

*Tip at the Top!*

Use a fast spin in your washing machine to decrease the time and energy required by your laundry in your tumble dryer!

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## Introduction

Hello, and welcome to The Green Issue. We are a newsletter that aims to raise awareness of the environmental issues that face each and every one of us each day.

In this edition of The Green Issue we look, in depth, at how the agriculture industry affects our environment; and the steps we can take to make positive changes to the industry.

We also step back in to the laundry room and focus on the excessive reliance we have on our energy guzzling tumble dryers and not only look at ways to reduce the energy they use but also how to save money by reducing drying times!

But first we go back in to the seas to focus on the vast amount of edible fish that, despite being caught, is being returned to the sea due to incompatibility of old-fashioned fishing methods and the EU quotas that are in place to keep endangered species of fish in our waters.

Kind Regards,

**Susan Bryant**  
Editor



## Plenty more Fish in the Sea?

No sooner had I written last week's article concerning the decline of cod stocks, urging you to opt for different species of fish instead of cod when choosing your meals, when fish supplies were in the headlines again. This time, however, it was the legal restrictions in place to protect cod that were under fire.

The issue was raised when it emerged that UK fishermen were returning thousands of dead cod to the sea due to EU quotas limiting the number of fish they are allowed to bring in to port. Much of the cod in question would have made a wonderful piece of food and it being returned to the sea seems highly immoral for many reasons.

The EU quotas for fishing, particularly those for cod are in place in order to allow fish stocks to replenish following years of over-fishing in European waters. Fishing methods, however, have not advanced significantly enough to enable fishermen to target, or moreover, to avoid particular species of fish.

Trawling is a method of fishing that involves a trawler pulling a fishing net behind it in order to catch fish. This mass method of fishing means a large catch for the fishermen, but is damaging to fish stocks and often results in perfectly good fish being returned to the sea due to the EU quotas that are in place.

One way to prevent the waste that occurs due to this method is to change the EU quotas that are currently in place; by raising the amount of fish a boat can bring to shore less will be wasted by being thrown back in to the sea.

There is, however, another way to prevent this and this is to change the methods used to fish our oceans. By purchasing line or diver caught fish and shellfish this decreases the amount that is bought that has been landed using the trawling method that is so damaging to sea life. There are also new methods of trawling being developed that can specifically avoid certain species, such as cod, by the size of the netting and using modern technology to find certain fish and avoid others.

By researching the methods used to catch our fish and buying fish that has been caught in a sustainable manner we can help change the fishing industry to avoid the unnecessary wastage that is occurring at present.



## **The Environmental Impact of Agriculture**

Industries within the United Kingdom are responsible for having a significant negative impact on our environment; through the energy they use, the waste they produce and the chemicals they release into the environment. Obviously, the type of impact an industry has is dependent upon the focus of that industry, thus making it difficult to discuss the environmental impact of 'business' in general. Therefore, over the coming weeks, we will be examining various industries and the impact each of them has on the environment. This week we begin by looking at the agriculture industry, the ways in which this affects our environment, and what we can do as consumers to reduce this impact.

Agriculture in this country, namely farming, is an extremely tough industry and farmers often suffer due to low store prices and competition within the market place. This should not be forgotten as it often drives some of the practices that lead to our environment being damaged.



The use of fertilisers within agriculture is necessary in order to produce a greater crop yield than if the crops were to gain nutrients just from the soil alone. Figures for fertiliser use have actually decreased since the 1980's, despite an increase in crop production, thus suggesting that fertilisers are being used more efficiently now than in the past.

Fertilisers can either be natural, such as manure or sewage sludge, or artificial such as ammonium nitrate. The problem with artificial fertilisers is that they are often washed off of farmland, into rivers and streams, and cause an environmental problem known as eutrophication.

Eutrophication is an increase in chemical nutrients within an eco-system: in the case of our rivers and streams this is typically an increase in nitrogen or phosphorous compounds. This can be caused by fertilisers using a nitrogen compound (such as ammonium nitrate) being washed in to our rivers.

Once in our aquatic system the fertiliser that has been used on the fields stimulates the growth of choking aquatic vegetation, or algae bloom, which disrupts the normal eco-system of our waterways by causing a host of problems such as a decrease in the oxygen levels within the water. All fish and shellfish need oxygen to survive, and as algae thrives in the water it significantly reduces the amount of oxygen there, thus endangering aquatic life.

This decrease in fish and shellfish in our rivers and streams has a negative impact on human society as well; impacting the fishing industry, recreational facilities and the aesthetic value of our waterways.

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The agriculture industry uses other chemicals as well as fertilisers, mainly in the form of pesticides. Pesticides are substances that are used to control or destroy pests that feed off of the crops grown by farmers. They can be made from synthetic chemical substances, although natural substances are used to control pest in organic crops. Due to the different ways that pesticides are used and the varying properties each one has a different impact on the environment.

The main threat posed to the environment by the use of pesticides again, as is the case with fertilisers, is the affect the chemicals have on our water systems. Many pesticides that are used are toxic to aquatic life and can devastate rivers, streams and lakes if disposed of carelessly or used incorrectly. Not only can pesticides damage wildlife they can also affect us as consumers. Water companies spend many millions of pounds each year ridding our drinking water of chemical residues caused by pesticides; and these costs are passed on to us as the consumer.



Do we have any choice but to buy products that release these chemicals, not only in to the environment, but also in to our bodies? The answer is that as consumers we do have a choice and if all of us used that choice to buy

produce grown without the use of pesticides then the world (and maybe even our own bodies) could be a much healthier place.

Organic food has grown in both popularity and profile in recent years; but the premise behind it goes back a long way. In fact, The Soil Association has been trying to change the way food is grown for over sixty years, with the focus being on creating natural, sustainable, produce. Today organic produce is the fastest growing element of the food and drink trade; and it is no wonder why.

Organic food is food that is produced without the use of harmful pesticides and additives. But, moreover, it is food (or other produce) that is produced by enriching the soil, using sustainable methods, that have not only reduces the need for pesticides, but also has environmental benefits in its own right. Many people maintain that this method of farming not only has positive environmental benefits but also produces food that is tastier as well as being healthier.

By purchasing food that has been grown to comply with stringent EU regulations that apply to food labelled as organic, you are not only buying food that is tastier to eat and less harmful for the environment; you are also investing in a new way of farming. Standing up for organic farming methods also means standing against issues such as genetic modification and showing that people really do care about where their food comes from and how it is grown.

Organic food may be a little more pricey than its conventionally mass produced counterparts, but if more people buy organic produce it really could revolutionise the farming industry and reduce the environmental impact the agriculture industry has significantly.

## Energy Saving - Tumble Dryers

Tumble dryers are notorious for the vast amount of energy that they use to dry washing. Yet, due to the hectic, need it now, society we live in, a million of these appliances are sold each year in the UK alone. So, why are tumble dryers so harmful to the environment and what can we do to decrease the impact of them?

Tumble dryers use heated air to circulate in the drum amongst the clothes in order to cause the moisture in them to evaporate: thus drying the clothes. It is the heating of this air that causes a massive amount of electricity to be needed increasing the environmental impact of the machine significantly.

The best way to reduce the impact of tumble drying our clothes is to not do it. However, it is clear that it is not always possible to wait for our clothes to line dry, and in this country the weather is not always compliant with us wanting to dry our clothes outdoors.

So, if you must use your tumble dryer there are a few things you can do to decrease the amount of energy used.

Before your clothes even make it to the tumble dryer make sure you have used a high spin speed on your washing machine to make sure your clothes are as dry as possible in order to minimise the amount of time they need in the dryer. Always fill your tumble dryer to full capacity; it uses the same energy whether full or half fill so make the most of it!

Placing a dry towel can decrease drying time, as can the use of Dryer Balls.

Make sure that your tumble dryer is located in a well ventilated room as if a tumble dryer overheats it takes significantly longer to dry your clothes, as does the lint filter of the machine being clogged; try to remember to clean this after every load.

Despite all these tips, though, nothing can reduce the energy consumption of tumble dryers than not using them! So hang your washing outdoors, or if the weather's letting us down get that clothes horse out!

## Dryer Balls

As shown in the 'Saving Energy' article in this week's The Green Issue, tumble dryers use an absolutely extortionate amount of energy whilst drying our washing. Add to this the use of chemical laden fabric softeners and tumble drying our clothes becomes an ecological nightmare.

There is, however, a way to reduce drying time (thus saving energy) that also makes your washing soft (reducing the need for chemical based fabric softeners).

Dryer balls solve the problem of both lengthy drying times and fabric softness. They work by lifting and separating the washing whilst it is drying; this decreases drying time, softens the laundry and sometimes even negates the need for ironing (anything that does that gets my vote!). And the lack of chemical agents in the balls also makes them ideal for anyone with eczema, asthma or other allergies.

Dryer balls are safe, non-toxic and reusable; meaning they also save you money as there is no need to buy fabric softener. This also means you throw less packaging away as you are not needing to use bottles and bottles of fabric softener, reducing the environmental impact of your washing even further, as they are guaranteed for two years and expected to last for up to five! This means they easily pay for themselves in the usage alone, as well as through the amount of electricity you save as your washing takes less time!

So, save some money and reduce the environmental impact of your washing by using dryer balls the next time you use your tumble dryer!

