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CLEAN project had the aim of helping consumers making sustainable choices on detergents

OCU, Altroconsumo, Test-Achats with the support of Deco Proteste, as expressed in the [Approved by Tomorrow manifesto](#), are convinced that informed and empowered consumers can play a central role in accelerating a successful green transition.

A crucial first step is to ensure consumers have access to trustworthy information about sustainable products.

This project aimed to:

- Inform consumers about the performance and environmental impacts of household detergents (dishwashers, hand dishwashing liquids, bathroom cleaners, multipurpose detergents).
- Warn consumers and report misleading or unproven environmental claims.
- Advocate against misleading environmental and green claims at the EU and Member State levels.
- Develop reliable testing methodologies across all consumer organisations.

The results of the tests led to the identification of several inaccuracies and defaults which justify consumers' mistrust. Whereas it was dishwasher detergent, hand dishwasher detergent or multipurpose detergent, which was tested, the studies found out that **more than half of the products tested contained ingredients that have a harmful impact on the environment**. The only exception was for bathroom detergents, where only 11 out of the 61 tested products contain harmful ingredients for the environment. **The protocol was reviewed by adding the evaluation and chemical analysis on the composition of the tested detergents mapping 425 ingredients and 296 green claims. This test was built upon robust methodologies that were elaborated to be used in the future by citizens and consumers organisations also to address dual quality and unfair commercial communications.**

A survey which says a lot about the confusion of consumers

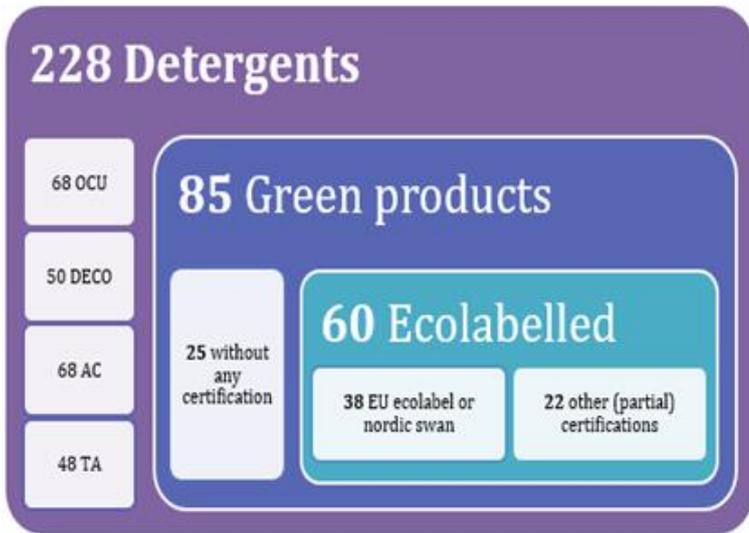
Among **4.210 consumers** in Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain, a majority of consumers said they pay attention to environmental aspects when purchasing household detergents. However, only a few respondents declared to be well-informed. More than half of respondents reported believing that environmentally-friendly claims are solely driven by marketing purposes.

Detergents environmental weaknesses

We tested **228 detergents**, from market leaders of established brands to numerous green detergents presenting some kind of ecological label or reputation. For each detergent, the label, packaging, and ingredients were combed through.

Among the dishwasher detergents analyzed, 35% of products have a bad or very bad environmental impact of ingredients. Nevertheless, good performing products, with low environmental impact, exist.

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Environmental self-declarations of products should be based on verified and easily understandable data that relate to important aspects of the product life cycle. For the sake of clarity, displayed information should not use legal restrictions to make environmental claims. Also, the quality of the detergent shouldn't be undermined when the environmental impact is lowered.

Do detergents produce microplastics?

The CLEAN project tests were also conducted to evaluate if the detergents hydro soluble film releases microplastics into wastewater. The results indicated that there was no sign of significant pollution of wastewater by microplastic generated by capsules. It turns out that fiber shredding from clothing is the main source of microplastics in wastewater as a consequence of washing cycles. It was found that in some cases, however, the fiber shedding can be influenced by some detergents.



Although European law (Regulation (EC) No 648/2004) specifies that detergent manufacturers shall make available on a website the ingredients data sheet, it turns out that several brands don't do it. Test results also showed that many of the identified ingredients have no role in the performance of the detergents and could therefore be avoided.

Most importantly, several ingredients that are necessary for the manufacturing of detergents include substances that present a risk for the environment, while being easily replaceable by others that are less harmful.

