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From benzene in factories to rivers full of e-waste, why consumer electronics are a deadly business for workers all along the supply chain. *Page 14*

# Toxic Gadgets



**NEW!**

Introducing Green America's  
campaign to end  
smartphone sweatshops:

[bad-apple.org](http://bad-apple.org)

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# Bad Apple: Making News and Making Waves

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It was just about a year ago when Heather White, documentary filmmaker, human-rights activist, and long-time ally, met with our Campaigns team at Green America to report on what she was finding in the electronics supply chain while she was on the ground in China.

The news went from awful to horrifying. Tens of thousands of people working in factories are being exposed to toxins like benzene and n-hexane with little protection while making cell phones, tablets, and computers. The dirtiest jobs usually go to young people—often still in their teens. Instead of a college education and a future, too often they end up with leukemia or other cancers, or nerve damage that can lead to paralysis.

Heather and our team decided it was time for a big campaign, coupled with the visual power of film, to end the use of these toxic chemicals and get adequate medical care for the workers who make the devices we all depend on. All electronics companies from Samsung to LG to Nokia are equally at fault. But we decided to focus on Apple as the brand leader whose example every company will follow.

Apple has no excuses. **Our research uncovered that benzene and n-hexane can be replaced for less than a dollar per device.** Apple makes a nearly 40-percent profit margin on iPhones. It can afford to do the right thing. Former EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson was once responsible for making sure no worker in the US is exposed to unsafe levels of toxins like benzene. She now oversees environmental matters at Apple, and she needs to do the same for all workers in its supply chain.

So we began plans to time the launch of the Bad Apple campaign with the release of Heather's short film, *Who Pays the Price? The Human Cost of Electronics*, this spring. Heather was already working with our friends at *The Nation*. And we reached out to our allies at China Labor Watch, the International Campaign for Responsible Technology, and the Hong-Kong-based worker's rights group Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior to join in mobilizing people all over the world to pressure Apple to solve these problems.

The response to our campaign has already been tremendous. In just over a month, over 750,000 people have seen Heather's movie. Stories in the media have reached over 50 million people. Apple is feeling the pressure big time, uncharacteristically responding to our campaign instead of keeping its usual silence. **We won't stop until Apple makes it right.**

Turn the pages to learn about these toxic gadgets (p. 14), how to see the film and take action (p. 19), how to fix your devices so they last longer (p. 21), and how to recycle them responsibly (p. 18).

Meanwhile, I'm going to keep my old phone, with its cracked screen, until Apple comes around. Please join with me in letting Apple know that you love its products but it must make them without toxic chemicals that poison their workers and the environment.



ALISA GRAVITZ

To health for all,

Alisa Gravitz, President/CEO

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## Shareholders Take Emergency Action to Protect “Fracked” Family



Photo © Jacques-Jean Tiziou, jttiziou.net

*Tammy Manning (right) holds her granddaughter Madison, who became ill after the family's drinking water was contaminated by natural gas fracking operations.*

Shareholder activists usually play the long game, filing shareholder resolutions with companies, requesting dialogues with corporate managers, and issuing investor statements calling for industry-wide action. These efforts add up, over time, to spur social and environmental changes at corporations. But last December, an investor coalition led by Green Century Capital Management took rapid, emergency action to save one Pennsylvania family from having to drink water contaminated by natural gas fracking.

“Most of the filings and discussions with companies take place over at least six months, and sometimes it takes years to secure the changes you seek,” says Green Century president Leslie Samuelrich. “But Green Century has started a rapid-response program to weigh in on important and timely issues.”

That program recently came to the aid of Tammy Manning and her family. The Mannings had moved to Franklin Forks, PA, a few years ago, just as energy companies were ramping up hydraulic fracturing operations in the Marcellus Shale region, an area stretching across Pennsylvania, New York, West Virginia, Ohio, and Maryland. When WPX Energy opened up two fracking wells near the Mannings’ property, Tammy noticed that something was very wrong in her household.

Her granddaughter Madison started waking up in the mornings vomiting, and this happened several times a week. Eventually, Manning pinpointed the family’s drinking water as a potential cause of the problem.

Natural gas fracking involves shooting thousands of gallons of chemical-laden water into rock formations deep in the ground to extract the natural gas con-

tained below those formations. The process can result in fracking chemicals or methane—the main component in natural gas—leaking into drinking water tables. Fracking has negatively affected 161 wells across Pennsylvania, according to the nonprofit Environment America.

Manning called her township office, which directed her to WPX. WPX in turn called in the state Department of Environmental Protection to test the Mannings’ water.

“He came in, turned on the faucet in the kitchen,” Manning told Environment America. “He held a wand next to the faucet, and it started beeping and sounding off like crazy.”

The state investigator found toxic heavy metals and flammable methane in the Mannings’ water. It asked WPX to install a water tank on the Mannings’ property to replace the contaminated drinking water, and Madison’s health took a dramatic turn for the better shortly thereafter.

Late last year, however, WPX obtained a court order to seize the water tank on or after December 16th. While the Mannings thought WPX had given them the tank, a judge sided with WPX ruling that the tank was on loan, and the company could take it back when it wished.

“To us, it seemed like petty vindictiveness and spiteful, beyond-the-pale behavior, the kind of corporate behavior where if the spotlight was shone on it, they would perhaps back away,” says John Rumpler, senior attorney at Environment America, which Manning contacted for help. “We thought direct pressure on the company could have an impact.”

So Environment America called on Green Century, with whom the organization had collaborated in the past.

“People like Tammy Manning are living on the front lines of fracking, and their kids are getting sick, their water’s getting

contaminated, their air is getting polluted,” says Rumpler. “This wasn’t the kind of thing that could be addressed through political channels, so we thought that turning to our friends at Green Century, who regularly engage in shareholder activism, would be a natural way to address this.”

With only a matter of days in which to act, Green Century pulled together a group of investors to issue a shareholder response letter asking WPX to allow the Mannings to keep their water tank.

“Hydraulic fracturing operations are increasingly controversial, and WPX’s recent actions to remove clean drinking water from the Manning family have increased the reputational risk for the company and its shareholders,” the letter stated. “The company’s decision to remove the drinking water tank has resulted in negative media attention for the company and risks damaging the company’s community relations. ... We urge WPX to immediately drop its plans to remove the drinking water tank from the Mannings and make its change public.”

The pressure worked. Within less than a week, WPX agreed to continue to supply clean drinking water to the Mannings and other affected families in the area.

“We are monitoring the situation to do everything we can to make sure the Mannings have access to the water they need to drink, bathe, and cook for as long as they need it—it is the minimum that should be provided,” says Samuelrich.

This isn’t the only victory Green Century’s new rapid-response shareholder program has achieved. Last fall, it learned that Wilmar, the world’s largest palm oil trader, was considering joining forces with grocery giant Unilever to develop a sustainable palm oil supply chain. Conventional palm oil harvesters often raze large swaths of rainforest to grow palm oil crops.

“We had been tracking the issue and wanted to signal support from the investment community,” says Samuelrich.

So the company organized 40 institutional investors with over \$270 billion in assets under management to call for “the development of transparent, traceable, deforestation-free palm oil supply chains.”

“In less than a month, Wilmar and Unilever announced their new policy, which is already having positive reverberations up and down the supply chain,” says Samuelrich.

For details on 2014 shareholder resolutions asking for corporate improvements around fracking and palm oil supply chains, see Green America’s 2014 Shareholder Resolution Focus List: [greenamerica.org/go/shareholders](http://greenamerica.org/go/shareholders). See p. 8

for more on becoming a shareholder activist around these and other issues.

## Number of Chemicals Known to Injure Developing Brain Doubles in Seven Years

In 2006, a landmark analysis from Harvard University and the Mount Sinai School of Medicine systematically reviewed published clinical and epidemiological studies of the neurotoxicity of chemicals. It identified five industrial chemicals as developmental neurotoxins, or chemicals that injure the developing brain—lead, methylmercury, polychlorinated biphenyls, arsenic, and toluene. In February, the authors—Dr. Philip Landrigan, chair of the department of preventive medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, and Dr. Philippe Grandjean, chair of environmental medicine at the Harvard School of Public Health—updated this analysis, reviewing similar studies conducted since 2006. They identified six more chemicals as developmental neurotoxins:

- manganese, used in stainless steels.
- fluoride, put in drinking water to reduce cavities. Landrigan and Grandjean focused on studies linking very high levels of fluoride in groundwater in China to negative effects on brain growth. “Fluoride is a developmental neurotoxicant at high levels and not in the levels found in toothpaste or at federally approved levels in drinking water,” says Landrigan.
- chlorpyrifos, an organophosphate pesticide.
- dichlorodiphenyl trichloroethane, a.k.a. the now-banned pesticide DDT.
- perchloroethylene, a chemical commonly used in dry cleaning.
- polybrominated diphenyl ethers, used as flame retardants in furniture and electronics.

“In only seven years, the number of industrial chemicals recognized to have impacts on brain development has doubled, leading to a global, silent epidemic of neurodevelopmental disabilities,” says Landrigan. “More must be done to close the gap in testing of chemicals for neurodevelopmental neurotoxic effects; strengthen government regulation of these chemicals; and educate the public about the absolute and irreversible harm these chemicals do.”

Unfortunately, a new bill introduced by Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL) in February, the

Chemicals in Commerce Act, would weaken current outdated federal chemical regulations, rather than strengthening them.

Current law allows the US EPA to regulate a chemical only after it has been proven to cause “serious harm” to human health or the environment. Proving that harm has been notoriously difficult—and so the EPA has only banned or partially banned five of the more than 85,000 chemicals in use in the US today.

The Chemicals in Commerce Act would, for example, allow a manufacturer to refuse to conduct any testing requested by the EPA. At the end of a 90-day waiting period, the manufacturer could then put the chemical on the market anyway. The new bill would also block states from restricting chemicals, which they are allowed to do under the current system. It would also strike down laws like California’s Prop. 65, which requires labeling of approximately 800 chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm upon exposure.

Green America has long worked to muster support for effective control of toxic chemicals. We support the Safe Cosmetics Act and new initiatives, like the Companies for Safer Chemicals coalition, to fundamentally reform the Toxics Substances Control Act. Strengthening of this law, outdated chemical policy is long overdue. Green America is also a founding member of the Companies for Safer Chemicals coalition, which is making the business argument for strong chemical policy that supports industry in producing safer products.

For up-to-the-minute information about Green America’s work to support meaningful chemical policy reform, sign up for our free e-mail newsletter at [greenamerica.org/signup](http://greenamerica.org/signup). Businesses can sign the Companies for Safer Chemicals petition at <http://bit.ly/SaferChemicalsBizPetition>.

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# Safer Sunscreen for Summer



The summer months are upon us, and for many people, that means more time outside in the sun. It also often means slathering on sunscreen to protect yourself from sunburn and other dangerous effects of too much sun exposure. Did you know that common sunscreen brands can contain toxins? So the more you slather, the more problematic ingredients your body absorbs.

Fortunately, following a few simple rules can help you easily pick a safe sunscreen for your skin.

## Sun Exposure and Skin Cancer

According to the National Cancer Institute (NCI), more than 2 million Americans develop skin cancer every year. Basal and squamous cell carcinomas, which are rarely fatal, make up most of those cases, but cases of melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, are on the rise. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that melanoma incidents have increased by almost two percent each year since 2000.

Risk factors for melanoma include exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, family history, the number of moles on

a person's skin, fair skin, and frequent sunburns, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation.

While a handful of studies have demonstrated increased rates of cancer possibly linked with sunscreen use, more studies show lower melanoma rates with daily sunscreen use. Consequently, the general scientific consensus is to use sunscreen to avoid sunburns.

"We recommend following a complete sun protection regimen that includes seeking shade and covering

up with clothing, including a wide-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses, in addition to daily sunscreen use," says Emily Prager of the Skin Cancer Foundation.

So how do you choose a sunscreen?

## Don't Use Conventional Sunscreens

Wearing sunscreen is important, yet some chemical sunscreens contain ingredients that may pose a health danger and even *contribute* to the development of skin cancer. Like many body care products in the US, ingredients in sunscreens are poorly regulated by the FDA. Most sunscreen ingredients were already in use in 1978 when the FDA started regulating sunscreens, so many have never been tested for safety.

For example, vitamin A (retinyl palmitate) is an additive typically included as an anti-aging ingredient. While vitamin A is an essential nutrient for your body, decades of studies have shown that absorbing it through the skin can be hazardous. The most potent evidence came in a 2010 study from the National Toxicology Project, which found that mice coated with retinyl palmitate cream more rapidly developed skin damage, including skin cancer, than mice without it.

Oxybenzone, added as a UV filter, is found in about 80 percent of chemical sunscreens. Research compiled by the nonprofit Environmental Working Group (EWG) indicates that oxybenzone can penetrate the skin, causing allergic skin reactions and possibly disrupting hormones; oxybenzone is also connected to low birth weight in newborn girls.

## Do Comparison Shop

Before you shop, search the Environmental Working Group (EWG)'s Skin Deep cosmetic database, which rates body care products, including sunscreens, for toxicity.

In addition, EWG releases a "Guide to Safer Sunscreens" annually, comparing sunscreens and citing the safest brands.

"We literally have people going from store to store each year to see what sunscreens are on the shelves to keep

**WHAT!** Find safer sunscreens for summer.

**WHY!** Chemical-laden conventional sunscreens can include toxic ingredients that can be absorbed through the skin.

**WOW!** Sunscreens from green companies are free from the most potent toxins, avoid problematic nanoparticles, and can still protect you from the sun.

our guide relevant and useful,” says the EWG’s Paul Pestano.

### Don’t Rely on SPF Alone

When we talk about protecting the skin from sun damage, we are generally talking about ultraviolet radiation, a spectrum of electromagnetic radiation that is invisible to the naked eye. Ultraviolet B, or UVB radiation, has a short wavelength and affects the surface of your skin, resulting in sunburns. Ultraviolet A, or UVA radiation, has a longer wavelength and penetrates more deeply into your skin; UVA radiation has long been linked to skin aging, and more recent research shows that UVA radiation damages skin cells in the layer of epidermis where most melanoma skin cancers occur.

The sun protection factor, or SPF, number on sunscreens lets users know the level of protection they have from sunburns caused by UVB radiation. SPF numbers have nothing to do with protection offered from UVA radiation.

Therefore, says Pestano, “a sunscreen with higher SPF gives the user misconception that they can stay outside for longer, and that can be dangerous.”

### Do Use Broad-Spectrum Protection

Sunscreen that offers “broad-spectrum protection” can help keep you safe from both UVA and UVB radiation. However, don’t just trust any label that says “broad-” or “full-spectrum” without checking the ingredients. Although FDA regulates the “broad-spectrum” label, the FDA’s standards are much weaker than those in the European Union. In fact, half of the sunscreens labeled as offering broad-spectrum protection in the US could not be sold in Europe with that label due to insufficient UVA protection.

To ensure true broad-spectrum protection, look for effective, less-toxic UVA filters like zinc oxide, avobenzone, and Mexoryl SX listed as “active ingredients” on the label. Some might also be labeled as “mineral sunscreens” because they are using minerals, like zinc oxide, as UV filters.

## 5 SAFE SUNSCREENS

These sunscreens all earned a 1 (least-toxic rating) on EWG’s cosmetic database ([ewg.org/skindeep](http://ewg.org/skindeep)) and do not contain nanoparticles other than zinc oxide:

**Badger  Broad-Spectrum Sunscreen:** 800/603-6100, [badgerbalm.com](http://badgerbalm.com).

**Elemental Herbs  Sport Sunscreen:** 877/239-4667, [elementalherbs.com](http://elementalherbs.com).

**The Honest Company  Sunscreen:** 888/862-8818, [honest.com](http://honest.com).

**Purple Prairie Botanicals  Sunstick:** 320/558-9010, [purpleprairie.com](http://purpleprairie.com).

**Seventh Generation  Wee Generation Baby Sunscreen:** 800/211-4279, [seventhgeneration.com](http://seventhgeneration.com).

## 5 TO AVOID

The following brands received 8s, the most-toxic ranking on EWG’s cosmetic database.

**Borba** Age-Defying Wrinkle Shield

**Fruit of the Earth** Block Up! Sunscreen

**Headblade** Headshade Oil-Free Sunscreen

**Ocean Potion** Protective Spray Gel

**Panama Jack** Continuous Clear Spray Sunscreen

### Don’t Go for the Spray-On Kind

Though they can be fast and convenient, spray sunscreens can be inhaled into the lungs, potentially exposing users to even more toxins. Stick to sunscreen that you rub on the skin.

### Don’t Ignore Nanoparticles

Nanoparticles are ultrafine particles between 1 and 100 nanometers in size. They are used in sunscreen to help the cream rub onto the skin clearly and smoothly. Some mineral sunscreens do contain nanoparticles of otherwise safe minerals like titanium dioxide or zinc oxide, to provide better UVB protection. The FDA doesn’t require labeling of nanoparticles.

Some experts urge precaution with nanoparticles in any body care product, because there has not been a sufficient

## SUNSCREEN RESOURCES

**Environmental Working Group’s Skin Deep Cosmetic Database:** [ewg.org/skindeep](http://ewg.org/skindeep). Rates body care products, including sunscreen, for toxicity. Lists problematic ingredients and their potential health effects. EWG publishes an annual guide to sunscreens on the site as well.

**Friends of the Earth (FoE) “Nanotechnology and Sunscreens” report:** [action.foe.org/content.jsp?key=3060](http://action.foe.org/content.jsp?key=3060). This report ranks sunscreen companies on their use of nanoparticles.

**The Skin Cancer Foundation:** [skincancer.org](http://skincancer.org). Research and resources about skin cancer.

amount of study on their safety.

The European Commission’s Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety recommended in 2013 that certain types of nano-titanium dioxide not be used in sunscreen because they react with sunlight to produce free radicals, which can cause skin-cell damage. It also recommended that nano-titanium dioxide and nano-zinc oxide not be used in powder or spray sunscreens because they could be toxic if inhaled.

Zinc-oxide in any sunscreen usually comes in the form of nanoparticles. So far, studies have shown no major health issues, and it still provides the best protection of any less-toxic ingredient.

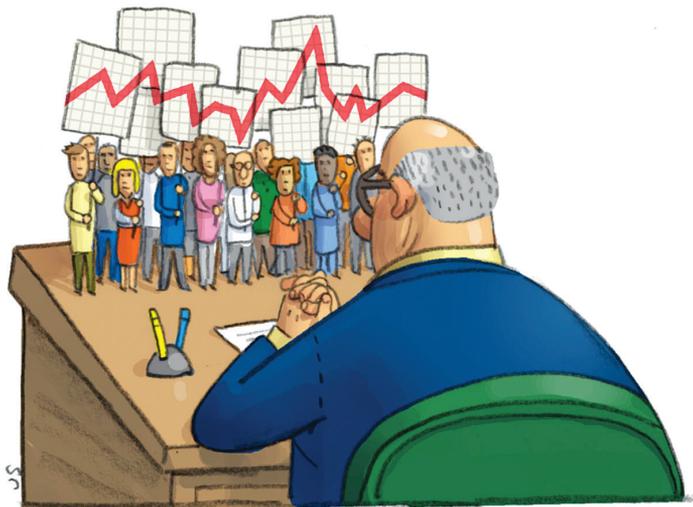
“While nanoparticles are a concern, [EWG doesn’t] believe that zinc oxide poses a large threat when applied to the skin,” says EWG’s Paul Pestano.

Green America recommends avoiding nanoparticles with the possible exception of zinc oxide. If you want to avoid all nano-materials, Friends of the Earth has published a guide to “Nanotechnology and Sunscreens” to help you find nano-free sunscreen.

### Do (Carefully) Have Fun in the Sun

Don’t be afraid to spend time in the sun. Just be vigilant about seeking out shade, avoid the most intense mid-day sun, and use a less-toxic, broad-spectrum sunscreen. 

—Sarah Tarver-Wahlquist



## Best Shareholder Actions for 2014

At the root of many corporate ills is a desire to maximize profits and, by extension, shareholder returns. Abusive sweatshops? Created to squeeze every last dime out of the workforce. Environmental harm? Inflicted by companies that cut corners on manufacturing practices and want to avoid costly overhauls of manufacturing processes. Greenhouse gas emissions? The biggest emitter is the fossil fuel industry, which earns more money the more carbon people burn.

So if you want to make a corporation sit up and take notice, hit it where it hurts—in the assets.

Today, every single investor has the power to pressure companies to improve their impacts on people and the Earth. Concerned shareholders, especially institutional investors—large organizations that invest, like unions, pension funds, and mutual funds—have been at the root of many positive moves taken by companies in the last few years, from Dell’s creation of a computer recycling program, to McDonald’s decision to demand its potato suppliers reduce pesticide use, to Walmart’s enacting a sexual-orientation non-discrimination policy.

Big changes like these are often spurred on by one simple economic

**WHAT?** Become an active shareholder and vote your proxy ballots for social and environmental resolutions.

**WHY?** Every shareholder receives a proxy ballot from companies in which they own stock, allowing them to vote on requests to company managers.

**WOW!** Voting for social and environmental resolutions helps pressure corporations to change for the better.

weapon that every investor can wield—the shareholder resolution.

### The Power of the Resolution

Shareholder resolutions are 500-word proposals requesting reports or actions from company management. These proposals appear on a company’s proxy ballot, which is mailed to all shareholders before its annual meeting. Shareholder activists need to own just \$2,000-worth of company stock for one year or more to file a resolution. And all shareholders can easily vote on

these resolutions via the proxy ballot. [Editor’s note: Want an example? View a sample proxy ballot at [greenamerica.org/go/proxyballot](http://greenamerica.org/go/proxyballot).]

Since shareholders are part-owners of a corporation and also represent the company’s customers, their requests are something corporate managers take very seriously, says Fran Teplitz, Green America’s director of social investing: “Filing a shareholder resolution ratchets up the pressure on a company to change its policy or conduct.”

Social and environmental resolutions don’t even need a majority to bring about changes in corporate behavior. Votes of 10–15 percent are often enough to spur companies into action, because management knows they represent a significant number of unhappy shareholders.

“The goal is change, not a big vote,” says Andrew Behar, CEO of As You Sow<sup>sm</sup>, a nonprofit promoting corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy.

2013 saw a record 394 social and environmental resolutions put forth by investors, the majority focused on climate change and corporate political spending. Perhaps the best news of the season is that average shareholder support for social and environmental resolutions that went to a vote has reached an all-time high of 21.3 percent.

“Ten years ago, a vote of 10 percent or more was considered wildly successful, and now that’s almost commonplace,” says Teplitz.

### Action in Coalition

Shareholder activists, especially institutional investors, will often act in coalition, so the combined total of their investments mean they can easily get the attention of corporate managers. They often start by meeting with management behind closed doors to dialogue on social and environmental concerns.

“We engage with a company first and say we want to see a certain change,” says Behar. “Sometimes they say, ‘Great idea!’ and they make the change, and it never goes to a resolution. If they

don't take us seriously, we file a shareholder resolution to get their attention. It's an escalation of the process."

Often, the act of filing a resolution is enough to bring executives to the negotiating table.

In 2013, 153 out of the 394 resolutions tracked by As You Sow were withdrawn before coming to vote after the management agreed to the filers' requests.

For those companies that are slower to take action, votes of three percent the first year, six the second, and ten percent thereafter are enough to put a resolution back on the shareholder ballot the next year, meaning the bad publicity these resolutions generate keeps coming back to haunt them.

"It's consistency. It's tenacity. It's many years of putting a company's name in the press that leads to change," says Behar.

### Shareholder Success in 2013

Social and environmental resolutions on key issues put forth by shareholder advocates earned high votes in 2013:

**NATURAL GAS FRACKING:** Shareholders are becoming increasingly concerned about the financial risks associated with hydraulic fracturing (fracking)—and that can be seen in last year's extraordinarily high voting rates. Of the six 2013 resolutions that dealt with fracking, half received votes of over 30 percent, and the other half were withdrawn when companies agreed to shareholder demands.

For example, Green Century<sup>™</sup> filed a resolution that asked Ultra Petroleum Corp. for a yearly report detailing how the company plans to minimize "the adverse environmental and community impacts from the company's hydraulic fracturing operations." Green Century withdrew the resolution after the company agreed to issue the reports.

**CLIMATE CHANGE:** Last year, Ceres<sup>™</sup>, a nonprofit coalition of investors, companies, and organizations advocating for sustainable business practices, tracked 40 resolutions filed that were related specifically to climate change, a big jump from 18 resolutions in 2012.

The 2013 climate resolution with one

## NEED HELP VOTING YOUR PROXIES?

Want assistance with navigating the world of shareholder activism? Green America provides a list of the year's most pressing resolutions that are tied to our organization's key issues, including banking, climate, corporate lobbying and political spending, deforestation, water issues, natural gas fracking, GMOs, human rights, recycling and packaging, and toxic chemicals. Find **Green America's Shareholder Resolution Focus List**, as well as a **sample proxy ballot**, at [greenamerica.org/go/shareholders](http://greenamerica.org/go/shareholders).



For a more comprehensive overview, look to As You Sow's **2014 Proxy Preview**. This annual report, sponsored in part by Green America, summarizes the record-breaking 417 social and environmental resolutions filed in 2014 and also provides in-depth analysis to help you figure out how to vote in support of your values. Download the report for free at [proxypreview.org](http://proxypreview.org).

of the highest votes overall—38.2 percent—questioned the impact of fracking on the climate: Trillium Asset Management<sup>™</sup>, asked ONEOK Inc., one of the largest US natural gas distributors, to report on the climate impact of natural gas throughout its lifecycle

**WORKER RIGHTS:** 2013 saw multiple sweatshop mass tragedies, including the Rana Plaza building collapse, which killed 1,129 people in Bangladesh as they made clothing for companies such as Walmart. In 2013, an investor coalition led by Boston Common Asset Management<sup>™</sup> issued an investor statement calling on 21 companies to enact system-wide reforms that would prevent similar tragedies.

Ceres reported 16 resolutions specific to worker safety in 2013. Some of them, such as those filed with Motorola and Gap Inc., dealt with worker-safety issues in overseas factories and sweatshops. Others delved into the question of improving worker safety here in the US.

Filers withdrew half of the worker-safety resolutions in 2013 after reaching an agreement with the companies.

### What to Watch for in 2014

**CLIMATE CHANGE:** 2014 brings increased shareholder focus on climate change, particularly in light of climate-related disasters like 2013's Typhoon Haiyan over the Philippines.

"Climate change results in unpredictable weather, water sources, and horrible impacts on people. These all

translate to financial risk to most companies," says Teplitz.

Several resolutions in 2014 are encouraging companies come to terms with the threat that climate change poses to their bottom line and find ways to improve their carbon footprint.

Shareholders have already achieved a landmark victory on the climate front in 2014. In response to a shareholder resolution filed by As You Sow and Arjuna Capital<sup>™</sup>, Exxon Mobil, the largest US energy company, agreed in March for the first time ever to publish a Carbon Asset Risk report on the company website "on the risks that stranded assets pose to the company's business model, how the company is planning for a carbon-constrained world, how climate risks affect capital expenditure plans, and other related issues."

"We're gratified that ExxonMobil has agreed to drop its opposition to our proposal and address this very real risk. Shareholder value is at stake if companies are not prepared for a low-carbon scenario," says Natasha Lamb, director of equity research and shareholder engagement at Arjuna Capital. "...We want to ensure our companies' capital will yield strong returns, and we're not throwing good money after bad."

**WORKER RIGHTS:** Look for the number of sweatshop-related resolutions to increase in 2014. From a strictly financial perspective, shareholders are becoming increasingly concerned about

## DIVEST FROM FOSSIL FUELS

Green America and our allies at 350.org continue to call on investors to divest from the top 250 oil and gas companies. Our goal is to pull the financial rug out from under the fossil-fuel industry to pressure these companies to switch to renewables. Find our free guide to fossil-fuel-free investing online at [greenamerica.org/fossilfree](http://greenamerica.org/fossilfree).

the risks that poor labor conditions can pose to a brand's image.

In 2014, shareholders filed 14 resolutions asking companies—including Dollar General, Kohl's, and Kroger—to analyze and report on the human-rights risks of the companies' products, operations, and supply chains. A resolution filed at Target asks the company to set up a board committee to oversee human rights issues, particularly among garment workers in Bangladesh and Jordan.

**GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS:** GMOs are increasingly becoming an issue of concern for shareholders.

"As more companies make the switch to non-GM food, their competitors are going to have to ask themselves about the risks they take on by including GMOs in their products," says Green America's Elizabeth O'Connell, who spoke at General Mills' 2013 shareholder meeting about its use of GMOs in Cheerios.

Shareholders filed proposals asking for labeling of products containing GMOs with Abbot Laboratories, ConAgra, Kraft Foods, Mondelez International, PepsiCo, and Safeway. They've also filed resolutions with DuPont and Monsanto asking for reports on the

impacts of GMOs and related pesticides on health and the Earth.

**OTHER ISSUES:** Shareholders have also filed resolutions on a number of other issues, including animal testing, corporate political spending, toxic chemicals, industrial agriculture, gun control, human rights, media and privacy, board and workplace diversity, and more.

### Vote Your Proxies!

It's vital that all concerned shareholders look out for their proxy ballots in the spring and vote in support of social and environmental resolutions.

If you own individual stocks, your proxy ballots will arrive in the mail each

spring. Check out resources from Green America and As You Sow in the box on p. 9 for votes you won't want to miss.

If you have a financial advisor, s/he may receive and vote your proxies for you. Ask him/her to send you the ballots so you can vote yourself.

If you own mutual funds, fund managers receive and vote your proxy ballots. By law, the funds must disclose their voting records on their website. Check out those records, and if they don't mesh with your values, call your funds' investor relations departments to let them know why you're unhappy.

"Becoming an engaged shareholder is not only your right, but your responsibility," says Andrew Behar of As You Sow. "As a shareholder, you own these businesses, so [take] ownership in a fundamental way of the companies [in your portfolio, instead of] allowing them to continue to do harm. It all comes down to aligning your personal values with your investing, as well as with how you live your life." 

—Martha van Gelder & Tracy Fernandez Rysavy

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Green America is forming a team of riders for Climate Ride, to promote our Clean Energy Victory Bonds legislation and fund our innovative climate protection programs.

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For more information, contact Katie Gatlin, [kgatlin@greenamerica.org](mailto:kgatlin@greenamerica.org), 202.872.5339



# GREEN BUSINESS NEWS

THE LATEST FROM OUR GREEN BUSINESS NETWORK®

[GreenBusinessNetwork.org](http://GreenBusinessNetwork.org)

+ Find green companies in our National Green Pages®: [greenpages.org](http://greenpages.org)

## Introducing the Green Festival Brand and Community Awards!



Photo from Green Festivals, Inc.

Taking one more step to help families, businesses, and communities live green, Green Festivals, Inc. has launched two new awards this spring to recognize brands and organizations that make US communities more sustainable.

The following awards will be given at all five Green Festival events in 2014:

- *The Green Festival Community Award* will provide a \$5,000 grant to a deserving regional nonprofit for a sustainability-focused project aimed at improving its local community.

- *The Green Festival Brand Award* will be given to Green Festival exhibitors that are leading innovators in sustainable business, making significant impacts on the lives of people and the planet.

In addition, attendees in each city who vote for their favorite green brands will be eligible to win a *Super Green Shopper Prize*, a gift basket full of premium green products donated by Festival exhibitors.

“At Green Festival, we believe that even small changes toward sustainability can make a major impact on our lives and planet,” says Dr. Corinna Basler, president

of Green Festivals, Inc. “These new awards, given by Green Festival, will recognize the contributions made by companies that care about sustainability and the [people] who support them.”

In collaboration with Green America and Global Exchange<sup>™</sup>, Green Festival has joined forces with Messe Stuttgart, a leading international trade show organizer with a long-standing commitment to sustainability.

Join us at the Green Festival to deepen your journey to sustainability. Each Festival includes inspiring speakers and sustainability thought-leaders, innovative green-business exhibitors, a children’s area, a yoga pavilion, a vegetarian food court, and more.

The 2014 Green Festivals include: New York City, April 26–27 • Washington, DC, May 31–June 1 • Los Angeles, Sept. 12–14 • Chicago, Oct. 24–26 • San Francisco, Nov. 14–16.

Contact: Online Voting for the Green Festival Brand Award is open April 28–May 29. The Green Festival Community Award online voting is open May 26–May 30, and on-site voting is May 31–June 1. For more details, visit [greenfestivals.org/awards](http://greenfestivals.org/awards).

The Community Award will be crowdsourced at each Festival, with the general public and attendees invited to vote at [GreenFestival.org](http://GreenFestival.org) one week prior to each Festival.

## Pioneering Aveda Founder Passes Away

Green-business pioneer Horst Rechelbacher, founder of Aveda<sup>™</sup>, died on February 15th at age 72. A long-time member of Green America, Rechelbacher is credited with shifting the cosmetics industry toward a less-toxic and more conscientious path through his activism and business practices.

Rechelbacher founded Aveda in 1978 after holistic treatments helped him recover from a car accident, launching a least-toxic line of hair products. The company soon became known as a pioneer in natural, plant-based hair and body care. But Aveda wasn’t just promoting a healthy lifestyle for its customers. In a time before Fair Trade was a well-known concept, Rechelbacher worked to source Aveda’s ingredients in a way that supported its supplier communities. The company was also an early adopter of recycled packaging and organic ingredients.

Rechelbacher would often say, “Don’t put anything on your skin that you wouldn’t put in your mouth.” After selling Aveda in 1997, he founded Intelligent Nutrients<sup>™</sup>, with the philosophy that “everything we put in and on our body must be nutritious and safe.” The company creates hair and body care products that are 100 percent organic-food-based—and Rechelbacher illustrated their safety by famously drinking them.

But Rechelbacher went beyond leading by example, working closely with organizations such as the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics to raise awareness about the rampant toxicity of mainstream beauty products.

“Horst was an amazing leader in green business practices,” says Denise Hamler, director of Green America’s Green Business Network®. “He helped to advance the idea of voting with your dollars, of consumers using their purchasing choices to support the kind of world they wanted to live in.”



## GMO Inside Launches Starbucks Campaign

This spring, Green America's GMO Inside campaign set its sights on Starbucks, asking the coffee-shop chain to stop serving dairy milk from cows fed genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and to replace it with organic milk. Organic certification ensures that crops are grown without GMOs, in addition to prohibiting the use of synthetic chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

Cows living on industrial farms are fed mainly GMO crops like corn, soy, alfalfa, cotton seed, or sugar beets. In fact, 98 percent of GM soy and 49 percent of GM corn in the US goes to feeding livestock and poultry.

"These crops degrade the quality of our land and water, perpetuate corporate-controlled agriculture, and potentially have negative health impacts on livestock," says GMO Inside campaign manager Nicole McCann. "Additionally, the overuse of antibiotics in industrialized farming is contributing to the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, putting us all at risk."

A study published in the June 2013 *Journal of Organic Systems* found that pigs fed an entirely GMO diet suffered from severe stomach inflammation when compared to

pigs given non-GMO feed. Also, while the dairy industry claims that genetically modified particles are broken down in the digestive tracts of the animals that eat them, these GM particles have shown up in the organs and milk of animals fed GMOs, the same milk and meat that humans then eat.

"Starbucks boasts nearly 20,000 retail stores in over 60 countries. With its global presence, Starbucks must prove its true dedication to sustainability and provide organic dairy milk at all of its locations to support a sustainable future for all," says McCann.

McCann points out that Starbucks is already a leader in the coffee shop industry by serving rBGH-free dairy and using only USDA-certified organic soy milk. "By setting the same organic standard for dairy milk, Starbucks can demonstrate a serious commitment to providing environmentally and socially conscious products that help foster a sustainable agriculture system," she says.

Visit [GMOinside.org](http://GMOinside.org) and click on "Take Action" to sign petitions asking Starbucks to replace milk from GMO-fed cows with organic milk.

Select articles of our Jan./Feb. 2014 *Green American*, "GMOs and the Case for Precaution," are available at [greenamerica.org/go/GMOprecaution](http://greenamerica.org/go/GMOprecaution).

## Announcing the Clean Energy Victory Bonds Act of 2014!

It's official! On April 8th, Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) and Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA), along with 15 co-sponsors, introduced the Clean Energy Victory Bonds Act of 2014 in the House of Representatives.

The brainchild of Green America's Climate Action program, the Clean Energy Victory Bonds Act is modeled after one of the most successful fundraising efforts in US history. During World War II, millions of Americans purchased over \$185 billion in Victory Bonds (over \$2 trillion in today's dollars), which were issued by the United States Treasury to finance the war effort.

Likewise, government-issued Clean Energy Victory Bonds (CEVBs) would help fund renewable-energy and energy-efficiency solutions to the climate-related crises we face, such as rising sea levels and extreme weather events like Hurricane Sandy, which put the US infrastructure and economy at risk.

Clean Energy Victory Bonds will allow Americans to combat the climate crisis and invest in a clean-energy future for as little as \$25. The sale of the bonds is expected to raise up to \$50 billion, which would leverage an additional \$100 billion from private investors. The money raised would fund essential tax credits for renewable sources and extend them for a decade, including the Production Tax Credit for wind energy, the Solar Investment Tax Credit, the Residential Energy Efficiency Tax Credit, and the Plug-In Electric Vehicle Grants program.

"Investing in clean-energy technology spurs economic development and job creation, protects our environment, and ensures that the United States remains a world leader in the clean-energy economy," said Rep. Matsui upon the bill's introduction. "By providing an opportunity to all Americans who support renewable energy to invest in proven technologies, Clean Energy Victory Bonds allow us to move forward towards a cleaner and more secure future for our nation."

Call your Congressional representatives and ask them to co-sponsor the Clean Energy Victory Bond Act of 2014. Find contact information for your representative at [house.gov](http://house.gov). For more information, visit Green America's [cleanenergyvictorybonds.org](http://cleanenergyvictorybonds.org).

## Down with Dominion's Cove Point Plan

Green America has joined forces with the Chesapeake Sustainable Business Council to protest Dominion Energy's plans for a nearly \$4 billion liquefied natural gas plant in Cove Point, MD—the first of its kind on the East Coast. Liquefying natural gas makes it suitable for international export, and increasing export of natural gas means increasing production, says Fran Teplitz, Green America's policy director.

"If Dominion starts exporting natural gas through Cove Point, the number of fracking projects in the surrounding area will skyrocket," says Teplitz. "This project is a lot like the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, in that it's setting the country up for exporting the energy, sending big profits to energy companies, and putting all the environmental risks on the American public."

Fracking, also known as hydraulic fracturing, releases natural gas held in rock formations deep within the earth, mainly by drilling into those formations and blasting open fissures with injections of millions of gallons of chemically treated water and sand per well. As much as 75 percent of this poisoned water returns to the surface, where it often leaks into groundwater.

Although natural gas has a lower carbon footprint than other fossil fuels, the process of liquefying the gas for export increases its lifecycle carbon footprint by 15 percent.

In March, Green America mobilized 38,000 people to protest the plant as part of a public-comment period on the project, as well as urging 50 Maryland-based members of our Green Business Network® to send a letter to the Maryland Public Service Commission asking it to halt the facility.

"We believe that Dominion's proposed Cove Point project will not serve our state's interests, whether in terms of economic benefits, environmental gains, or positive impacts on public health and welfare," the letter stated. "This massive project will pollute our air and waterways. ... Maryland needs to build on our renewable energy infrastructure, which will promote

our best economic future—and not invest in fossil-fuel projects that are bad for the economy and that will only exacerbate the climate crisis."

## People & Planet Award Winners Help Create Green Homes

The winter season of our \$5,000 People & Planet Awards program celebrated sustainable businesses with an extraordinary commitment to building green and healthy homes. Green America congratulates our three newest winners of the award, chosen by voters across the country from among ten finalists.

This winter's three winners included a green cleaning service, a solar installer and efficiency expert, and a home-improvement center specializing in reuse.

Nancy Vasquez Louth, manager of the Green Broom Brigade cleaning cooperative in Lompoc, CA, says the cooperative will use its People & Planet prize money to expand its services. "Winning this award will give us the opportunity to purchase needed equipment so that we can expand into commercial cleaning using our same green, friendly products," she says.

Kevin Eigel, president of Ecohouse in Galloway, OH, says, "We are happy to be recognized for our work of helping central Ohio homeowners and businesses go solar and reduce the impact of climate change. We will use the prize money to help put up a solar electric system for the Third Hand Bike Co-op, a local nonprofit organization that makes cycling accessible for everyone in our region."

And finally, Ruthie Mundell, outreach manager at Community Forklift in Edmonston, MD, says, "We've recently been offered unfinished space in a nearby warehouse. The prize money will help us clean and fix it up." In addition, she says, "we can finally explore some exciting possibilities—like recycling paint, conducting an upcycling workshop, or offering job training in deconstruction!"

Finalists for the spring People & Planet Awards will be nominated by a team of community development financial professionals from among their green-business clients. To vote for your favorites to win, visit our website beginning May 1st.

Reward three green businesses with a \$5,000 prize by visiting [greenamerica.org/peopleandplanet](http://greenamerica.org/peopleandplanet) during the month of May.



Photo by Josh Tulkin

From left to right: Green America's Kathy Harget and Fran Teplitz joined Chesapeake Sustainable Business Council executive director Stephen Shaff at a "Say No to Cove Point" rally in March.

## Join the Green America Climate Ride Team!

Thinking about joining Green America's Climate Ride team? Now is the perfect time to sign up for Climate Ride NYC-DC and the new Climate Ride Midwest.

The Climate Ride is a four-day charitable bicycling adventure in which cyclists each raise \$2,800+ for nonprofits working on climate change, including Green America.

Climate Ride NYC-DC, which takes place Sept. 20-24, departs by ferry in Manhattan, passes through Pennsylvania Amish areas and Maryland's horse country, and ends on the steps of the US Capitol building in Washington, DC.

Climate Ride Midwest starts in bike-friendly Grand Rapids, MI, and travels along scenic backroads lining the shores of Lake Michigan, winding up in Chicago's Grant Park.

Both Climate Rides feature inspiring speakers along the way, as well as opportunities to socialize with fellow riders who are deeply concerned about climate change. Both are fully supported, meaning Climate Ride staff handles your luggage, vegetarian meals, bike repairs, and lodging.

Green America has our own Climate Ride team participating in each ride, and the majority of the money our team raises goes to our Climate Action programs.

To join Green America's Climate Ride teams, contact Katie Gatlin at 202/872-5339 or e-mail [kgatlin@greenamerica.org](mailto:kgatlin@greenamerica.org).

# TOXIC GADGETS

*Workers who make smartphones and other electronics overseas are being poisoned by the toxins used inside supplier factories. You can end this.*



AP photo/Kin Cheung

University students from Hong Kong and mainland China dressed as Foxconn factory workers stage a demonstration with mock iPads outside a Hong Kong Apple store in protest of poor working conditions. The factory makes iPhones and iPads for Apple.

**L**i Qiang, founder and executive director of New York-based China Labor Watch, often sends undercover investigators to work in electronics supplier factories in China. They report back on the labor conditions they experienced, which CLW uses as ammunition to advocate—on the ground in China and with US corporations that use the factories—for better pay and conditions for workers. In 1999, shortly before founding CLW, Li decided to go in and work for himself in a factory that made

electronics for US retailers, and he also interviewed workers at China's Foxconn factory, which would go on to make iPhones and iPads for Apple.

The average worker on the production line in a supplier factory for Apple and other electronics manufacturers in China will labor for at least 12-hour shifts, with perhaps an hour break total. She (or he) will work six or seven days a week, particularly during high production times (think when Apple is introducing a new iPhone). Supervisors will put immense pressure on the worker to

meet high quotas, so she'll have to work very quickly at repetitive tasks like wiping screens with a chemical or putting plastic cases into a molding machine.

When she finishes the workday, she'll have a simple meal in the factory dormitory—as she's likely a migrant worker who traveled far from home to an industrial area seeking employment. She'll go to bed, sharing a room with up to 12 people who may not speak her dialect or be from her region in China—all the better to keep workers isolated so they won't try to organize.

And then she'll go to sleep, get up in the morning, and start again.

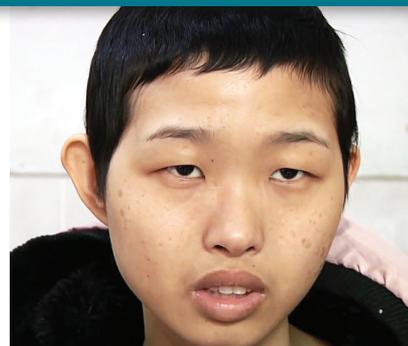
The work is so intense that many factories will only hire people under the age of 35 or 30, because they need tremendous energy to toil at the necessary pace for such long shifts, says Li.

He held to this schedule for four weeks. "Working that intensely for a month was enough to convince me to do this work for life," he says of China Labor Watch's mission to improve pay and conditions for exploited workers in the country. "Chinese workers are treated like robots."

But it's not just the frenetic pace and the long hours that make life difficult for the people who labor in the factories that supply cell phones and other gadgets to major retailers. Many are being systematically poisoned, as well.

## **Danger in the Factories**

Millions of workers toil in factories in China. Many on the production lines are exposed to toxic solvents and other



Photos from the film *Who Pays the Price?*

## WHO PAYS THE PRICE?

All three of the people pictured above worked at supplier factories for electronics manufacturers. Right to left: Li (not her real name), who started working in a Foxconn supplier factory at age 14, suffered nerve damage and paralysis after being exposed to n-hexane. Ming Kunpeng committed suicide at 26 after years of dealing with leukemia caused by occupational benzene exposure. Chen Qianqian was hospitalized with leukemia from benzene poisoning. Learn more about their stories in the film *Who Pays the Price?*, available to watch free at Green America's [bad-apple.org](http://bad-apple.org).

chemicals, but they receive very little training in how to safely manage those substances. What investigators from non-governmental organizations on the ground in China have found is that workers in electronics supplier factories, in particular, are often exposed to thousands of undisclosed chemicals.

In fact, one 2010 study in the *Journal of Environmental Health and Preventive Medicine* showed that between 1991 and 2008, there were nearly 42,000 workplace poisonings in China. And these are only the poisonings that were serious enough not to be swept under the proverbial rug by employers.

"Part of the problem is that workers don't even know the names of the chemicals they're being exposed to," says Kevin Slaten, program coordinator at China Labor Watch. "They'll smell very strong odors, or they may feel that there's something dangerous about their work, but they don't know why."

Two that have been documented in Apple supplier factories are the potent toxins n-hexane and benzene.

Determined to be a known carcinogen by the US Department of Health and Human Services, benzene can cause leukemia, a blood cancer, and leukopenia, a life-threatening condition in which one has an abnormally low white blood cell count. Benzene is banned or restricted in many Western countries for industrial use and prohibited in the US in products intended for use inside the home.

The chemical n-hexane is a neuro-

toxicant that can cause nerve damage and paralysis when one is constantly exposed to it, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Workers at supplier factories for major electronics companies use both chemicals to clean smartphone and tablet touch screens. It dries faster than alcohol.

Consequently, many of these workers are succumbing to benzene and n-hexane poisoning, as documented in the short film *Who Pays the Price? The Human Cost of Electronics*, created by Lynn Zhang and Heather White.

Apple isn't alone. For example, activists in South Korea recently uncovered 58 cases of leukemia and other blood-related cancers in several Samsung plants in the country that they say is no coincidence, according to *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*.

However, Green America's newest campaign targets Apple with the aim of pressuring this industry titan to use some of its legendary innovation to lead the way in protecting workers in electronics supplier factories.

"Apple management has cared in the past about other environmental and social issues, and they care about the company's reputation," says Elizabeth O'Connell, Green America campaigns director. "We believe that Apple is likely to be the first company to change on this issue, and a change from Apple could have a huge effect on the entire industry."

It wouldn't cost much for Apple to shift, either. Industry experts told Green America that Apple could switch to safer

alternatives to n-hexane and benzene for as little as \$1 per iPhone. It's a mere pittance compared to what Apple makes on each of these gadgets—the company's profit margins per iPhone are close to 40 percent, which translates to several hundred dollars in profit per device.

Conducted in partnership with the activist arm of *The Nation* and China Labor Watch, Green America's Bad Apple campaign is calling on the company to:

- **Eliminate toxic chemicals.** End the use of the most dangerous chemicals in Apple supplier factories and replace them with safer alternatives.
- **Ensure adequate medical treatment.** Create a fund to pay for the treatment of injured workers and ensure that all workers injured while making Apple products receive adequate treatment.
- **Stop worker abuse.** Ensure compliance with the International Labour Organization's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; article 32 on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child; and national laws regarding occupational health and safety, worker benefits, and minimum wage for all workers.

### One Worker's Story

After Apple CEO Steve Jobs succumbed to pancreatic cancer in 2012, the Jobs family made it a priority to ensure that Apple employees in the US have a state-of-the-art medical plan.

In stark contrast, workers in Chinese supplier factories for Apple and other manufacturers are dying from preventable illnesses contracted on the job.

When Chen Qianqian was in the third grade, her mother left home to find work in the city. She's one of 260 million migrant workers in China who must travel far from home to secure a job and earn

enough money to support their families, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics.

When Chen was in the seventh grade, she stopped hearing from her mother. The disappearance haunted her throughout the rest of her childhood, so when she came of age, she, too, left home to find factory work in the city, clinging to the dream of also finding her mother.

"I wanted to find her, to rescue her. My mind was set on earning as much money as possible," she relates in the film.

She started working at an electronics supplier factory in China. Filmmaker Heather White says that typical days for the factory workers with whom she spoke started at 8 a.m. and ended at 11 p.m., with only one night off a month.

As another worker at a different electronics factory related to White and Zhang, "We sat there all day cleaning phone screens and using chemicals. When I wasn't eating or sleeping, I would be wiping something. It was the only thing I did. There was no other ventilation, no windows. The smell was horrible at first, but I eventually got used to it."

Exposed to benzene on a daily basis while cleaning smartphone and tablet components, Chen contracted leukemia and spent months trying to get compensation from the factory.

"They concluded that my cancer was not caused by working at the factory, and I was denied compensation," she says. Despite the fact that she was working daily with a category 1 carcinogen linked to her type of cancer.

White says Chen had to pay for her chemotherapy and hospitalization out of pocket and by borrowing from family.

"Her mom is not in the picture, so there weren't that many people to borrow from," says White. "She didn't get the level of treatment she deserved."

Of her search to find her mother, Chen says, "Everything is over."

#### **Audits for What?**

Before Green America and our allies launched the Bad Apple campaign, we reached out to Apple management with the demands listed on p. 15. Their response was that the company "meets



AP photo/Kin Cheung

*Workers at electronics supplier factories in China are being subjected to toxins that cause problems ranging from skin rashes to leukemia.*

or exceeds" US safety standards in its supplier factories.

Via a statement about the campaign in *Computer World* magazine, the company added, "Last year, we conducted nearly 200 factory inspections which focused on hazardous chemicals, to make sure those facilities meet our strict standards. We also provide suppliers with training in hazardous chemical management, industrial hygiene, and personal protection equipment as part of the Apple Supplier EHS Academy in Suzhou, China."

But a closer look into those claims reveals troubling gaps. Take, for instance, the inspections Apple says it provides.

Jack Linchuan Qiu, a professor at the Chinese University at Hong Kong and advisor for Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior, says that most corporate audits in China, Apple's included, are simply not effective.

"Only a small proportion of a brand's supplier factories are audited each year, and the vast majority of these facilities receive advance warning of such audits," says Qiu. "This allows for management to prepare to 'pass' any inspector's test, and allows brands like Apple to falsely claim vast compliance of their corporate codes of conduct."

And Heather White reports that the Chinese workers she and Lynn Zhang interviewed for *Who Pays the Price?* told her they've never seen an auditor on

the floor who was looking into worker safety. However, they do report having quality-control auditors hang over their shoulders to ensure that the factory employees maintain Apple's high product-quality standards.

White relates a conversation she had with a British engineer who was wholly employed by Apple and worked in an Apple supplier factory in China. "He told me there's no sign of Apple on the labor standards front," she says. "What he did see were at least 40 inspectors per week—and none were there for labor standards, just quality control. There's a serious disconnect between what Apple would like us to believe and the reality for people in the factories."

As for the hazardous chemical training Apple claims it provides, the company claimed in its 2014 "Supplier Responsibility Report" that "240 factory personnel" went through an 18-month curriculum aimed at raising the level of environment, health, and safety expertise in its supply chain.

Keep in mind that roughly 1.5 million people currently toil in Apple supplier factories in China—so each of those 240 people would have to pass their training on to hundreds or even thousands of others, especially given the high 20 percent monthly turnover in the factories.

"Chinese law requires that every worker receive 24 hours of occupational safety

training, but at the Apple suppliers CLW has investigated, we're still seeing workers trained for ten minutes before they're put to work," says Slaten. "The average is more like an hour, which is insufficient."

He adds that the "protection equipment" Apple says workers are provided is often inadequate: They often have to ask for said equipment, and it generally amounts to a paper mask and cotton gloves. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend a gas mask and a full-body, chemical-resistant suit when dealing with chronic occupational exposure to benzene.

### A Lack of Enforcement

While some of the blame for worker poisonings rests on the factories, it's the brands that hold the real power to change the system.

Chinese labor laws are quite strong in many ways—even including longer maternity leave and stronger overtime restrictions than in the US. The problem is a lack of enforcement. Ted Smith, coordinator of the International Campaign for Responsible Technology, notes that local officials have a strong interest in encouraging economic growth, so when workers dispute their treatment, local officials will often side with local factories in the interest of growth. And Western corporations move in to take advantage of the lax enforcement of labor and environmental laws in a troubling race to the bottom.

"Even if they wanted to, the Chinese factories would have trouble providing adequate hazardous-chemical training while also meeting the needs of Apple," says Green America's O'Connell. "Apple puts them under intense pressure to meet its high production quotas, especially during high-demand periods, such as the release of the latest iPhone. If Apple relaxed its timeline demands, that would make a difference for workers."

The *Financial Times* reported in 2012 that iPhone supplier factory Foxconn earned a profit of \$8 per iPhone, compared to Apple's \$319 per per iPhone. This discrepancy makes it very difficult for local suppliers to have power in negotiations, because companies like Apple can go to

## Why Apple? What About the Others?



**G**reen America initially researched all major cell phone companies with the aim of creating one of our ever-popular scorecards ranking them on the labor conditions in their supplier factories and worker exposure to toxic chemicals. Sadly, we discovered that from LG to Nokia to Samsung, they'd all get Fs.

Green America's campaign focuses on Apple, because it is the iconic brand leader in the consumer electronics industry. It has spent a fortune to create its brand status, and it makes protecting that brand a high priority. Also, Apple has taken leadership on other issues after experiencing public pressure: It led the way in reducing its carbon footprint and shifting to renewable energy at its data centers and headquarters. It was the first smartphone manufacturer to eliminate the use of tantalum from conflict regions (see p. 18) in its products. And it announced in April that it will take back its products at all Apple stores for reuse or responsible recycling. Consequently, we know that if enough people take action, Apple will also lead in protecting the workers in its supply chain from dangerous chemicals—and other companies will follow.

A reality of the plugged-in world in which we live is that there is an ever-growing demand for cell phones. An estimated 75 percent of the world's population now has a cell phone, according to the World Bank. Green America isn't asking people to give up their smartphones. But you can use your powerful voice as a cell phone buyer to foster change.

Call Apple and ask it to sell phones that do not endanger the workers who make them (see p. 19). If you use a smartphone by any of the manufacturers below, it's just as important that they hear from you. Companies read and record all consumer concerns, so the more comments they receive, the sooner they will take action. Call and leave a message with a customer service representative, send an e-mail, or visit the company support sites to "live chat" your concerns.

**Samsung** (Maker of the Galaxy S and Galaxy Note smartphones): 888/987-4357, Hours: Mon – Fri: 8 a.m. – 3 a.m. (EST), Sat – Sun: 10 a.m. – 11 p.m. (EST); [samsung.com/us/support/contact](http://samsung.com/us/support/contact)

**LG** (Maker of Optimus, Google Nexus, and G smartphones): 800/243-0000, [lg.com/us/support](http://lg.com/us/support)

**Nokia** (Maker of Lumia smartphones) 888/665-4228, Hours: Mon – Fri: 10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. (EST); [nokia.com/us-en/support/contact](http://nokia.com/us-en/support/contact)

**Sony** (Maker of Xperia Smartphones): 239/768-7547, Hours: Mon – Fri 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. (EST); [esupport.sony.com/US/p/contact-relation.pl?](http://esupport.sony.com/US/p/contact-relation.pl?)

**BlackBerry** (Maker of the Z10 and Q10 smartphones): 877/552-5532, Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; [us.blackberry.com/customer-service/contact-us.html](http://us.blackberry.com/customer-service/contact-us.html)

—Elizabeth O'Connell



Lucas Oleniuk / GetStock.com

## The Conflict Mineral Question

**H**ave you ever heard of conflict diamonds? The phrase refers to diamonds that originate in war-torn areas and are sold to buy arms or in other ways fund a conflict. Turns out diamonds aren't the only resource financing wars—you may be walking around with a conflict cell phone in your pocket.

Tantalum is one of many “conflict minerals” that are key components of cell phones, laptops, tablets, other types of technology that use miniature circuit boards. Tantalum and other conflict minerals like tin, tungsten, and gold are mined in a number of countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where they are often extracted using forced and child labor. The money made through the sale of these minerals not only fuels the cycle of slavery but also funds a protracted and bloody conflict in the DRC that has claimed an estimated 5.4 million lives, according to a 2007 mortality survey by the International Rescue Committee. War crimes include the use of child soldiers and the massacre of civilians.

Tantalum mining has also devastated populations of the Eastern Mountain Gorillas, which are hunted by the isolated miners for food.

Fortunately, this issue is receiving more recognition. In August of 2012, the Securities and Exchange Commission published new regulations around the Dodd-Frank Act, requiring electronics manufacturers to trace and disclose where potential conflict minerals in their products are sourced.

Under the Act, companies must file their first disclosure reports on May 31, 2014 and annually on May 31st thereafter. Todd Larsen, Green America's director of corporate responsibility programs, is cautiously optimistic. “It's good that the industry is finally addressing this,” he says. “But we need to keep a close eye on the effects of these regulations to see if they're going to amount to real change.”

With conflict minerals present in so many of the devices we depend on every day, what is the green thing to do? First, buying less is always a green option. Don't upgrade your phones until absolutely necessary, and continue to use your current phone for as long as possible.

Second, it's vital to recycle your cell phone and other electronics instead of throwing them away, so the conflict minerals inside can be reused. For advice on how to responsibly recycle your electronics, see p. 21.

—Martha van Gelder

another factory to meet their price and time requirements. The combination of timeline and financial pressures is deadly for workers, as the factories cut corners on working conditions and employee benefits to remain in the black.

In short, it's Apple and other brands that hold the power to improve conditions for workers. And it's their customers who can make them wield that power.

### Apple, Take the Lead

There is a precedent for Apple to make radical shifts. Two years ago, Greenpeace slammed Apple for using dirty energy from coal-fired plants to store its cloud data. Fast-forward to 2014, and Greenpeace is now lauding the company for its “aggressive” commitment to powering its data centers with renewables.

After the Dodd-Frank Act mandated that publicly traded companies must report as of 2015 on their use of potential “conflict minerals”—or minerals whose sale is used to fund wars (see left)—Apple published its results early and announced plans to cut conflict minerals completely out of its supply chain.

And it recently announced it would take back used Apple electronics at its retail stores worldwide for reuse, or recycling with e-Stewards-certified (see p. 20) Sims Recycling Solutions.

In addition, says O'Connell, “Apple normally doesn't acknowledge activist campaigns, so it's a good sign that it responded to ours.”

In other words, concerned citizens have influenced Apple to change in the past, and we can do it again.

“Green America isn't asking you to give up your smartphone,” says O'Connell. “But it's important to use your voice as a cell phone customer to stop worker poisonings in the factories.”

Take action today. Together, we can push Apple to eliminate toxins from its supply chain, ensure adequate medical treatment for workers, and stop worker abuse. And where Apple goes, the other brands will follow.

—Tracy Fernandez Rysavy, editor-in-chief, with special thanks to Lynn Zhang and Heather White

# 5 Ways to Take Action!



Chances are that you, like 91 percent of the US population, use a cell phone. As cell phone users, it's doubly important that we speak up about factory worker safety. Just forgoing an iPhone and buying a different brand will not protect workers, because all brands have a long way to go.

- 1 Sign Green America's petition to Apple at [bad-apple.org](http://bad-apple.org).
- 2 Share the petition with friends online.
- 3 Call Apple and let it know you want it to lead the way in protecting workers. Call 408/996-1010 and ask to speak to a customer-relations representative. They log every comment!
- 4 Watch *Who Pays the Price?* at [bad-apple.org](http://bad-apple.org).
- 5 Host a screening of the film in your community. Get a free screening kit at [greenamerica.org/bad-apple/screeningkit.cfm](http://greenamerica.org/bad-apple/screeningkit.cfm).

**CALL APPLE AT 408/996-1010 TODAY  
AND ASK IT TO:**

**Eliminate toxic chemicals.** End the use of the most dangerous chemicals in Apple supplier factories and replace them with safe alternatives.

**Ensure adequate medical treatment.** Provide all workers injured while making Apple products with adequate, free medical treatment.

**Stop worker abuse.** Ensure compliance with the International Labour Organization's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, article 32 of the United Nations' Convention of the Rights of the Child, and national laws regarding occupational health and safety, worker benefits, and minimum wage for all workers at Apple and its supplier factories.





# What Can We Do About E-Waste?

Photo from the Basel Action Network

*People in developing countries often “recycle” cast-off electronics by burning or hand-dismantling them, exposing themselves and their communities to dangerous toxins.*

Once cell phones, laptops, or other electronics have outlived their mayfly-like lifespans, their disposal becomes an issue. Full of toxic chemicals such as lead, cadmium, mercury, chromium, and PCBs, improperly recycled electronic waste, or e-waste, can expose people to substances that lead to cancer, birth defects, and other major health issues.

According to some estimates, 50 to 80 percent of electronics collected for recycling in North America is exported to developing countries, where they're dumped or hand-processed by workers with little to no protective gear, and release toxins at deadly levels.

“Some people in Africa, China, and India are making more money scavenging e-waste than they could otherwise, but they're risking their lives to take it apart or burn the plastics off to recover the recyclable metals,” says Ted Smith, coordinator of the International Campaign for Responsible Technology. “High-end e-waste recyclers should know how to recover the metals without burning and exposing people to toxins, but waste-pickers in developing countries don't have the cash or the wherewithal to do it. That's what's creating pollution that's just wreaking havoc in so many places.”

To reduce the likelihood of your electronics ending up in a toxic dump in Africa or Asia, pay close attention to whether and how your recycler is certified. The two main certifications in the US are R2 and e-Stewards.

R2 is the standard developed under the heavy hand of US electronics manufacturers and a scrap-recycling trade association. E-waste activists consider R2 lax and cite numerous loopholes that allow R2-certified companies to cut corners and mislead clients. For example, companies with only one R2-certified facility can act as if their entire business is “R2-certified” while still operating non-certified facilities that may ship your old electronics to developing countries.

In contrast, the robust e-Stewards certification is run by the Basel Action Network (BAN), an environmental and human rights watchdog in the area of e-waste. BAN is named after the Basel Convention, an international treaty that prevents global dumping of toxic e-waste, particularly in developing countries. The US is the only developed country that has failed to ratify the Basel Convention.

BAN regularly monitors electronics recyclers—regardless of whether they're certified by e-Stewards—for illegal overseas waste shipments by planting

electronic tracking devices in e-waste that they drop off for recycling, or by photographing containers and tracking their numbers across the ocean.

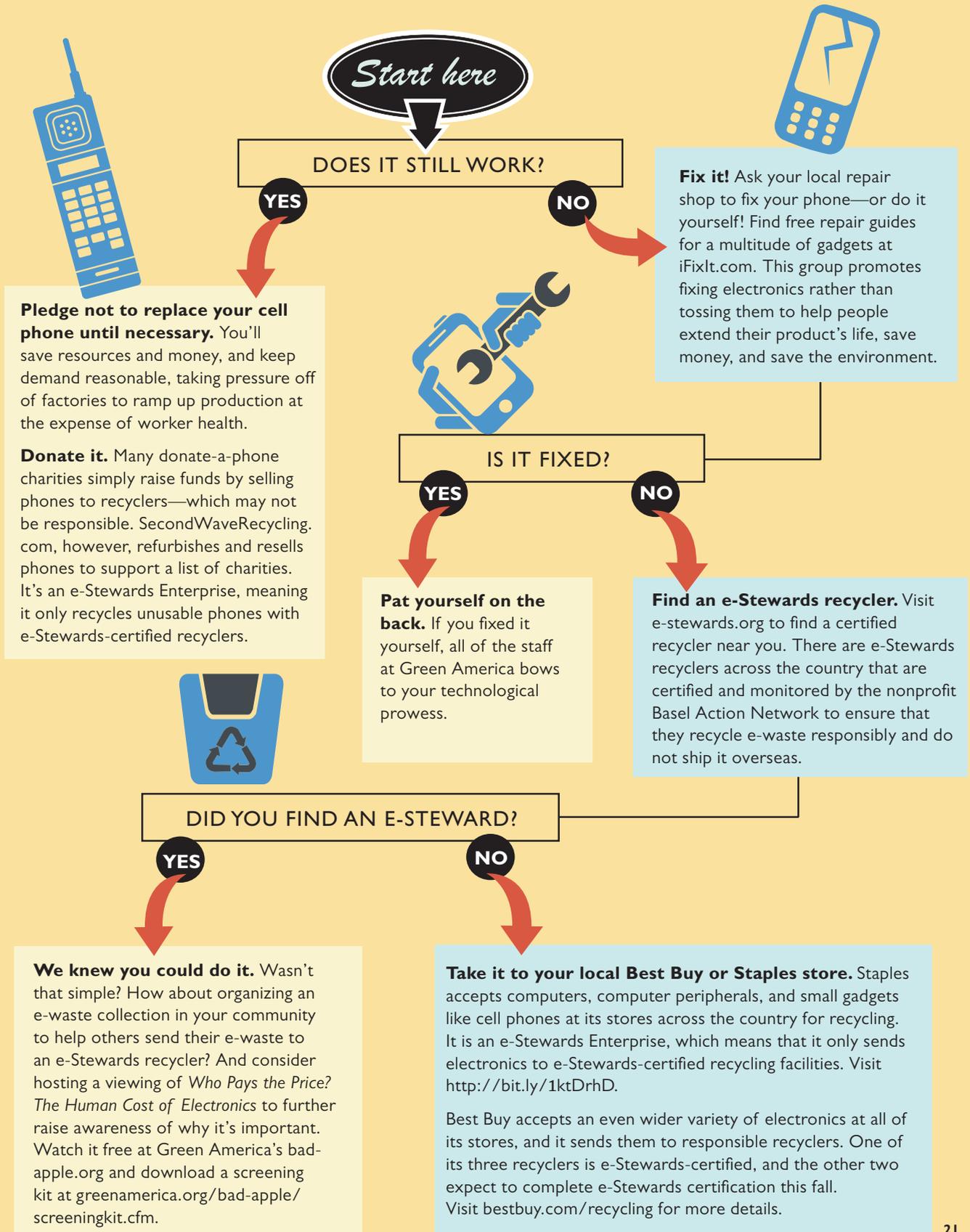
Chicago-based Intercon Solutions, an electronics recycler currently certified by R2, was caught red-handed in 2011 when a shipping container left its secure facility and arrived in Hong Kong, where authorities, alerted by BAN, found it full of contraband waste, forbidden for entry into China. Ironically, the company was applying at the time for e-Stewards certification. Needless to say, BAN rejected the company for e-Stewards certification, laying out the steps it would need to take to clean up its act.

“R2 allows exporters of e-waste to violate the decisions and global norms of the Basel Convention,” says Jim Puckett, executive director of BAN. In contrast, “e-Stewards is designed to implement the global decisions that prevent the export of toxic waste electronics from developed to developing countries. In this way, we preserve lives and good American recycling jobs.”

Green America supports recycling cell phones, computers, and other electronics through an e-Stewards recycler. Find one near you at [e-stewards.org](http://e-stewards.org).

—Martha van Gelder

# What? You Need a New Phone?



## Guilt or Action?

### Go Veggie!

I really enjoyed the interview with Sir David Attenborough (Jan./Feb. 2014) and your great questions. I would like to add something to one of his answers. You asked, "What do you feel are the most critical steps people can take on an individual level to help curb the environmental crisis we face?" I liked Sir David's answer about population, but there is something that everyone can do that would start making a difference much faster.

I think everyone needs to become vegetarian and, even better, vegan. Not only is raising livestock doing incredible damage to the planet, but the moral issue of raising and destroying living beings is really horrible.

Daphne T. Stevens  
Fiskdale, MA

### GMOs and Gluten Sensitivity?

In the Jan./Feb. 2014 issue of the *Green American*, "GMOs and the Case for Precaution," Dr. Jane Doe talks about [the introduction of genetically modified food mapping out with] an increase in gluten sensitivity, yet wheat is not GM.

We have 9 billion people coming soon. How are we going to feed them? There is a reason the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation supports genetically modified seeds for places like Africa that will be resistant to drought.

Jan Mueller  
E-mail

TRACY: Thank you for your e-mail, Jan. You're right that wheat is not GMO at this time. As detailed in the *Green American*, some studies have shown that GMO crops that contain pesticides, like Bt, may be damaging our guts—as they do in certain insects,

Because technology has become such a big part of everyone's lives, we've found that a common response to our Bad Apple campaign is a combination of the first two of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's stages of grief—denial and anger. So if you're feeling a twinge of one or the other, I want to let you know that all of us at Green America feel it's okay to love your iPhone. In fact, many people need smartphones and other gadgets to do our jobs properly. And speaking from experience, parenting active kids is a lot easier when the adults in their lives have smartphones with which to coordinate pick-ups, drop-offs, and carpools.

However, we do have a responsibility to speak out on behalf of the exploited workers who made our gadgets. Being enthusiastic customers of Apple (or other manufacturers) gives us special leverage when talking to these companies. We can sincerely say we've bought and loved their products and very much want to keep doing so, but they must protect the people all along their supply chains.

We also need to protect ourselves. Cell phones emit radio-frequency radiation, which the World Health Organization has classified as "possibly carcinogenic to humans," the same category in which it puts lead, DDT, and jet fuel. Dr. Devra Davis, author of *Disconnect: The Truth About Cell Phone Radiation, What the Industry Has Done to Hide It, and How to Protect Your Family*, says that "studies in Europe have shown that people who use cell phones heavily for over ten years have a doubled risk of brain cancer, and those who begin using cell phones as teenagers have a four to five times higher chance of being diagnosed with brain cancer."

For more information, visit [ehtrust.org](http://ehtrust.org), the website for Davis's nonprofit, Environmental Health Trust. And check out select articles of our Jan./Feb. 2011 issue, "Do Cell Phones Cause Cancer?" at [greenamerica.org/go/cellphones](http://greenamerica.org/go/cellphones).

Protecting yourself while you call Apple to protect the workers in its supply chain is simple: Keep your cell phone away from your head—use a headset or the speakerphone setting. Carry active cell phones in a purse or bag away from your body, never in a pocket or bra. And don't put it near or under your pillow at night.

—Tracy Fernandez Rysavy, editor-in-chief

which is how they kill them. Gut damage is thought by some health experts like the physician members of the American Academy of Environmental Medicine to be linked to certain autoimmune conditions, of which gluten intolerance is one. So consuming Bt corn could

lead to a leaky gut, which could in turn masquerade as or lead to gluten intolerance and other autoimmune problems.

As for whether GMOs can feed the world, our response to that is in the "Other GMO Issues" section of the magazine. The piece talks



TRACY  
FERNANDEZ  
RYSAVY

about a comprehensive United Nations study, "Agriculture at a Crossroads," which points to the fact that GMOs are not helping subsistence (i.e. poor) farmers around the world, and that it's sustainable agriculture we need if we want to feed the world in the future. A GMO-based agricultural system that results in increased pesticide use, superweeds, and a loss of seed biodiversity isn't going to cut it if we want the planet to be farmable for future generations.

Green America is not preemptively against all GMOs. We would love it if they did indeed reduce pesticide use, reduce costs for all farmers, and feed the world. Our concern is that they are not delivering on these promises and are instead creating a host of other very serious social and environmental problems. Additionally, they have not been adequately tested for safety with the scientific gold-standard: long-term, peer-reviewed studies.

### Correction

EDITOR'S NOTE: In our Jan./Feb. 2014 issue, a photo caption in the "Across Green America" section included a mention of the Shelton Green Alpha Fund, a fossil-free mutual fund investing in climate solutions. The name of the fund is the Shelton Green Alpha Fund, not the Shelton Clean Alpha Fund, as was written in the caption. Visit <http://bit.ly/1k6xHcT> to learn more.



Please send your letters to: Editors, Green America, 1612 K St. NW, Ste. 600, Washington, DC 20006. Or e-mail [editors@greenamerica.org](mailto:editors@greenamerica.org). Letters used in this column may be edited for length and clarity. Interact with our editors and staff at our blog: [blog.greenamerica.org](http://blog.greenamerica.org)

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