visit the Autos section.

- Some rechargeable batteries contain cadmium, another highly toxic metal. When they reach the end of their useful life, these batteries must be recycled rather than simply discarded. The Rechargeable Battery Coalition, a consortium of battery manufacturers, has developed a national take-back program for rechargeables that is administered through local retail outlets. To find a participating store in your area, use the consortium's zip-code search listing.

To learn how to safely discard these and other hazardous materials, use the zip-code searchable listings offered by Earth 911.

**Turn in old electronic equipment.** Many retailers and manufacturers have programs to recycle batteries, cell phones, and computer systems,

incentives to buy new products. Others charge a fee for this service require you to mail the products back, retailers or municipalities sponsor local, limited-duration collection programs.

**Understand the label claims.** Many products tout their recycled or constituents, their capacity to be recycled later, and their ability to be recycled. For more information on what the labels mean, visit [Eco-labels](#), our site.

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### What you need to know

#### Coffee with a cause

If you're a coffee drinker looking for a little added "feel good" value you shouldn't have to look too far. Today, companies large and small offer coffee with various eco-labels claiming to address social and environmental challenges within the industry. By choosing coffees with the most credible labels, you'll help to ensure your purchase will make a difference.

#### THE CHALLENGES

**Farm earnings are low.** The majority of coffee is grown by small farmers in remote tropical regions. Because they lack market access, they receive a small fraction of the value of their harvest, keeping them in a cycle of extreme poverty. The typical coffee worker earns hardly enough to meet basic living needs.

**Growing practices are damaging eco-systems.** To increase yields, coffee varieties are being introduced that grow in full sun, which requires intensive use of pesticides and fertilizers. This arrangement disrupts natural systems and supports far less biodiversity than coffee's native shade-grown systems. For example, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center reports that studies have shown there are 94 to 97 percent fewer bird species on full-sun plantations compared to shade plantations.

#### HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**Choose coffee with meaningful eco-labels.** Doing so can help make a difference in the lives of the people who grow coffee and also benefit the environment. The following is a list of the most meaningful eco-labels you can find on coffee:



#### Bird Friendly

##### What it means:

- Coffee is grown under conditions that support healthy bird habitats
- Coffee is grown under a tree canopy with a minimum of 40 percent



- Coffee is grown organically, according to USDA organic standards

For a list of Bird Friendly coffee companies, visit the Smithsonian M Center, a research and certification organization. To learn more ab Bird Friendly label means, visit [Eco-labels](#), our free labeling Web si

A note on "Shade-Grown" claims. This has become an increasingly claim that may not be very meaningful. Any "shade-grown" claim st associated with clear, minimum shade-coverage requirements and third-party certification. Of the two certification programs in the U.S currently require—Bird friendly and Rainforest Alliance—Bird friend most rigorous shade requirements.



#### Fair Trade Certified

##### What it means:

- Farmers and workers are guaranteed a set price of \$1.26 per pound (if organic), which is higher than average market rates, for the
- Trade is conducted directly between farmer-owned cooperatives and
- Crops are grown using soil and water conservation measures that use of agrochemicals.

For a list of Fair Trade coffee companies, visit [TransFair USA](#), the labeling organization. To learn more about what the Fair Trade label visit [Eco-labels](#), our free labeling Web site.

\*Since growers receive a set price regardless of what you pay for a Certified product, you can shop around to find the lowest retail price



#### Rainforest Alliance

##### What it means:

- Crops are grown using integrated pest management systems that of agrochemicals.
- Crops are grown using water-, soil-, and wildlife-habitat conservation measures.
- Farm laborers are paid salaries and benefits equal to or greater than minimum wage of their countries.

To locate Rainforest Alliance certified coffee, visit the Rainforest Alliance environmental advocacy and certification organization. To learn more about what the Rainforest Alliance label means, visit Eco-labels, our free site.



#### **USDA Certified Organic**

##### **What it means:**

- Farmers emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality.
- Crops are grown without using synthetic fertilizer or the most persistent pesticides.
- Crops are produced without genetic engineering or ionizing radiation.
- Crops are processed and handled separately from conventional crops.

For a list of organic coffee companies, visit the Organic Consumers Association, an organic advocacy organization. Click on "organic food" and then learn more about what the organic label means, visit Eco-labels, our free labeling Web site.

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### What you need to know

#### Chocolate with a little less guilt

If chocolate is one of your favorite guilty pleasures, you can feel a little guilty about it if you treat yourself to the "sustainable" kind. A growing number of chocolate manufacturers are addressing important social and environmental challenges within the cocoa industry, and they're offering a variety of "sustainable chocolate" products with eco-labels you can trust.

#### THE CHALLENGES

**Farm earnings are low.** The majority of cocoa is grown by small farmers in remote tropical regions. Because they lack market access, they are selling their harvest to middlemen for a fraction of its value, keeping them in a cycle of extreme poverty. The typical cocoa worker earns hardly enough for basic living needs.

**There have been documented labor abuses.** To cut costs, some companies reportedly using forced child labor, particularly in Western Africa, where 70 percent of the world's chocolate originates.

**Growing practices are damaging eco-systems.** To meet increasing demand, new cocoa varieties are being introduced that grow in full sun, an arrangement that disrupts eco-systems and supports far less biodiversity than cocoa's native shaded habitat.

**Some of the most toxic pesticides are used.** Cocoa plants are extremely vulnerable to pests and diseases. As a result, farmers may resort to using highly toxic pesticides, including lindane, a toxic cousin of DDT, which poses significant health and environmental risks.

#### HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**Choose chocolate with meaningful eco-labels.** Doing so can help make a real difference in the lives of the people who grow cocoa and also in the environment. The following is a list of the meaningful eco-labels you can look for on chocolate:

USDA Certified Organic



**What it means:**

- Farmers emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality
- Crops are grown without using synthetic fertilizer or the most persistent pesticides
- Crops are produced without genetic engineering or ionizing radiation
- Crops are processed and handled separately from conventional crops

For a directory of organic chocolate companies, visit the Organic Consumers Association, a grassroots organic advocacy organization. Click on "products" and then "cookies, snacks and candy." To learn more about what the organic label means and the different grades of organic, visit Eco-labels, our free labeling Web site.

**Fair Trade Certified****What it means:**

- Farmers and workers receive a fair price for their product
- Trade is done directly between farmer-owned cooperatives and buyers
- Crops are grown using soil and water conservation measures that minimize the use of agrochemicals

For a list of Fair Trade chocolate companies, visit TransFair USA, the fair trade certification organization. To learn more about what the Fair Trade label means, visit Eco-labels, our free labeling Web site.

**Rainforest Alliance****What it means:**

- Crops are grown using integrated pest management systems that minimize the use of agrochemicals
- Crops are grown using water, soil and wildlife habitat conservation practices



- Farm laborers are paid salaries and benefits equal to or greater than minimum wage of their countries

To locate Rainforest Alliance certified chocolate, visit the Rainforest Alliance environmental advocacy and certification organization. To learn more about what the Rainforest label means, visit [Eco-labels](#), our free labeling

*To learn more about chocolate, including its origins and nutrition in ConsumerReports.org subscribers can [click here](#).*

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