

# A Green Vocabulary For Green People

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The international passion to protect our planet from the ravages of pollution and to preserve our natural resources for future generations has become an everyday fact of life.

With international support by "green" political parties, consumer organizations, celebrities and politicians, the green movement has become a powerful force with an agenda that needs to be addressed by industry, politicians and consumers. Discussions about the environment are taking place in corporate board rooms, legislative hearings, and by consumers in supermarkets and department stores.

Can we fully understand environmental concerns and energy implications without a working knowledge of basic green vocabulary? Do we understand all the issues relevant to tax incentives for oil companies? Can we properly compare the organic and nonorganic products that we decide to eat or wear every day? In essence, to think and live green you need to speak and understand green.

Understanding some key green terms and their implications can help us evaluate alternatives between our planet and sacrificing aspects our personal lifestyle. It can help us decide how we cast our vote or spend our money or how we live our lives. A green vocabulary can help us reduce our "carbon footprint ". The following represents what is best described as a green vocabulary of definitions and commentary to help eco-oriented consumers make informed green decisions.

## A Green Vocabulary for Green People

Organic identifies products made under the authority of the Organic Foods Production Act. Organic production guidelines are established to use organic materials and practices that improve ecological balance. Organic production incorporates agricultural system components to enhance natural biological systems.

Organic Agriculture is an ecological farming system that promotes natural chemical and biological cycles that improve soil fertility and maintains a balanced and productive farming system. Any products introduced to this system for fertility or pest protection are of natural composition. It eliminates the use of harmful synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, growth stimulants or antibiotics. These essential restrictions can reduce contamination or pollution to our air, water or food supply.

Natural Fibers are "certified" organic fibers derived from organic agriculture such as cotton, bamboo and hemp.

Certified Organic Cotton is derived from organic agriculture. The cotton is grown without artificial pesticides or fertilizers. Conventional cotton farming ranks about fourth in the use of pesticides in the US. Several of the top pesticides used in nonorganic cotton farming are EPA recognized carcinogens. It takes 1/3 of a pound of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers to make one organic T-shirt disregarding the use of any toxic dyes (Organic Trade Association). A typical organic tee shirt is also about the same weight but without these harmful chemicals. Organic cotton is produced using conservation minded or "sustainable" approaches to crop production. Such practices help to retain and promote soil fertility and the natural recycling of soil resources.

Organic Certification is provided by various organizations. The most widely recognized standards are GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) which is the basis for the statement "100% certified organic cotton" used by many green companies.

Fair Labor Practices are not necessarily restricted to agriculture but generally support fair wages and healthy working conditions.

Fair Trade Certification "...guarantees consumers that strict economic, social and environmental criteria were met in the production and trade of an agricultural product." ([www.transfairusa.org](http://www.transfairusa.org)).

Sweatshop-free describes the absence of manufacturing conditions currently existing in many countries, referred to as "sweatshops". They are production facilities or factories where goods are produced cheaply by minimizing workers' salaries, and increasing working hours. Proper environmental health standards are diminished, yet demands for high levels of productivity still remain. These sweatshops may thrive from corporations seeking to increase profits by subcontracting inexpensive labor.

Sustainable means conserving and preserving limited natural resources and energy supplies. It is connected with the term "recycling" when natural products are re-used like rubber (for tires, shoes) or paper/trees (for books, business cards, magazines etc.), or wood (for recycled furniture). They are made from or made into recycled, carbon based products. A good example of preserving our resources is Trees for the Future, a charitable organization dedicated to replacing and planting trees. Unfortunately, most of our energy production is derived from organic (carbon based) fossil

fuels that cannot be recycled as compared to wind or solar energy. All of this is connected to our lifestyle and our "carbon footprint" discussed next.

Carbon Footprint is a descriptor of environmental impact. It describes the consumption of carbon based natural resources or the production of carbon by-products like carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide or "greenhouse emissions". It's about lifestyle and the amount of carbon based resources we consume through transportation, climate control, manufacturing etc. Basically it relates to how much each of us consume in terms of natural resources to meet our needs. In general each of us should be committed to reducing the size of our "footprint" to sustain resources for present and future generations.

Eco-fashion is a general term describing organic clothing that has addressed the needs of the environment as well as socially responsible working conditions.

Eco-friendly suggests a product or process than has a reduced impact on the environment.

Low Impact Dyes refers to dyes used the manufacture of goods that should have minimal impact on the environment. Sometimes the term non-toxic is used here as well.

Green is a generally positive term referring to the environment, organics or even a green lifestyle to be discussed shortly.

Conscientious Clothing describes organic clothing has addressed environmental, ethical and socially responsible standards.

### The Green Lifestyle

Green Lifestyle or Green Living describes a lifestyle reflecting a strong commitment to the environment. In addition, it addresses compassionate and positive thinking. It means choosing a life with charitable deeds and practices, reflecting compassion for the environment and others. Green living is being proactive and incorporates spiritual growth leading to ethical thinking.

Social Responsibility can be defined as accepting responsibility for others and taking action against social injustice. It includes meeting the needs of others through charitable giving.

Charitable Giving describes a sense of genuine compassion and reacting to it with charitable practices towards others.

In summary, a green lifestyle represents caring for the environment combined with positive thinking leading to ethical behavior and compassionate living. Ultimately, your deeds represent positive thoughts in action. The result can be a clean, safe environment and a better quality of life for yourself and others.

If you learned some green vocabulary, be sure to use it to make decisions and set priorities in your life. Think about adopting a greener lifestyle!

Bob Folkart is Vice-President of Live Life Organics, a company devoted to encouraging the living of a passionate life through environmental awareness. Live Life Organics has created a range of eco-friendly, organic cotton clothing from adults to babies. Every item of apparel displays positive inspirational messages promoting courage, hope and compassion and includes a plantable hang tag that recycles and grows into wild flowers. To view these organic products, go to: <http://www.livelifeoragnics.com>.

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