2016 SOS water bottle logo contest winner and design Congratulations to A. Thomas!!!
Agency and Hope

In our rapidly globalizing world, transportation and communications technologies seem to improve almost daily, and we are consuming more resources faster than ever before. It begs the question: will we run out? At current rates, we will run low on (or completely out of) many critical resources, and it won’t take as long as people think. Many who realize the direction in which societies are headed feel hopeless and powerless to stop the trend, but we are not. We each have a ripple effect on others around us, and our personal levels of consumption in the US are high enough that the changes we make as individuals have a big impact in themselves. Small behavioral changes can go a long way. We can reduce harm with simple actions; we can turn off the lights, eat less meat or produce that is shipped thousands of miles, use refillable water bottles, limit our use of disposable plastics, and repurpose materials we’d otherwise throw away.

For those who have the money, buying organic, local, or fairtrade has big benefits for the environment, your health, and a social/economic system that values producers and quality products. If you do feel that as one person you may not make much of a difference, remember that many people can create great change. This is where colleges and universities become indispensable. These communities of knowledgeable faculty and determined students are among those who see what we are doing to our planet. We see the effects of endless waste, climate change, environmental degradation, and many other things on the news and in our daily lives. We see the signs that more issues are soon due to arise and even increase in severity. We see plainly that something must be done to stop further damage and begin the process of healing. We may not understand the full consequences of our excessive consumption, but the glimpses are enough. Our position in society is respected, and we have a lot of power working together to advocate meaningful change.

The spirited, driven students at schools like UWEC are noticing, drawing on all our resources, and pursuing a more sustainable way of life. Our wonderful mix of ideas, information, dedication, and ways to get involved produces a place in the system capable of igniting a widespread movement toward sustainability and environmental awareness. Our collective efforts—however small—have already made significant cumulative impacts benefitting the environment, budgets, the community, and society as a whole. If you aren’t one for personal action and accountability, guidance and camaraderie are abundantly available here. If you’d like to get more involved with sustainability efforts, Kate Hartsel, the Student Office of Sustainability, and student organizations like Foodlums will welcome you with open arms and huge opportunities. You have the chance to assist with environmental workshops, educate others, grow and prepare your own food, help plan events and projects, and so much more, contributing to making our campus even more sustainable! (hartseka@uwec, sos@uwec, foodlums@uwec)

By Julian K. Faledas

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Bikes, desks, chairs, computers, file cabinets, kayak, and much more for unbeatable prices!

Public Sales: Every other Thursday, 3pm - 6pm
Next sale is March 3rd
Have questions?
715-836-5555

Apr: 14, 28
May: 12, 26
June: 9, 23
As consumers, we make choices all the time. We might buy a generic brand of our favorite snack to save a few dollars, or decide on one t-shirt because another is the wrong color. When it comes to being choosy about how our purchases relate to sustainability, though, it can be tough to know just what to look for. There are a lot of labels out there, but what do they all mean? Learning about “green” labels and how they affect people, animals and the environment is a great way to become a more conscious consumer!

Below are five common labels related to sustainability to help you get started:

The Label:

What It Means:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Organic label is perhaps the most well-known of the labels in this article. It’s talked about a lot, and for good reason! Organic farms and processors help to preserve natural resources and biodiversity, support animal health and welfare, and in general use materials that are better for the environment and our own health as human beings. Synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, genetic engineering, and many otherwise-used substances are not allowed in the production of organic foods.

In order to display the USDA Organic Label, a product must either contain 100 percent organic ingredients or a minimum of 95 percent organic ingredients. Most of the time, products that fall into the former category will also have the phrase “100 percent organic” displayed on their packaging. The word “Organic” by itself can only be used to label products with a minimum of 95 percent organic ingredients.

“Made with Organic ____” can be used on a product containing at least 75 percent organically produced ingredients. These products, in addition to those containing less than 75 percent organic ingredients, cannot use the above USDA Organic label.

One exception to USDA certification standards applies to producers who market less than $5000 worth of organic products in a year. They must still comply with organic standards, but they are not required to apply for organic certification. Keep this in mind while visiting the local farmers’ market this spring. Just because a producer doesn’t display the USDA Organic label, doesn’t mean they are not following organic production and handling requirements.

Where you might find it:

Food products, agriculture and cosmetics

For more information:


The Label:

What it Means:

The Rainforest Alliance Certified seal represents environmentally and socially responsible practices. Products bearing the seal either originate on, or contain ingredients sourced from, Rainforest Alliance Certified farms or forests; therefore supporting areas such as the conservation of wildlife, protection of soils and waterways, and the safeguarding of workers, their families, and their local communities. For example, farms with this certification are taking steps to maintain or increase tree cover, reduce chemical use, conserve soil quality and prevent erosion, protect wildlife, and ensure the well-being of workers and their families by assisting with access to education and healthcare.
Where you might find it:
- On everything from furniture to health products to food and beverages and office supplies—you can even find a Rainforest Alliance Certified guitar!
For more information:
http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/

The label:

What it means:
ENERGY STAR is a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program that encourages the production and consumption of energy efficient products. To earn the label, products must undergo testing in EPA-recognized laboratories and be third-party certified. An example of its benefit can be found in ENERGY STAR certified televisions, which on average are 25 percent more energy efficient than conventional models. Consider, too, that ENERGY STAR certified lightbulbs typically use about 70-100% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. This is not only better for the environment, but for your wallet too!
Where you might find it:
- Commercial buildings and new homes, appliances, heating and cooling systems, office supplies, electronics, lighting… the list goes on!
For more information:
https://www.energystar.gov/

The label:

What it means:
Another program under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is WaterSense, which was developed to protect our nation’s water supply. It offers companies and individuals easy ways to save water with water-efficient products, homes and services. Products displaying the WaterSense label must be a minimum of 20 percent more efficient without sacrificing performance.
Where you might find it:
- Bathroom sink faucets, showerheads, irrigation controllers, etc.
For more information:
https://www3.epa.gov/watersense/index.html

The label:

What it means:
Fair Trade USA supports bringing empowerment, economic and social development, and environmental stewardship to farmers and workers across the globe. Its efforts help these individuals fight poverty through better trade. For example, recent revisions to their ingredients policy were established with the goal of enabling tens of thousands more cocoa farmers and their families to lift themselves out of poverty in years to come.
The above label indicates the product is 100% Fair Trade Certified. One variation of the product has a specific ingredient or the word “ingredients” listed under the phrase “Fair Trade Certified”, and indicates that more than 20%, but less than 100%, of the ingredients are Fair Trade Certified.
Where you might find it:
- Apparel and home goods, food products, herbs and spices, body care, etc.
For more information:
http://www.fairtradeusa.org/

By Brittany Strom
Storage

While some produce is no longer in season by the end of fall, many hearty root vegetables and other produce are stored easily through winter months and can effectively be considered “seasonal.”

In Season

Spinach

Garlic, Onion, Parsnips, Potatoes, Rutabagas, Turnips, Winter Squash, Cauliflower, Apples, Pears, Carrots, Beets,

Earth Week Schedule

Earth Week is almost upon us and we have a full schedule of events for you to attend and participate in.

April 13th- Fashion Show,
April 18th- Climate Change and Religion Talk, Ecumenical Center
April 19th- Water bottle hand out in Davies. Special tabling focus on composting, 5:10 pm is the Foodlums Cooking Show in Tower basement
April 20th- water bottle hand out in Davies, special focus on E-waste that day
April 21st- Sustainability and the Confluence Project presented by Kimera Way, Menomonie room 4-5:30 Davies
April 22nd- Earth Day, Water Bottle Hand-out Day, special focus on plastic reduction
April 25th- PSA showing “Mysteries of the Driftless” 7pm
April 28th- SOS showing “Merchants of Doubt” 6 pm

Make sure to be on the lookout for any other events that may pop up by checking out our website. http://www.uwec.edu/StudentSenate/commissions/sos/index.htm and on our facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/StudentOfficeofSustainability. Any other questions feel free to email us at sos@uwec.edu.

The SOS provides funding for projects that reduce UW-Eau Claire’s negative impact on the environment and make UW-Eau Claire a more sustainable campus. The SOS allocates funding to projects addressing the various sustainability areas of transportation, energy, waste, climate change, food systems, campus ecology, environmental ethics, and outreach.

STUDENT OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY
MEETINGS:
Monday 12 pm in Centennial 320
DIRECTOR:
Maria Delgado Gomez
sos@uwec.edu