

## Consumers Agree: It's Too Hard to be Sustainable

*Study: While consumers want to make sustainable choices, confusion and lack of transparency made for high hurdles to overcome*

**SAN DIEGO, California (September 24, 2019)** – Green is the new black, and environmentally-friendly products like plant-based meats and compostable plastic bags are surging in popularity. According to a new survey from sustainability leader [Genomatica](#), 95 percent of Americans say sustainability is a good goal — but many are finding it difficult to put into practice.

In an era of political division, this is one story Americans can agree on: 70 percent of Republicans and 80 percent of Democrats say that sustainability is important and are trying to make sustainable choices. But despite the strong support, nearly half of consumers (48 percent) report that convenience, lack of awareness and availability are top obstacles to sustainability. Even though they're motivated to make the change, understanding their products proves just too hard; of the consumers committed enough to read product labels, 3 in 4 (74 percent) don't know what half of the ingredients are — and it's not clear how or where to learn about them.

“Consumers have a craving to be environmentally-friendly and make sustainable choices, but many don't know what ingredients make up their products, and how sustainable those ingredients are,” said Christophe Schilling, Genomatica's CEO. “There's a real opportunity for the industry to educate consumers to help them get over these hurdles, and for brands to market and deliver more sustainable products with greater transparency on where they come from to feed this surging demand.”

While [96 percent of all manufactured goods are enabled by chemistry](#), the survey showed that consumers aren't aware that so many of their everyday products are made with chemicals derived from fossil fuels — including crude oil, coal and natural gas. Nearly half (44 percent) of consumers didn't think disposable water bottles are made using ingredients derived from crude oil and 42 percent didn't realize personal care products like face moisturizer contains crude oil-based ingredients.

Other key findings from the Genomatica study include:

### **Millennials are leading the push — but consumers feel they're coming up short on sustainability**

- Millennials are most likely to believe sustainability is important and make sustainable choices (78 percent), followed by Boomers (76 percent), Gen X (71 percent) and Gen Z (69 percent)
- One in four (24 percent) consumers feel guilty or ashamed about their personal level of sustainability

### **It's still too hard to understand if a product is sustainable**

- 56 percent of consumers say they look at the ingredients label when shopping for products
  - Boomers are the most likely to read ingredients label (69 percent) compared to Gen X (57 percent), Millennials (53 percent) or Gen Z (35 percent)
- 74 percent of consumers reading the ingredients label don't know what half of the ingredients are — making it nearly impossible to understand if a product is sustainable
  - Millennials are far more likely to understand all the ingredients on the label (34 percent) compared to Boomers (23 percent), Gen X (23 percent) or Gen Z (20 percent)

**Consumers are unaware that many products they use daily, from plastics to personal care products to gasoline, are made from crude oil. When they find out, they're surprised — and disgusted**

- Nearly half (44 percent) of consumers don't think disposable water bottles are made using ingredients derived from crude oil and 38 percent were surprised to learn that they are
- 55 percent were surprised to learn baby sunscreen contains ingredients made from crude oil, 42 percent don't realize face moisturizer contains crude oil-based ingredients and 66 percent weren't happy when they found out (32 percent were "disgusted," 34 percent were "bothered")
- 34 percent of consumers didn't know that plastic bags are made from crude oil-derived ingredients — and 29 percent were surprised to learn that they are
- 11 percent of Millennials thought that gasoline did not include ingredients made from crude oil — highlighting the contrast between the few items consumers understand are fossil fuel-based and the numerous everyday products that are, but consumers don't realize

**Consumers are opening their wallets to sustainable products — and boycotting dirty products**

- One in four consumers (26 percent) say they'd look for ways to spend more money with their favorite brand if their favorite brand increased their sustainability
  - Millennials are particularly inclined to do this, with 34 percent saying they'd spend more money compared to 24 percent of Gen Z and 18 percent of Boomers
- 46 percent of consumers say they've boycotted a brand before
  - 24 percent who have boycotted have done so because of unsustainable products and 23 percent due to unsustainable practices
  - Gen Z are the biggest boycotters for reasons of unsustainable products (36 percent) versus 27 percent of millennials, 21 percent of Boomers and 18 percent of Gen X

**About Genomatica**

Genomatica is a widely-recognized leader in bioengineering and aims to [lead a transition](#) to more sustainable materials. It develops bio-based process technologies that enable a better way to produce widely used chemicals, from alternative feedstocks, with better economics, sustainability and performance. Genomatica has commercialized processes for the chemical butanediol (for biodegradable plastics and apparel) and for butylene glycol (cosmetics and personal care), and is working on bio-nylon. Awards include the [Kirkpatrick Award](#), for "the most noteworthy chemical engineering technology commercialized in the world" and the [ICIS Innovation Award](#) for its Brontide™ butylene glycol. To learn more, visit [www.genomatica.com](http://www.genomatica.com).

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**Survey Methodology**

This survey was conducted online among 1,000 U.S. adults ages 18 to 73 by Qualtrics on behalf of Genomatica from July 10 to July 16 2019. The survey was conducted among an online national sample balanced across age, gender, and income categories.

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