

# Press Release No. 71/2009

**Press Relations Officer:** Martin Ittershagen  
**PR-staff:** Anke Döpke, Dieter Leutert,  
Fotini Mavromati, Theresa Pfeifer, Martin Stallmann  
**Address:** Postfach 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau  
**Telephone:** +49 340/21 03-2122, -2827, -2250, -2318, -3927, -2507  
**E-Mail:** [pressestelle@uba.de](mailto:pressestelle@uba.de)  
**Internet:** [www.umweltbundesamt.de](http://www.umweltbundesamt.de)



## Growing interest in cleaning products and detergents with the EU ecolabel

### More manufacturers applying for the EU ecolabel

**The interest of several manufacturers in the EU ecolabel for cleaning products and detergents has grown in the past two years. Whereas initial interest was registered for ecolabels on all-purpose cleaners and dishwashing machine detergents, there is now an interest in ecolabels for laundry detergents. What is certain is that by consuming roughly 1.3 million tonnes of cleaning agents and detergents annually, we are polluting wastewater with chemicals considerably. "The chemicals we use and take for granted in the household are not always without consequence for our health and the environment. This is why cleaning products and detergents bearing the European ecolabel should be preferred so as to keep this source of pollution low", said Dr. Klaus Günter Steinhäuser, Head of the Chemical Safety department at the Federal Environment Agency.**

Roughly 600,000 tonnes of laundry detergent, 200,000 tonnes of softener, and 450,000 tonnes of cleaning agents are sold every year in Germany's stores-- only to land in the sewer system after use.

These products very often contain substances that, although they meet statutory requirements, can still impact health and the environment. Detergents and cleaning agents still have substances that are not fully biodegradable or contain sensitising ingredients. In addition, most dishwasher detergents still have phosphate, which pollutes water.

In order to reduce pollution while retaining good cleaning results, one should pay attention to the European ecolabel when buying products. The Federal Environment Agency has played an active role in the development of the criteria for this ecolabel.

The ingredients used in these products must comply with stricter standards than required by law as concerns their compatibility with health and the environment. Proof of cleaning power which is also required is an additional guarantee of desired results. The EU ecolabel is currently available for all-purpose cleaners and cleaners for sanitary facilities, for hand dishwashing detergents, detergents for dishwashing machines, and most recently, for laundry detergents. Products with the ecolabel which are available in Germany include phosphate-free dishwashing machine detergents, bathroom cleaners formulated on a citric acid basis and, as of late, ecological laundry detergents. The Federal Environment Agency promoted the award of the EU ecolabel to these products. Because of existing manufacturer interest in the ecolabel, the Federal Environment Agency is now working on developing Blue Angel award criteria for this product category.

As with all products, proper dosage of the EU ecolabelled products as well as instructions for use must be followed.

Information about the ecolabel for cleaning agents is available here:  
<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/chemikalien/waschmittel/zeichen.htm>. The Federal Environment Agency is glad to answer any other questions about cleaning products and detergents, email: [detergenzien@uba.de](mailto:detergenzien@uba.de)

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This is the European ecolabel, the so-called "Ecolabel Flower":

