

# Bringing Transparency to Fragrances in Cleaning Products

## Clorox tackles increased ingredient disclosure

Earlier this year, The Clorox Co. expanded its Ingredients Inside program to include fragrance ingredients.

"This is a core piece of our corporate responsibility program and commitment to transparency as a whole at Clorox," says Aileen Zerrudo, the company's director of corporate communications. "We felt that we wanted to address that interest [by consumers] in knowing what's in cleaners. Ultimately, we want consumers to be confident in our products; we want them to know we have no problem disclosing this information because we've done a lot of environmental and human safety testing for the products that people put in their homes."

Under the program, the company has posted a list of fragrance ingredients used in US and Canadian cleaning, disinfecting and laundry products.<sup>a</sup> The list consolidates all materials, which are not broken out by product or use levels to protect suppliers' confidential business information. The ingredients are listed in numerical and alphabetical order and are included in a PDF containing CAS numbers and International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) chemical names. Acknowledging that listing the entire contents of a product on a label is challenging, Clorox has seen to it that every product falling under the auspices of the program will bear the following message: "A list of this product's ingredients is available at [www.CloroxCSR.com](http://www.CloroxCSR.com)."

As it did in 2008 when Clorox launched its Green Works line, the Sierra Club has lent the move its support. "We applaud Clorox's continued efforts to become even more transparent with respect to the ingredients in [its] products," said Sierra Club chairman Carl Pope in an official release. "This is another example of the company responding to the immediate needs and interests of consumers."

"With the launch of Green Works and our acquisition of Burt's Bees, Clorox was under greater scrutiny with respect to its sustainability practices," says Zerrudo. She and Clorox research fellow Gregory van Buskirk add that, at the time, the company had long been focused on corporate responsibility and sustainability, but it hadn't released a sustainability report or otherwise aggressively promoted its actions in this area.



Gregory van Buskirk

"If people don't hear about what you're doing, they assume you're doing nothing."

—Aileen Zerrudo

"We had a clean reputation to tell, but we didn't do it," says van Buskirk.

The effect, says Zerrudo, was a lack of awareness and misperception of Clorox's overall corporate responsibility efforts. "If people don't hear about what you're doing, they assume you're doing nothing."

And so, with the launch of Green Works, Zerrudo says, "We realized how much people wanted to know about our product safety processes and sustainability initiatives. In particular, over the years there's been recognition that we're accelerating our sustainability efforts. It's not a 'nice to do.' These days it's an expectation. We learned a lot in the process. Sierra Club, before agreeing to work with us, did an extensive vetting process for six months prior to solidifying the relationship. They went deep to ask us about our products and product safety processes, about bleach, any environmental issues we might have at plants, and they certainly would not have agreed to a partnership if they found something concerning. They also gave us feedback on product ingredient communication."

Zerrudo says it was the Green Works launch that led the Ingredients Inside program where it is today. "One of the principles we felt strongly about was making sure that consumers understood how natural our products were." Green Works products were released with ingredients listed on the label. "Then we thought, 'Why should we just do it for natural cleaners?' We wanted to supply the

<sup>a</sup>[www.cloroxcsr.com/fragrances/](http://www.cloroxcsr.com/fragrances/)

same principals of transparency to our [conventional] cleaning and disinfecting products, starting in 2009.” At that stage, she says, the company listed its active ingredients for products in the United States and Canada. “We see this as an evolving effort.” The next step, say Zerrudo and van Buskirk, was to inform consumers about the function of each ingredient.

Van Buskirk adds that increased disclosure fundamentally changed the traditional relationship between manufacturer and fragrance supplier. “We, as formulators, never know what’s in a fragrance—we just get a fragrance and formulate it in,” he says. “As we started to think about something that would be a step up from the list that’s available to anybody on the International Fragrance Association website (IFRA; [www.ifraorg.org](http://www.ifraorg.org)), we wanted something that was more [specific] to our products. In talking to our procurement and fragrance specialists, they had some trepidation in terms of what we had in mind, but when we were talking to our suppliers about what we were going to do ... nobody put up any roadblocks. When they saw it was potentially the same thing as the IFRA website, they probably thought ‘why not?’ I wonder whether or not other suppliers had already previously asked for this information.” The compiled information,

adds Zerrudo, in effect represents the Clorox fragrance palette and reflects a level of information analogous to IFRA’s existing ingredient list.

“If we’re up front with our [ingredient] disclosure, the need to have it regulated is perhaps minimized—as long as the needs of the consumer are addressed,” says van Buskirk, while also acknowledging that the strategy behind the relatively new initiative will take time to prove out.

“It’s hard to say what’s next for us,” says Zerrudo, “but we’re committed to paying attention to what our stakeholders are saying.”

“We don’t make these decisions strictly autonomously,” says van Buskirk. “We’re trying to keep our ears to the ground [regarding] how this is going and apply that to what we think the consumer wants.”

*Zerrudo and van Buskirk speak as part of “Sustainable Fragrances 2011,” taking place June 9–10 in Arlington, Virginia; [www.sustainablefragrances.com](http://www.sustainablefragrances.com).*

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