

# One Green Score for One Earth

How retailers, brands and shoppers can  
all win with a universal **sustainability score**



# Contents



*It Started with  
a Simple Idea*

*Our Green Methodology*

*The Dawning of an Eco-Era*

*A Sustainability Score*

*Challenge: How to  
Make Green More Clear*

*Opportunity: Optimizing the Score*

*Conclusions: Commit and Score*

*Appendix*

*Study Authors*

*Contact Us*

*Special Thanks*



# It Started with a Simple Idea

## Finding a universal way to talk about sustainability

We began taking a closer look at product sustainability right about the time retailers and manufacturers were unveiling their 2011 Earth Day campaigns. The media was teeming with articles, ads, reports and blogs concerning all things eco and green. As we devoured the content and commentary, our interest was piqued by what appeared to be the prevailing topic of conversation—rating and scoring product sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

Walmart was being singled out by the press as a key contender to not only establish a sustainability rating standard or scoring system, but also as a regulator that would command widespread industry compliance (based on their organizational definition of sustainability).<sup>2</sup> In addition to greater supply chain efficiency, which could bring the company further financial rewards, Walmart's venture into sustainability was said to be fueled by their shoppers' demands.



1. "Weighing Wal-Mart | Environmental Defense Fund | Five Years into Its Sustainability Mission, the World's Largest Retailer Is Getting Some Respect." *Supermarket News | Grocery, Wholesale and Food News | Food Companies | Green Food, Food Recalls*. Web. 28 Feb. 2011. <[http://supermarketnews.com/Sustainability\\_Green/weighing\\_walmart\\_0228/](http://supermarketnews.com/Sustainability_Green/weighing_walmart_0228/)>  
•"Will American Consumers Ever Go Green? | Business | GreenBiz.com." *Green Business News, Resources, and Sustainability Career Tools | Business | GreenBiz.com*. Web. 6 Apr. 2011. <[http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2011/04/06/will-american-consumers-ever-go-green?utm\\_source=feedburner](http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2011/04/06/will-american-consumers-ever-go-green?utm_source=feedburner)>.  
•"Earth Day and the Polling of America 2011 | Business | GreenBiz.com." *Green Business News, Resources, and Sustainability Career Tools | Business | GreenBiz.com*. Web. 28 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2011/03/28/earth-day-and-polling-america-2011?page=full>>.  
2. "Move Over Government, Walmart's the New Regulator in Town | News - Advertising Age." *Advertising Agency & Marketing Industry News - Advertising Age*. Web. 7 Mar. 2011. <http://adage.com/article/news/move-government-walmart-s-regulator-town/149251/>>.  
•"The Business of Rating Business." *Marc Gunther – A Blog about Business and Sustainability*. Web. 30 May. 2011. <<http://www.marcgunther.com/2010/05/30/the-business-of-rating-business>>.



## It Started with a Simple Idea

### Finding a universal way to talk about sustainability

Shopper needs and wants is an area in which both Ryan Partnership® Chicago and Mambo Sprouts® Marketing are considered experts, so we decided to take a deeper look at exactly what consumers are looking for when it comes to a sustainable product/brand. The purpose of this study was not to create a universal sustainability score, but rather to inspire stakeholders to come together to create it and influence what it might look like. At the same time, we considered how a score could be communicated to provide shoppers with the information they need and want to make sustainable buying decisions. This is how a scoring system will have the greatest impact for the retailers and brands that develop and participate in it. Our opinion is that it's not a matter of *if* a universal sustainability score or a series of scores/standards will be established, but a matter of *when*. Thus, we'd like to stimulate the conversation now, so we're all equipped with the knowledge required to make the score(s) as meaningful as possible.





## It Started with a Simple Idea

### A closer look at eco-consciousness

Our inquiry into the subject commenced with an examination of Mambo Sprouts Marketing's *2011 Natural and Organic Consumer Annual Outlook Survey*. The study revealed that eco-consumers are as committed as ever to living healthfully. However, the definition of health and wellness products is expanding to include attributes such as minimally processed, locally sourced, green and responsible. Health and nutrition benefits, taste and ingredients list were the factors cited as having the most impact on brand purchase decisions, but the research did not delve into consumer attitudes regarding sustainability and its many dimensions, so we looked to a number of other sources to satisfy our curiosity.

What we found was an entire body of research and countless guidelines, all offering retailers and/or manufacturers direction on how best to market their individual sustainable product or service. While sensible, this approach seemed limiting and reminiscent of the way in which nutrition standards and scores are evolving. Multiple communication systems compete for attention in the nutritional measurement space (i.e. NuVal™, Aggregate Nutrient Density Index [ANDI], Certified Naturally Grown, Nutrition Keys, etc.).



Each system is designed to provide the retailer/manufacturer with a story to sell and the consumer with empowering information. But there are too many standards, each with various meanings and, as a result, confusion and consumer apathy often prevail. What could we learn from these missteps? How also could these be prevented when communicating product sustainability?





## It Started with a Simple Idea

### A closer look at eco-consciousness

This is what motivated us to launch our own study on product sustainability. We wanted to expand upon current understandings, while at the same time digging deeper into consumer attitudes and beliefs surrounding sustainable products. The results of our findings are presented within this research white paper, along with commerce implications for product marketers, retailers and shoppers. We've also included a glimpse into how product sustainability could be communicated. This was, after all, our original objective—to spark the dialogue within industry about how a sustainability score could be presented to consumers in order to have the most significant impact.

***One Green Score for One Earth***  
is the first in a series of sustainability research white papers Ryan Partnership Chicago and Mambo Sprouts Marketing will publish to assist brand marketers and retailers in communicating sustainability to consumers.

**RYAN**  
PARTNERSHIP®  
**CHICAGO**

**Mambo**  
**Sprouts**  
mambosprouts.com



# Our Green Methodology

## A two-phased research approach

The **One Green Score for One Earth** product sustainability research study was conducted in two phases by Ryan Partnership Chicago and Mambo Sprouts Marketing.

**Phase I** consisted of an online survey using the MamboTrack consumer panel to better understand 'sustainable' purchase decisions and green shopper behaviors. MamboTrack was chosen for its position as a leading survey research platform of over 50,000 health and wellness shoppers willing to share their opinions and insights about natural and organic products as well as sustainable living. For the analysis of the survey, 802 MamboTrack Summer 2011 respondents were segmented into 'shades of green' according to how important sustainability was to their purchase decisions. The respondents were assigned to one of four sustainability groups (see right).

### Respondent Groupings:



Consumers who responded that it is *very important* to buy sustainable products (n= 190)



Consumers who responded that it is *important* to buy sustainable products (n= 239)



Consumers who responded that it is *somewhat important* to buy sustainable products (n= 242)



Consumers who responded either *neutral or negative on importance* of buying sustainable products (n= 131)



## Our Green Methodology

### A two-phased research approach

**Phase II** of the study consisted of a series of structured retailer and manufacturer conversations. Interviewees were selected to represent the full spectrum of business philosophies and practices (e.g., natural/conventional, small/large, etc.) key to this study's purpose. The goal was to gather industry insight and perspective to supplement the consumer findings, as well as explore these stakeholders potentially increasing focus on the 'triple bottom line' (people, planet and profits-the key pillars that inspire sustainability).





## The Dawning of an Eco-Era

### A growing commitment to buy 'green'

From the shoppers' standpoint, it appears that sustainability is nearing a tipping point. The growing availability and promotion of products with claims around various aspects of sustainability has evolved such that even those who say sustainability is not important to them (Not Green), estimate that about one-third of recent purchases were sustainable. Meanwhile, those who are most committed to buying sustainable products (Heavy Green) were able to do so with about two-thirds of their purchases.

### Past Years' Purchases Considered Sustainable



Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, *One Green Score for One Earth* Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011



## The Dawning of an Eco-Era

### A growing commitment to buy 'green'

Mass market influencers like Walmart, Target and major grocery chains will continue promoting sustainability, and once-niche natural/organic manufacturers will continue to grow and become mainstream brands (and, of course, the media will continue to increase coverage on all things sustainable). As a result, Ryan Partnership Chicago and Mambo Sprouts Marketing fully expect the average American shoppers' commitment to buying sustainable products will rise as well. In coming years, we presume general market shoppers' attitudes and behaviors will more closely align with those we would currently consider core sustainability shoppers (Heavy Green and Medium Green).

### In the future, we predict three key market changes:

1

Shoppers will devote a larger share of their spending to products and stores that are able to convince them of their sustainability claims.

2

Shopper sensitivity to greenwashing (misleading shoppers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service) will intensify and they will demand an accurate way of understanding and comparing sustainability across products, companies and retailers.

3

Brands and retailers will increasingly focus on the triple bottom line (people, planet and profit—the key pillars that inspire sustainability), and strive to provide their customers with this information.

*Those brands that take the lead on these trends and establish themselves as credible on the topic of sustainability will reap the benefits in terms of an increased share of wallet and shopper loyalty.*



## The Dawning of an Eco-Era

What makes a product sustainable is up for debate

It was not surprising to discover that shoppers understand and define product sustainability in a variety of ways. When respondents were asked the question, *what qualities do you expect in a sustainable product*, they answered:

**“A high quality product that is affordable and does not harm the environment.”**

**“An environmentally, socially, and economically quality product that not only promotes fair trade practices, but also tastes, or is useful, in a good way.”**

**“Eco-packaging, organic, cruelty-free, animal friendly, and environmentally friendly.”**

**“Environmentally friendly & aware. Natural or recycled parts. A company that cares about the environment and is looking to educate consumers.”**

**“Does what it’s supposed to do while being healthy for the environment, people, pets, etc.”**

**“Products that are beneficial to the environment and community.”**

While there is a common environmental theme, the replies reveal a strong interest in other aspects of sustainability, such as corporate social responsibility, community welfare, fair trade practices and cruelty-free product development. Implicit in the consumer conversation around sustainable products is a standard of quality and performance—ideally at a price they can afford.







## The Dawning of an Eco-Era

**What makes a product sustainable is up for debate**

Similarly, all the manufacturers and retailers interviewed—whether more ‘conventional’ in their business practices or not—included environmental terms in their definitions of sustainability. Often they pointed to energy and supply chain efficiencies and the resulting cost savings. All agree that operating sustainably is both good for business and the right thing to do, although they tend to differ in their emphasis on which of these benefits drives their activities. Just as there is a range of shopper commitment and behavior related to sustainability, there is also a continuum of corporate commitment. For some organizations, it begins at the top and is core to their business practices and philosophy, and so sustainable activities permeate their operations, from hiring practices and production to consumer communications.

One leading natural and organic product manufacturer said, **“We take a holistic approach to sustainability and have made it part of our DNA. It has always been part of what we do—we believe in walking the talk, backing up what we are saying.”**

Another leading natural and organic product manufacturer said, **“Our products, our packaging and our role in the communities we reside in is all part of sustainability...responsible organizations look at not only the environmental impact...but social, work life balance, impact on community; all have to be part of the picture of how a company impacts sustainability.”**

For others, it may be a path they pursue solely as a business imperative due to customer or competitive market pressures, or cost and efficiency opportunities. As one mainstream grocery retailer said, **“Efficiency saves money, helps us to be more competitive. If Walmart is doing things that we are not, we have to do this to survive—and it’s the right thing to do. Consumers are demanding environmentally friendly products—we need to get better and expand to more categories.”**

Just as shoppers are migrating toward the more committed end of the spectrum, at least in purchase behavior, so are the brands and retailers we interviewed.



## The Dawning of an Eco-Era

What makes a product sustainable is up for debate

Further evidence of the expanding interest in product sustainability can be seen in the retail channels in which shoppers expect to find sustainable products. Both brands and retailers have made great strides in recent years in expanding the availability of sustainable products across channels. As a result, shoppers no longer turn just to specialty/health channels for sustainable products and services—six in ten consumers are just as likely to shop conventional supermarkets.

Four in ten or more 'green-minded' shoppers who are moderately committed to buying sustainably are more likely than others to look for, and expect, sustainable products at value prices from discount/mass merchandising outlets.

It is also key to note the impact that e-commerce is having, with about one-quarter to over one-third of sustainable shoppers looking for these products online. This channel of distribution is both expanding shopper access to sustainable products and, most likely, spurring competitive channels to increase their own assortment.



Shoppers no longer turn just to specialty/health channels for sustainable products and services.

# 6 in 10

are just as likely to shop conventional supermarkets.



# The Dawning of an Eco-Era

What makes a product sustainable is up for debate

## Locations Where Sustainable Products Are Purchased



Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, *One Green Score for One Earth* Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011



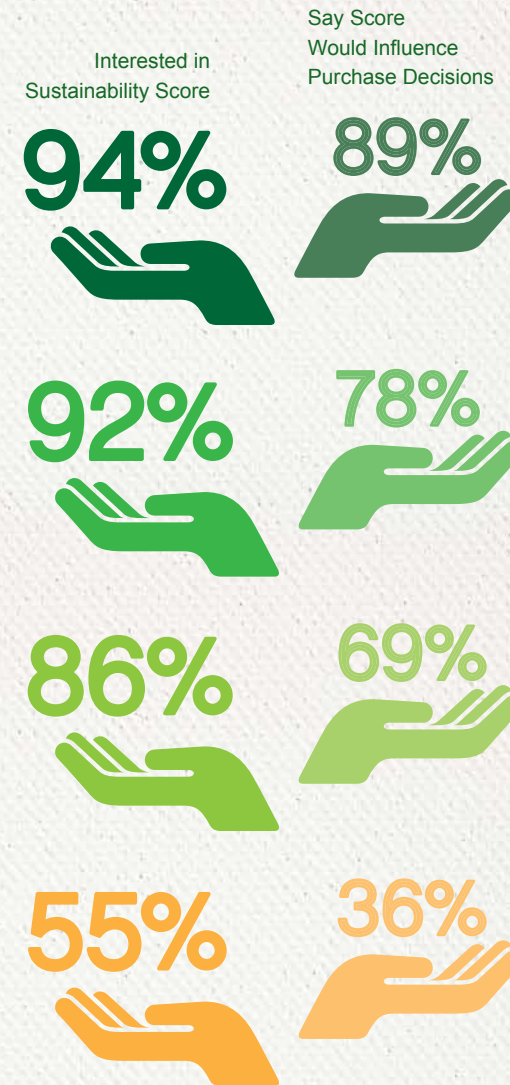
## A Sustainability Score

Do shoppers universally want one green score?

As shoppers become increasingly interested in and motivated by sustainability and are buying these products across multiple channels, it is not surprising that they would be interested in a universal 'sustainability score' as a way to gauge and compare the sustainability of a variety of brands across a range of retail outlets.

That is, in fact, what we found in our survey. Among shoppers who say sustainability is at least somewhat important to them (Light, Medium and Heavy Green), approximately nine out of ten want a product sustainability score. Even the majority (55%) of those who are not committed to buying sustainable products (Not Green) would support such a score. Also, about eight in ten or more committed sustainable shoppers say that such a score would influence their purchase decisions (89% of Heavy Green and 78% of Medium Green).

## Sustainability Score Interest and Purchase Impact



Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, *One Green Score for One Earth* Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011



## A Sustainability Score

Shoppers weigh in: What should the score look like?

Regardless of how invested they are in buying sustainably, three out of four consumers surveyed indicated that they would find a numerical score format most useful in communicating product sustainability information. While there is some interest in other creative ways of displaying the information, including symbols and text (favored among just over 25%), consumers clearly prefer a number rating score. Respondents were least interested in a color rating score (favored among less than one in five).

A numeric sustainability score allows shoppers to quickly and easily digest and compare what is being communicated, without having to remember which symbol stands for what, or spend precious time reading overly descriptive and often self-serving statements about sustainability policies. This is important since shoppers often make their sustainability fact-finding and buying decisions during a shopping trip filled with distractions, while also weighing other types of information (e.g., price, quality, nutrition). The flexibility of a numeric score also allows shoppers to draw rather fine distinctions: while there are a limited number of shapes and colors into which products could be grouped, a numeric score allows each product to essentially have a unique rating.



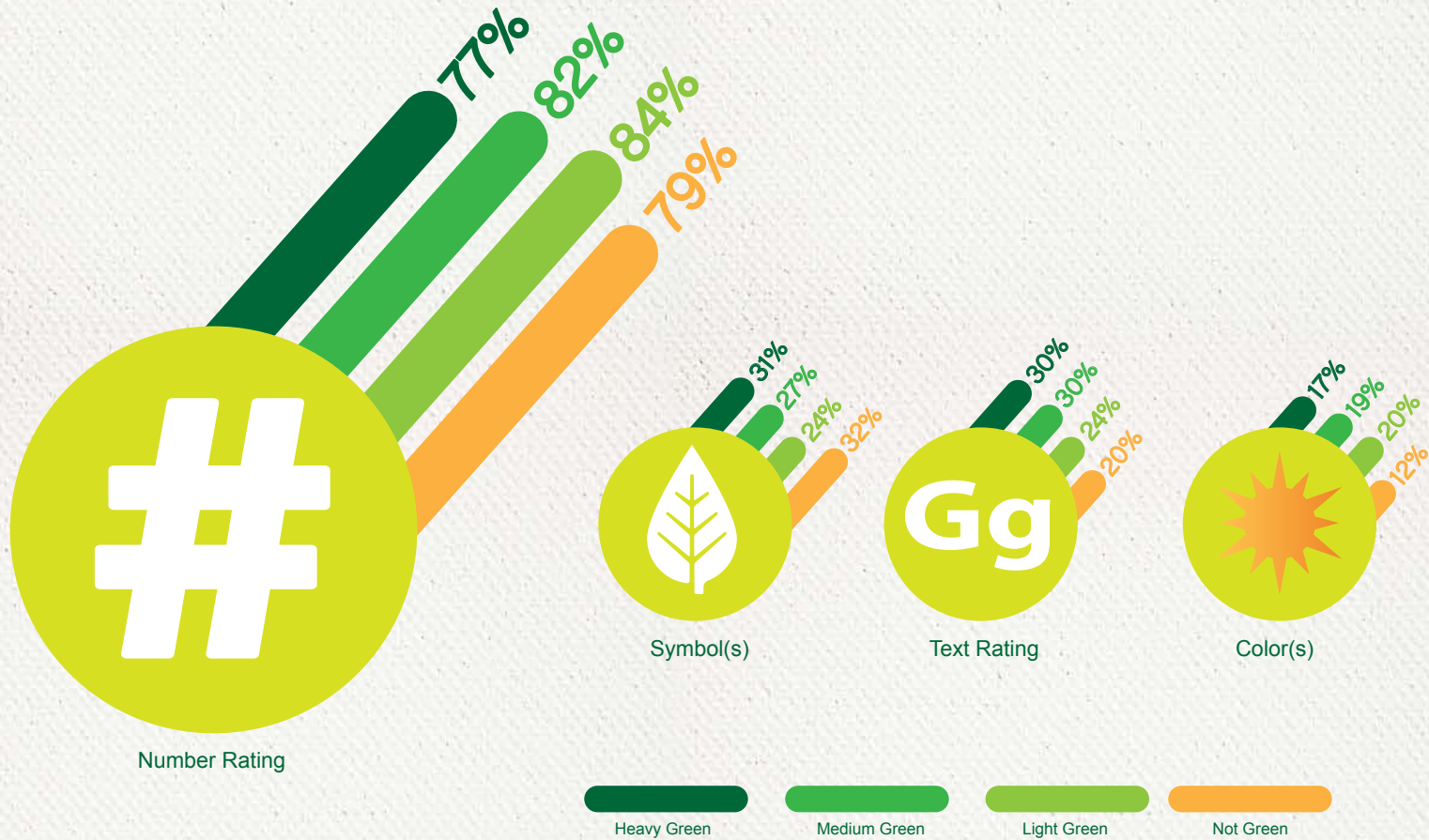
**3 in 4**  
would find a  
numerical  
score format  
most useful



# A Sustainability Score

Shoppers weigh in: What should the score look like?

## Preferred Sustainability Score Display Format



(Respondents could select up to two score formats so bar figures do not add up to 100%.)

Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, *One Green Score for One Earth* Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011



## A Sustainability Score

### Sustainability factors: Measuring 'green' in many ways

One of the primary difficulties in creating or agreeing on any such score is the number of widely varying factors that shoppers consider when they look for sustainable products. Just as shoppers have a range of definitions for sustainability, we found that they rely on a variety of different factors and methods to determine whether or not a product is sustainable.

**“I look up non-toxic products and eco-responsible companies online through independent consumer organizations such as the Environmental Working Group.”**

**“I examine product ingredients and packaging.”**

**“I’ve never seen a product that markets itself as sustainable. I normally choose the most organic/natural products available.”**

**So exactly what then should a product sustainability score measure?**

- 🌱 **Should some factors be weighed more heavily than others?**
- 🌱 **Should some not be counted at all?**
- 🌱 **Should there be different scores for different factors—for example, a green score, an organic designation, a carbon footprint score and a corporate social responsibility indicator?**



## A Sustainability Score

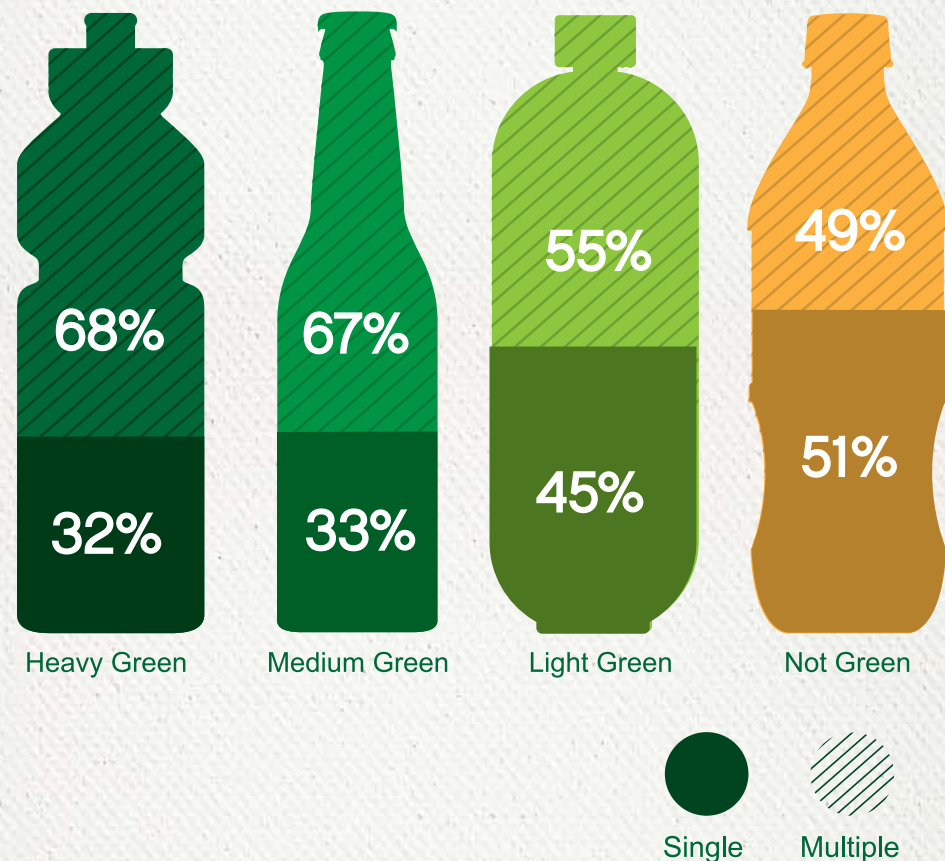
### Sustainability factors: Measuring 'green' in many ways

While a single score would seem simple and clear, shoppers understand the complex nature of sustainability and are open to the idea of multiple scores to improve the quality of communication. This is particularly true for those who are more committed to buying sustainably (Heavy and Medium Green) with 68% and 67%, respectively, interested in a multi-score format.

Even among those who believe it is only somewhat important to buy sustainably (Light Green), the majority (55%) are interested in receiving more detailed information as part of a sustainability score.

Brands and retailers are also very much aware of the complexity of communicating a given product's relative sustainability. This is certainly one of the difficulties that has held the industry back from creating the kind of rating system shoppers say they want and need. Regarding the complexity of the score, one natural product manufacturer said: **"We would never create a [sustainability] score that gives the illusion that sustainable is just a simple thing."**

### Single vs. Multiple Sustainability Score Preference



Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, *One Green Score for One Earth* Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011



## A Sustainability Score

### Setting the score: What factors do shoppers want?

As the industry comes to terms with how to communicate sustainability in a way that is useful to shoppers, it is critical that we understand what **they** (shoppers) want to know. How do **they** make sustainable product purchase decisions? What factors do **they** value and how do **they** weigh them?

As noted earlier, shoppers have a complex definition of sustainability, and they take a variety of different factors into consideration when making their product purchase decisions. Our study found that the more committed shoppers are to sustainable purchasing, the more likely they are to include a wider variety of factors in their decision-making. So, of those classified as Light Green, only three factors are important to more than 90% of them—quality, healthiness, and environmental friendliness. For the Heavy Green respondents, however, there are 12 factors that 90% or more of them agree are important to their purchase decision. These factors range from quality to durability, to cruelty-free/no animal testing and corporate responsibility.




















# A Sustainability Score

Setting the score: What factors do shoppers want?

## Sustainable Purchase Influence Factors (Ranked by Heavy Green Importance)

<p>Quality</p>  <p>99% 100% 99% 90%</p>	<p>Environmentally friendly/ green product</p>  <p>97% 97% 94% 71%</p>	<p>Healthy</p>  <p>97% 97% 92% 92%</p>	<p>Natural</p>  <p>95% 91% 80% 73%</p>	<p>Corporate responsibility</p>  <p>95% 87% 79% 55%</p>
<p>Organic</p>  <p>94% 93% 77% 63%</p>	<p>Carbon/energy footprint</p>  <p>93% 85% 72% 43%</p>	<p>Cruelty-free/no animal testing</p>  <p>93% 88% 81% 59%</p>	<p>Eco-packaging</p>  <p>92% 88% 82% 55%</p>	<p>Durability</p>  <p>92% 81% 81% 66%</p>
<p>Supports local community</p>  <p>92% 82% 71% 53%</p>	<p>Fair trade</p>  <p>90% 83% 73% 48%</p>	<p>Made locally/regionally/USA</p>  <p>88% 89% 81% 61%</p>	<p>Price</p>  <p>87% 90% 87% 88%</p>	<p>Convenience</p>  <p>77% 71% 69% 59%</p>

Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, *One Green Score for One Earth* Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011



## A Sustainability Score

### Setting the score: What factors do shoppers want?

Even with all of the considerations, retailers find that price is a leading factor. One health & wellness retailer said, “**Honestly, the customer wants to focus on [sustainability], but it drives prices up, so customers focus on quality, value and then sustainability.**” Also, a natural and organic manufacturer agreed and said, “**For a lot of our consumers [sustainability] is in their hearts but does not drive purchasing as much as price and quality [does].**”

Given universal emphasis on pricing, it would be helpful to find a way to better communicate the trade-offs shoppers may make in sustainability relative to price.

A final complication in considering which elements to include in a sustainability score is that factors may overlap in some shoppers' minds and not others. For instance, environmentally friendly/green is in the top five most important factors for all shoppers surveyed, but that description could encompass other factors, such as: natural, organic, locally sourced, eco-packaging, and carbon footprint. For some shoppers, brand manufacturers and retailers, an overall score for environmental friendliness may be sufficient. For others, it may be important to understand or highlight a particular area, such as carbon footprint.

As many brands and retailers have discovered for themselves, even relatively committed sustainable purchasers do not expect to have to pay a higher price for their commitment.

**While price is not the #1 factor for any sustainability-minded shopper, it remains important to about 9 in 10 of them.**





## A Sustainability Score

### Setting the score: What factors do shoppers want?

Clearly, given that multiple factors influence the purchase decision and that significant differences exist in what shoppers consider most important, marketers need to find a way to combine the simplicity of a single score with the superior informational capacity of multiple scores. This way all shoppers can easily compare across brands, categories and retailers. As conventional market shoppers become more sophisticated and committed to buying sustainably, they will be able to delve a little deeper to understand how any particular item performs as it pertains to what is most important to them. The most committed can also be directed to more complete sources of information, such as websites, social media links, mobile apps with info and ratings, and other product studies and details.

Both Heavy Green and Medium Green respondents told us to keep the score **“clear and visible with more information about the score available online.”** They also want marketers to provide education that would **“clarify the scale and explain the different aspects of the ratings so I could stand by a product’s rating and feel confident I was purchasing a product I could feel good about supporting.”**

When we specifically asked shoppers which of the 15 factors, in the study, they would like to include in a sustainability rating system, the expected factors such as environmental friendliness and organic rose to the top, but there was also considerable support for local community origins and cruelty-free practices.



**Heavy Green  
and Medium Green  
respondents told us  
to keep the score  
clear and visible**



# A Sustainability Score

Setting the score: What factors do shoppers want?

## Key Sustainability Score Factors to Include for Maximum Impact (Ranked by Heavy Green Importance)



	Environmentally friendly/ green product	Organic	Sourced locally/regionally/USA	Eco-packaging	Cruelty-free/ no animal testing
heavy green	79%	77%	64%	63%	61%
medium green	86%	70%	57%	58%	58%
light green	77%	55%	48%	58%	44%
not green	68%	39%	51%	44%	35%

Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, *One Green Score for One Earth* Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011



## A Sustainability Score

Turning shoppers into buyers: How everyone can win with a sustainability score

Assuming a useful scoring system can be developed, we wanted some input from shoppers on how and where they expect to see it and learn about it. We asked them how they currently prefer to determine whether a product is sustainable, and found that the top five communication vehicles they prefer all provide them with instant information at the moment of decision-making in the store: product labels, eco-seals, eco-packaging, signs on the store shelf and brand name products. Shoppers currently prefer marketers to provide this information in a variety of different formats within the store environment itself and there is no reason to suspect this would change if we were able to provide better information. We know that more committed green-minded shoppers are willing to seek out product sustainability information through retailer and brand websites, product reviews and word of mouth recommendations. We also found that they are willing to digest greater amounts of more complex information. Even the most dedicated sustainable shoppers **prefer** to receive pertinent information where it is most useful—at the **point-of-purchase**.

### Top Sustainability Communication Vehicles



Product information on label or package



Eco-seal or certification on label or package



Eco-packaging



Sign on the store shelf



Brand/product reputation



# A Sustainability Score

Turning shoppers into buyers: How everyone can win with a sustainability score

## Key Elements to Include in a Sustainability Score



	Product information on label or package	Eco-seal or certification on label or package	Eco-packaging	Sign on the store shelf	Brand/product reputation
heavy green	64%	53%	22%	17%	8%
medium green	75%	57%	19%	18%	6%
light green	71%	55%	16%	19%	7%
not green	73%	38%	17%	21%	5%

Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, *One Green Score for One Earth* Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011



## A Sustainability Score

**An independent scorekeeper:  
The ultimate green-thority**

The credibility of any potential sustainability score(s) is critical to its usefulness to shoppers and, therefore, to marketers who want to communicate with them. We asked shoppers to tell us who they would trust to develop a score that measures product sustainability. Three in four or more (across all shades of Green) responded unequivocally that it should be an independent organization or group of experts across different areas of sustainability, without a profit motive. While consumers strongly prefer that the score be created by an independent organization or group of experts, leading edge manufacturers and retailers committed to sustainability stressed the need to be at the table to ensure that the sustainability score is realistic and is something that can be implemented within their organizations and throughout their supply chains.

**The success of any universal sustainability score or system will require real collaboration between product manufacturers and retailers, in order to connect with shoppers, and move a ‘true’ sustainability score forward as **One Green Score for One Earth.****

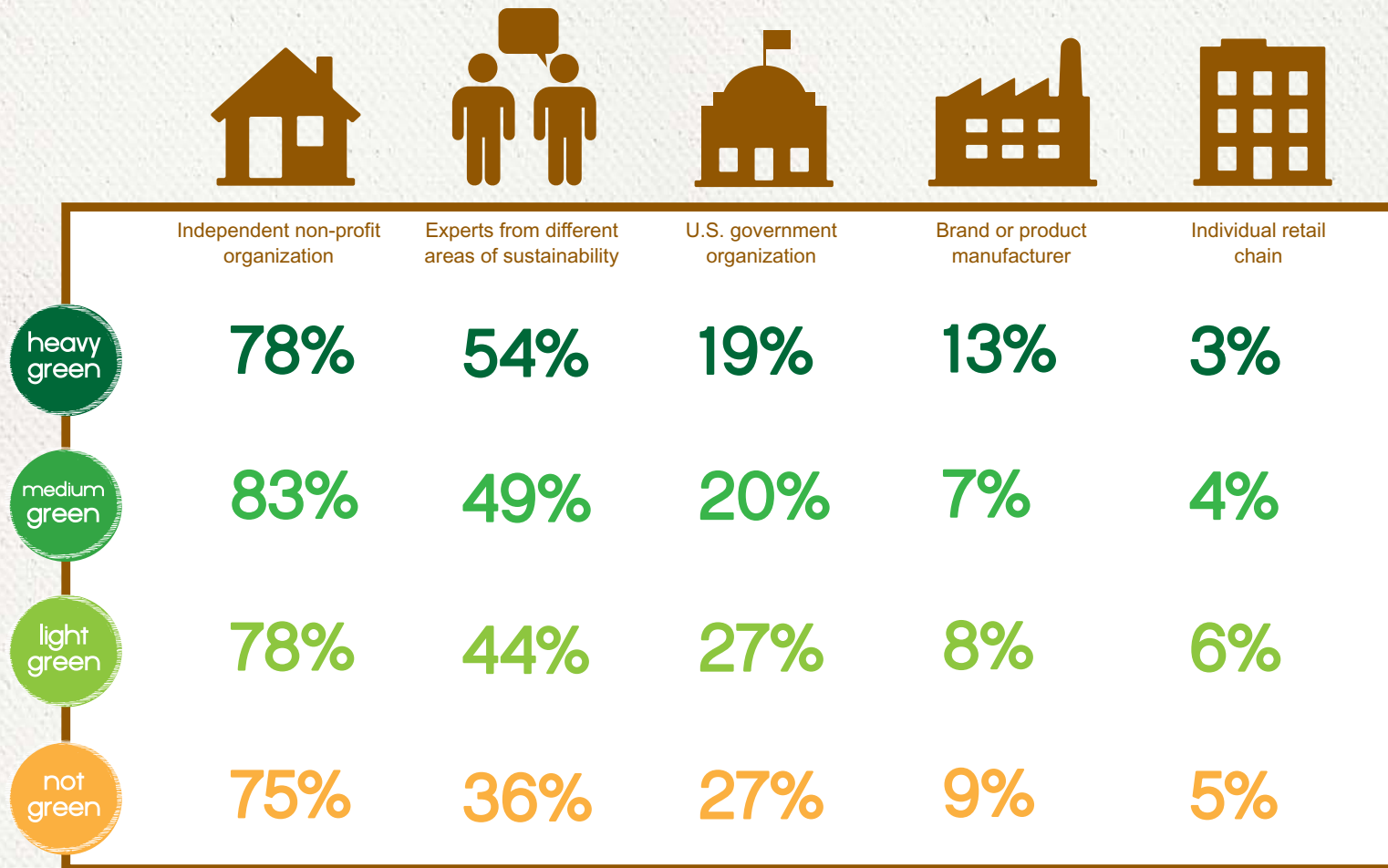




# A Sustainability Score

An independent scorekeeper:  
The ultimate green-thority

## Sustainability Score Creator Preferences



Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, *One Green Score for One Earth* Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011



## Challenge: How to Make Green More Clear

Many marketers, many opinions, many hurdles

While we see that shoppers are interested in a relatively simple, transparent system for understanding the comparative sustainability of the products they buy, there are clearly challenges in delivering on that shopper need. For one thing, there is the lack of a single-minded definition of sustainability, as already pointed out by the shoppers, manufacturers and retailers who took part in this study. Marketers may hesitate to commit themselves now to a scoring system that may not be fully relevant to shoppers in the future, as definitions and preferences around sustainability evolve.

Another issue is the great differences that currently exist among manufacturers and retailers regarding their level of commitment to sustainability. For some, the idea of sustainability is ingrained in their business philosophy and all of their practices; for others, it is a relatively new idea that is still in the early stages of incorporation into their go-to-market strategies. In addition, marketers find themselves with different strengths and weaknesses in the various areas of sustainability identified by shoppers. Any given marketer is understandably reluctant to sign onto a scoring system that doesn't highlight the areas of sustainability in which they have a strong story to tell. Finally, motivations range from highly altruistic to strictly profit-driven. All of these factors impact marketers' ability to come to agreement on a common scoring system.







## Challenge: How to Make Green More Clear

**Simplifying 'green' isn't that simple**

Beyond the business differences, the reality is that it is very difficult to develop a quantitative measure of some of the elements of product sustainability that interest shoppers. We see the difficulties that have already arisen in trying to determine exactly what is organic or natural. Add to that the challenge of measuring and certifying how cruelty-free or responsible a corporation or business process is, and it is easy to see the complexity involved. As both shoppers and marketers told us, sustainability is a complicated proposition. It will be challenging to develop a standardized measurement system that crosses a wide variety of categories, raw materials, processing activities and selling channels, even without the potential political pressures that will inevitably find their way into the process.

And finally, there is the challenge of creating and perpetuating the kind of independent third-party organization that shoppers will trust to score or 'certify' products. The organization and the scoring system itself will need to work for categories as diverse as health and beauty care, consumer electronics, produce and apparel, involving experts in the measurement of issues from animal testing to carbon footprinting, to fair labor practices. It is quite a challenge indeed.



## Opportunity: Optimizing the Score

How marketers and manufacturers can embrace a more sustainable world

On the other hand, marketers need to keep their eyes on the prize. Shoppers are increasingly interested in buying sustainably, and they will be motivated to change their purchase behavior by a universal scoring system that helps them understand how sustainable a given product is.

**We firmly believe that sustainability is destined to be as important or more important a factor in motivating shopper decisions as nutritional labeling or natural/organic designations.** For that reason, we offer *one* possible scenario for developing and communicating a sustainability measurement system in the hopes of challenging and inspiring the various players in our industry to move forward to make this idea a reality.





## Opportunity: Optimizing the Score

How marketers and manufacturers can embrace a more sustainable world

Shoppers are used to factoring price into their purchase decisions. In fact, our research confirmed that price is just one of the key factors consumers consider when making a sustainable product purchase. To keep a universal sustainability score as simple and as universal as possible, it should tap into this prevailing attitude. Consumers already instinctively ask, **“What does this cost?”** A sustainability ‘price tag’ on every item would allow consumers to easily answer a much greater question... **“What is the True Cost of this item, the cost to the Earth and those of us who live on it?”**





## Opportunity: Optimizing the Score

How marketers and manufacturers can embrace a more sustainable world



Expressing a universal score as a **True Cost** becomes a simple, powerful (and numerical) way to express sustainability. A **True Cost** could help retailers and brands to keep sustainability simple for their shoppers too. First and foremost, however, retailers and brands would need to make the **True Cost** score easy for shoppers to find and understand. Brands could feature the score prominently on the front of product packaging or hang tags. Retailers could tout **True Cost** scores in a way that's as easy to find and compare as the dollar price of an item.



## Opportunity: Optimizing the Score

How marketers and manufacturers can embrace a more sustainable world



Technology could help too, with tools like a mobile app where shoppers could scan the shelves to easily find the best **True Cost** option in a category, and even dive deeper into the factors that make up the **True Cost**.



## Opportunity: Optimizing the Score

How marketers and manufacturers can embrace a more sustainable world



Because **True Cost** would be treated just like a price, shoppers would easily notice and understand tactics that mirror a retailer's most impactful price promotional methods. From 'low **True Cost**' price pops at-shelf to circular ads that pool together low **True Cost** items for an Earth Sale. Plus, register receipts could show shoppers how much of the Earth they saved on each trip.

Loyalty programs could also leverage **True Cost** in a way that's familiar to shoppers. Retailers could offer exclusive rewards to shoppers who "ring up" lower **True Cost** totals. Manufacturers with loyalty programs could offer double points or other boosts for lower **True Cost** products in their portfolios.



## Opportunity: Optimizing the Score

How marketers and manufacturers can embrace a more sustainable world

**True Cost** also creates a whole new currency that allows consumers, retailers and manufacturers to participate together in an **'Earth economy.'** We could essentially create a **'World Bank' for the Earth...the 'Earth Bank.'**

For consumers, the Earth Bank could become a tangible place where they maintain accounts to help track and receive rewards for sustainable activity. For example, account balances could rise with earth-friendly acts like recycling. Balances could fall with purchases of high **True Cost** items or less sustainable lifestyle practices like driving to work. Just like financial banking today, Earth Banking could be a highly personal and very mobile activity. A consumer could shop for a car and see how an SUV or hybrid purchase would affect their Earth Bank balance.

For retailers and manufacturers, Earth Bank could offer a simple way to publicize sustainable practices. By making Earth Bank balances public, just like stock prices, businesses would be motivated to keep their Earth Bank balances attractive.







## Opportunity: Optimizing the Score

How marketers and manufacturers can embrace a more sustainable world

How could shoppers learn and get excited about **True Cost** and Earth Bank?



Launch **True Cost** with an Earth Bank Grand Opening of planetary magnitude. On Tax Day, it could be announced that the Earth Bank is open and that tax deductions will be given, in years to come, to those who carry certain Earth Bank balances.



Pop-up Earth Banks could serve as educational centers where consumers could learn about, and sign up, for their Earth Bank account.



Publish the first ever '**True Cost** Report' in *Consumer Reports* reviewing the most earth-affordable products across every conceivable consumer goods and services category.



Monitor the collective sustainable behavior of the country with the national Earth Bank balance reported just like the Dow or employment figures via daily **True Cost** reports on news outlets.

*All these ideas, and many more, could add up, exerting significant influence on purchase behavior. In the end, **True Cost** could give us a universal sustainability score that has a real, global impact and big dividends in the Earth Bank.*



A decorative header element consisting of several overlapping circles in shades of brown and tan. The leftmost circle contains a close-up image of almonds.

## Conclusions: Commit and Score

### A market opportunity awaits

Through our research, we have learned that shoppers are increasingly interested in sustainable purchasing, but have a complex and evolving definition of sustainability. They believe that if we can make it easier for them to understand—and have confidence in—the sustainable claims of a given product, they will be more likely to buy it (assuming reasonable pricing). Retailers and manufacturers, alike, tell us they are committed to marketing more sustainable products. There should certainly be strong motivation for those marketers to find a way to communicate their efforts, so that shoppers get the information and confidence they seek.

We hope we have inspired some of those marketers on both the retail and manufacturing sides to see how such a scoring system could be creatively, and persuasively, applied across multiple communication channels with the concept of **True Cost**.

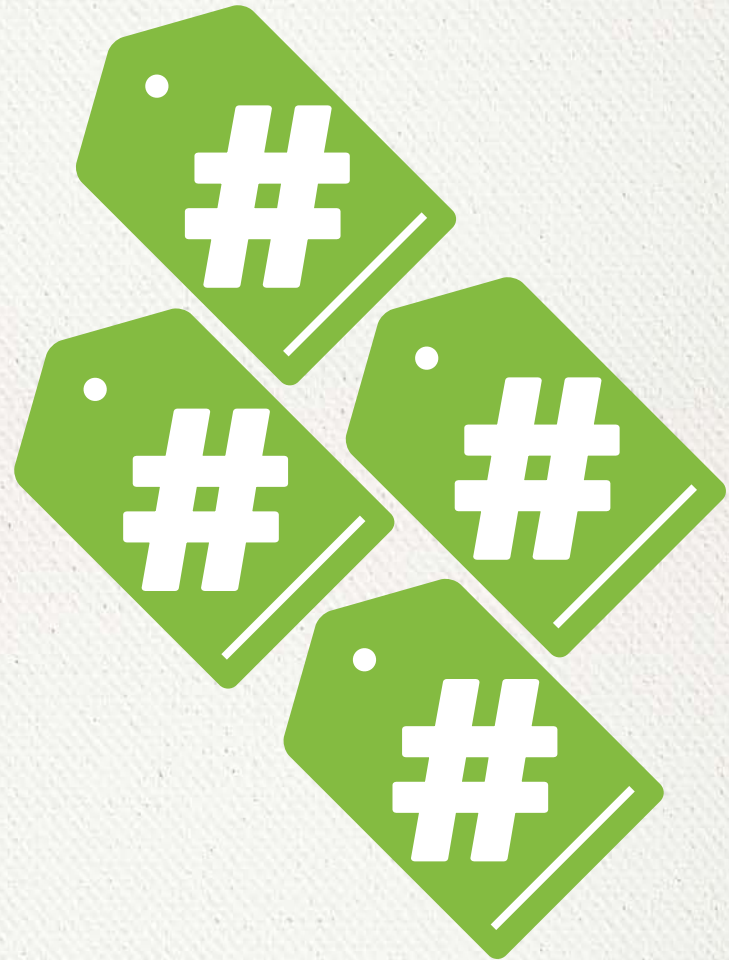






## Conclusions: Commit and Score A market opportunity awaits

There is a clear **OPPORTUNITY** now for those brands who are on the leading edge of this trend to respond to shopper demand and establish sustainability guidelines. We believe **NOW** is the time for marketers across industries and retail channels to come together and develop a clear, universal sustainability score—**One Green Score for One Earth**—with a communication system that makes it easy for shoppers to assess the sustainability implications of any potential purchase against others. While the challenges of creating such a system are great, we believe the potential rewards for marketers, shoppers, and the Earth, are much greater.





# Appendix

## Research methodology

### Consumer Survey

The white paper research findings are based on an online quantitative survey developed by Ryan Partnership Chicago and Mambo Sprouts Marketing. The study was fielded to the MamboTrack research panel of over 50,000 health and wellness consumers. The findings are based on replies from 802 respondents collected between May 17 and May 23, 2011. An incentive was provided for participation. For the analysis, the MamboTrack consumer survey respondents were segmented into groups and coded as shades of 'Green' according to how important sustainability was in their purchase decisions.

The profile of MamboTrack survey respondents was demographically similar across the 'Green' sustainability groups. Overall, respondents were well-educated females, 25-54 years old, with above-average income levels.

### Demographic Profile\*

heavy green

medium green

light green

not green

		190	239	242	131
<b>Gender</b>	Female	95%	92%	94%	92%
	Male	5%	8%	6%	8%
<b>Age</b>	Under 18	1%	0%	0%	0%
	18-24	3%	3%	5%	3%
	25-34	21%	26%	32%	30%
	35-44	28%	30%	32%	30%
	45-54	26%	22%	18%	23%
	55-64	15%	15%	11%	10%
	65 or over	6%	4%	2%	3%
<b>Children by Age</b>	No children	50%	49%	54%	50%
	Up to 2 years	7%	10%	11%	9%
	2 to 5 years	18%	20%	18%	28%
	6 to 11 years	22%	24%	19%	21%
	12 to 17 years	18%	17%	13%	13%
	18 to 22 years	12%	7%	6%	8%
<b>Education</b>	High school or less	7%	6%	5%	4%
	Some college	20%	22%	14%	13%
	College grad	47%	42%	48%	47%
	Advanced degree	25%	30%	33%	36%
<b>HH Income</b>	Less than 25K	11%	7%	7%	6%
	25-39K	11%	12%	8%	13%
	40-59K	16%	19%	20%	22%
	60-74K	15%	12%	11%	8%
	75-99K	12%	14%	18%	13%
	100K or more	17%	20%	18%	12%
	Prefer not to answer	18%	16%	18%	25%

Source: Ryan Partnership Chicago/Mambo Sprouts Marketing, One Green Score for One Earth Consumer Sustainability Survey, Summer 2011  
\*Green groups were defined based on the % of their product purchases considered to be sustainable



## Appendix

### Research methodology

#### **Manufacturer and Retailer Interviews**

The white paper also reflects insight and perspective gathered from six guided telephone interviews/ conversations with retailers and manufacturers in regards to the consumer sustainability survey findings. Manufacturers and retailers were selected to represent the full spectrum of business philosophies and practices (e.g., natural/conventional, small/large, etc.). These conversations were conducted by Ryan Partnership Chicago/ Mambo Sprouts Marketing during the week of June 20, 2011, among the following mix of consumer product manufacturers and retailers:

#### **3 Natural and Organic Manufacturers**

**1 Conventional Product Manufacturer**

**1 Independent Natural and Organic Retailer**

**1 Conventional Chain Grocery Retailer**







## Study Authors

### **Ryan Partnership Chicago**

See how far ideas can take you.®

Ryan Partnership Chicago is a leading expert in promotion, shopper and digital marketing campaigns for emerging and established consumer brands. The company's creative professionals combine sound, strategic research and business acumen to create meaningful IDEAS that motivate purchase and loyalty among its clients' products, services and customers. Ryan's unparalleled expertise originates from its extensive, proprietary research that yields some of the industry's deepest insights into consumers, categories, retailers, and shopper behavior. This knowledge is leveraged to consistently drive competitive market positioning and ROI.

The agency is a creative powerhouse, recently tripling in size with its breakthrough ideas and campaigns for clients such as Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company, GlaxoSmithKline, Energizer Personal Care, World Vision, Bel Brands USA and Chaco. Ryan Partnership Chicago is a part of Ryan Partnership, the largest independent marketing services company in North America and a subsidiary of D.L. Ryan Companies, Ltd. For a complete listing of services, please visit [www.ryanpartnershipchicago.com](http://www.ryanpartnershipchicago.com).

### **Mambo Sprouts Marketing**

Live Healthy. Live Green. Live Well.

Mambo Sprouts Marketing, headquartered in Collingswood, New Jersey, develops and executes online, retail and direct mail promotions, and market research programs targeted at health, natural and organic products consumers. In existence since 1996, the company was created when its founders recognized the lack of educational materials and discounts available to health and natural products consumers. It has since grown into a full-scale marketing agency with programs that benefit health and eco consumers, manufacturers and retailers. Leading the health and wellness marketplace through its MamboTrack research data trends and insights, Mambo Sprouts Marketing is a respected resource throughout the LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health & Sustainability) industry. For more information, please visit [www.mambosprouts.com](http://www.mambosprouts.com).

**RYAN**  
PARTNERSHIP®  
**CHICAGO**

**Mambo**  
**Sprouts**  
mambosprouts.com





## Contact Us

Learn more about this study or share your feedback



### **Ryan Partnership**

Christine Nardi Diette

Group President

325 N. LaSalle, Suite 775

Chicago, IL 60654

[cdiette@ryanchicago.com](mailto:cdiette@ryanchicago.com)



### **Mambo Sprouts Marketing**

Karen Herther

Sr. Director of Market Research & Consumer Insight

1101 Haddon Avenue

Collingswood, NJ 08108

[kherther@mambosprouts.com](mailto:kherther@mambosprouts.com)



## Special Thanks

Many green contributors for one green study

We would like to give special thanks to all of the MamboTrack health and wellness consumers who participated in this survey. Your opinions and actions will certainly lead the industry in making effective changes toward a sustainable future.

We would also like to thank the retailers and manufacturers who so graciously gave us their valuable time and candid insights during the interview conversations referenced in this paper.

And last, but not least, we'd like to express our gratitude to several members of the Ryan Partnership Chicago team who embraced this project with enthusiasm, in addition to their 'day jobs': Randi Steiner, for questionnaire design and analytic magic; the creative team of Colleen Barkley, Sarah Davis, Megan Happ and Kate Parks for developing the **True Cost** concept; Clint Correa from the digital team for making it come to life electronically, Anjie Maslouski and the production team for putting all the pieces together and Carol Maggio for keeping everyone on their toes and contributing to the project through all its phases.







## Sources

- “Weighing Wal-Mart | Environmental Defense Fund | Five Years into Its Sustainability Mission, the World’s Largest Retailer Is Getting Some Respect.” *Supermarket News | Grocery, Wholesale and Food News | Food Companies | Green Food, Food Recalls*. Web. 28 Feb. 2011. <[http://supermarketnews.com/Sustainability\\_Green/weighing\\_walmart\\_0228/](http://supermarketnews.com/Sustainability_Green/weighing_walmart_0228/)>
- “Will American Consumers Ever Go Green? | Business | GreenBiz.com.” *Green Business News, Resources, and Sustainability Career Tools | Business | GreenBiz.com*. Web. 6 Apr. 2011. <[http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2011/04/06/will-american-consumers-ever-go-green?utm\\_source=feedburner](http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2011/04/06/will-american-consumers-ever-go-green?utm_source=feedburner)>
- “Earth Day and the Polling of America 2011 | Business | GreenBiz.com.” *Green Business News, Resources, and Sustainability Career Tools | Business | GreenBiz.com*. Web. 28 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2011/03/28/earth-day-and-polling-america-2011?page=full>>
- “Move Over Government, Walmart’s the New Regulator in Town | News - Advertising Age.” *Advertising Agency & Marketing Industry News - Advertising Age*. Web. 7 Mar. 2011. <http://adage.com/article/news/move-government-walmart-s-regulator-town/149251/>.
- “The Business of Rating Business.” Marc Gunther – *A Blog about Business and Sustainability*. Web. 30 May. 2011. <<http://www.marcgunther.com/2010/05/30/the-business-of-rating-business>>
- “GMA and FMI Select Agency Partners to Support \$50 Million Nutrition Keys Consumer Education Campaign | GMA.” *Grocery Manufacturers Association | GMA*. Web. 11 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.gmaonline.org/news-events/newsroom/gma-and-fmi-select-agency-partners-to-support-50-million-nutrition-keys-con>>
- “Havas Media | News, October, 2010, Press Release, Sustainable, Futures, Debate, Relationship, Consumers, Advertising.” *Havas Media | Brands, Research, Sustainability, Sustainable, Futures, Debate, Relationship, Consumers, Advertising*. Web. Oct 2011. <<http://www.brandsustainablefutures.com/brand-sustainable-futures-news-october-2010.html>>
- Mambo Sprouts Marketing. “2011 Natural and Organic Consumer Annual Outlook Survey.” (2011).





One Green Score  
for One Earth