

Lost In The Wash

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Greg Dalton: Welcome to Climate One, a conversation about America's energy, economy, and environment. To understand any of them, you have to understand them all. I'm Greg Dalton.

Today, we're talking about sustainable consumption and greenwashing. The number of consumer products that claim to be ecofriendly are soaring, and there are more than 400 labels designed to inform or mislead people as they stroll down store aisles or browse online. Companies are providing more information about what is in their products and where and how they are made. That information could be helpful; it can also be overwhelming and confusing. With our audience at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, we'll talk in the next hour about how individuals can avoid green fatigue and make informed choices that are good for them and the planet. We'll also discuss what companies are doing to clean up their products and inform consumers what they are doing.

We're pleased to be joined by three guests deeply involved in the world of sustainable consumption. William Brent is executive vice president of Energy, Cleantech and Sustainability at Weber Shandwick, a public relations firm. Aron Cramer is president and CEO of Business for Social Responsibility, a consulting firm. And Dara O'Rourke is cofounder of The Good Guide and an associate professor of Environmental Studies at UC, Berkeley. Please welcome them to Climate One.

[Applause]

Greg Dalton: Thanks for coming. Dara O'Rourke, in 2007, the number of products that claimed to have some kind of green attribute increased sharply.

So tell us what does the large trend here about the rise in green claims among consumer products.

Dara O'Rourke: Well, to start with some good news, I think there is a growing demand among consumers to find products that are healthier, greener, safer, nontoxic, better for their health, their community, their environment, and the planet. And so we've seen growing awareness among consumers, largely unfortunately driven by scandal after scandal after scandal and exposé after exposé. And anyone who reads the newspaper sees this week was the warmest year on record, we saw in The New York Times; we have the most unhealthy population of men in the advanced Western world. We're seeing over and over -- and we've got major environmental crisis, major health crisis, major social issues around the world that has raised the awareness of consumers who want to find safer, healthier, greener products that they can feel good about consuming.

So that's the good news, so there's a growing demand among consumers. And as you mentioned, in 2006, '07, and '08, we saw the market respond with a really rapid growth in the number of products claiming to be natural or environmentally friendly or sustainable, usually very big, broad terms about their general environmental performance. So the market is responding. And, again, before we get into the bad news of greenwashing and all the problems, we see across sectors the fastest growing market for cars is in hybrid and energy-efficient cars. The fastest growing sector part of food is organic food. The fastest growing sector of cleaning is natural nontoxic cleaners. So across categories, we really are seeing good growth in better, healthier, safer products -- from very small starting points -- growing quite well.

Greg Dalton: And so you're saying that was consumer demand or pull that was doing that. Aron Cramer, you're consulting with lots of companies. Is it really that demand pull that's moving the market? What are -- why are the companies that you're working with doing more green products?

Aron Cramer: Well, there certainly is some increase in the demand as Dara had said, and that's the good news, of course. The flipside is exactly what Dara said -- is that it's starting from a very small base.

You know, big companies, in particular, are absolutely thinking about this but they're thinking about it with a degree of skepticism when it comes to what consumers do. I think there's a lot of polling data out there that suggest that consumers will buy something that's made under good working -- with good working conditions, that is organic, and at the ballot box of the cash register behavior tends to be a little bit different. But companies don't ignore that. So I think -- I think the way we frame things is really, really important. And we'll talk about labels today; people talk a lot about green. I actually think "green," as a word, is a bit of a dangerous word. I think it's got a lot of baggage associated with it.

If we start from a point of communicating to consumers that green is good, I actually think companies succeed best when they communicate a message along the lines that "good is green," and that -- take a company like Nike, which has been busy taking toxics out of its products for the last, now 10 or 15 years. They view this as an improvement in the quality of its product. And I think if we can get to a place where all of the attributes that Dara described are considered to be one dimension of quality and dimension of better, that's when the market place is really going to accelerate.

Greg Dalton: William Brent, you advise companies on how to communicate. What do you tell them about how to communicate their green products in this increasingly cluttered and -- market place?

William Brent: I think increasingly so -- when all these started, a lot of people sort of divide the time of sustainable products, green products with BW and AW -- Before Wal-Mart and After Wal-Mart. Whether that's a legitimate division, I don't know, but Wal-Mart basically made a big push starting in 2007, around that time to clean up its supply chain.

Prior to 2007, I think a lot of people were marketing green products on single attributes, right? So it's more recyclable and more better compostability, whatever it might be -- less energy used in the production of it. And then that -- I think that quickly became clear that that was not going to be sufficient and that there had to be a more holistic view. And so people looked at life cycle analysis, but that didn't really work well, either. It was hard to find a common framework, hard to communicate it in a way that made sense. And I think, where we are today from a sort of advising companies on sustainability and how they communicate is to really think about it from a business perspective and really, you know, taking it up to the level where it's part of the operations of the business integrated throughout the business, transparent throughout the business. And only when you have that and when you are able to achieve that as a business does it make sense to talk about the benefits of the products that you're producing. But just to do it on its own is insufficient today.

Greg Dalton: But a lot of companies, would you agree, are doing that, trying -- they're not sort of -- they're kind of just going through the motions. You know, there's a lot of these single-attribute claims still out there, so -- well, that might be the goal to say that good business is green business and if we do it right, we'll actually save money, enhance shareholder value. But let's talk a little bit about some of the claims that are out there, and, you know, I guess -- how do you recognize greenwashing when you see it? Like to tackle that one, Dara?

Dara O'Rourke: Yes well that was actually the impetus for us starting this project, GoodGuide.com, which basically was an attempt to help consumers see through the marketing claims -- the single attributes or the actual greenwash, the misleading claims, the claims that talk about our company planted trees here when their real impacts are over here, talk about we use a green water bottle, when what they're talking about is they made the lid 25 percent smaller.

Greg Dalton: Oh, that's one of my favorite --

Dara O'Rourke: Yeah. All right. So we saw --

Greg Dalton: Arrowhead, by the way.

Dara O'Rourke: All right -- and feeds you. That is a, you know, a hybrid Lexus that was -- had the worst gas mileage than the normal Lexus. We saw this whole range of things that were really, I think, misleading and deceptive. And so, we basically see -- I think, as William has pointed out, you need to help the public and companies identify what are the key impacts of their product and their supply chain? What really matters? So I don't really care if an oil company has a really nice office recycling program, right? Or they plant some trees. I want to know what's the impact of their extraction, distribution, burning of oil, or a mining company, or a T-shirt company, whatever -- you got to help people find what are the main impacts, the hot spots in the supply chain, and what are they doing on those issues, and can we show people how different T-shirt companies compare, how different cell phone companies, how different shampoo companies, help them identify the real impacts through life cycle assessment, health hazard assessment, chemical risk assessment. You need to have real science to do this to compare whether it's carbon or water toxics, and then really give companies and the public a better way to evaluate down their whole supply chain relative performance along these key material impacts.

Greg Dalton: So just to clarify, you would -- when someone's looking at a company claim, you would ask -- advise them to say, is this claim related to their core business and their core impact?

Dara O'Rourke: Exactly.

Greg Dalton: Or, is this a, sort of a diversion to the side of what they're really doing?

Aron Cramer: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: Aron Cramer, you want to --

Aron Cramer: Yeah. So there are a couple of competing issues here. One is that for consumers, simplicity is really important. You know, Dara will know better than I, but I think the average person in supermarkets spends milliseconds choosing one product or another, and a lot of it is by habit. So if it's not really simple and easy, it's not going to resonate. But all of the attributes that we're talking about are actually pretty complex in figuring out whether a T-shirt is sustainable or not is not that simple, actually, and it has a lot to do with how a consumer actually washes the shirt rather than how the shirt was made, where the cotton comes from.

So companies struggle with this. They know that they've got to translate science and a lot of -- and an extended value chain and a lot of complicated assessments, and then translate that into something that's really simple for consumers and not misleading. And so getting all of that right is complex, and that's where I think the word 'green' is problematic. I think it's much better to talk about something that is "greener" perhaps, because we're not yet at a place where we can say that many products are actually truly sustainable. One may be more sustainable than another doesn't make it sustainable.

William Brent: Not only that, I mean, I wonder and I think there's data out there to indicate this, you know, if consumers even really care. You know there's data that says, you know, only 25 percent of consumers use labeling or certification as a key indicator when making a purchase. And that's a still a very small number when you look at the overall market. And so, you know, the question to me is, you know, is this a consumer issue or is it a business issue? And I think that there's a fundamental question there in terms of where's the major change going to be coming from. Is it going to be coming from business and business management, business structure, supply chain, you know, the creation of your business as a B Corp or whatever it might be or is it going to actually be on the consumption side where consumers can and are willing to make a big difference? You know, is that even possible?

Dara O'Rourke: Well, sir, yeah, I would say it has to be both, that -- first of all, consumer spending is 70 percent of U.S. GDP, drives 70 percent of the U.S. GDP, so you've got to take on consumers. You've got to engage consumers and take on this gap between what they say they want. Seventy-five percent of Americans say they want to buy green, and one to three percent actually do. So we've got to cross that chasm. People want to buy healthy. They want to buy products that match their ethics. They want to buy products that are good for their family. So how do we help them do that? But I think you're absolutely right. The main action right now is actually B2B. It's businesses demanding of their vendors, their suppliers, their supply chain for a number of reasons. It may be corporate policy, it may be that their customers are demanding it, or the federal government is demanding it. So we've got to have a strategy, because the problems are so grave, climate change, biodiversity loss, health risks are so big, we've got to come out from both angles I think, and be pushing how do we create consumers as a point of leverage over brand-sensitive, reputation-sensitive companies, and how do we go to retailers, institutional purchasers, the big drivers of purchasing, and also build tools for them?

Greg Dalton: Dara O'Rourke is co-founder of The GoodGuide and a professor at UC Berkeley. We're also talking today with Aron Cramer from Business for Social Responsibility, and William Brent from Weber Shandwick. I'm Greg Dalton.

I'd like to read a quote from -- about this -- well, what consumers want. This is quote from Rita Clifton, who's chair of Interbrand, an agency -- a branding agency. "I'm sick of hearing that consumers want more information, they don't! They want knowledge of what a brand stands for and what extent it can be trusted to make those complicated decisions on their behalf." And what she seems to be saying is we want this to be easy, we want to do good things but not work too hard for it. Aron Cramer?

Aron Cramer: Well, I mean I think that's true, and I also think that the world has changed and we have access to infinitely more information than ever before. People are very adept at finding information that's most important to them, and that that's led to an information rich but fragmented world. Now, I think that's actually positive, because it means that if I'm interested in labor conditions or if I'm interested in water use, or I'm interested in toxics, I can choose what information, and I can go get it. And so it does all roll up to the brand, Rita Clifton is right, but a lot of us define the brand very differently in -- on an individual basis.

And that's the world we have, and it's only going to get -- it's only going to deepen.

Greg Dalton: And it gets hard to prioritize values. Dara O'Rourke, I went to The GoodGuide and started the process, and it basically asked people to say, "Do you care more about animal rights or human rights or do you care more about -- and -- I care about them all.

Dara O'Rourke: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: But then it had -- but then obviously you have to prioritize them, so is it my environment or the environment? That gets pretty tough and it brings up some conflict when people might throw up their arms and say, "Ah, this is just too hard. I'm just gonna buy whatever I --"

Dara O'Rourke: That's right. And I think I would agree with Aron that there are people who want just a simple answer. And you can go to GoodGuide and just take the default "our scientists have determined this is the best algorithm for you," but you can also then personalize if you really want to. We found over the last five years that there are more and more consumers who do want focus-tailored information. Just take a couple of things. Five years ago, it was me and a couple other nerds debating bisphenol-a and phthalates and parabens. Now, that's mainstream dinner conversation. Is there bisphenol-a in my baby bottle? Are they taking it out of my Nalgene bottle? People are talking about specific chemical ingredients, about specific toxics, about climate change, about e-waste, things that were really for academics and technical conversations are now -- some percentage of consumers want to know that this product does not contain bisphenol-a, or does not contain this specific chemical.

So we see, at GoodGuide, we've had 20 million consumers use GoodGuide that some want to go -- just want a simple answer -- yes, no, should I buy it or not? And others want to drill down to an ingredient. I want to avoid this ingredient. I want to avoid this labor practice. I want them to not test on animals. And so I think you've got to meet both, and the ideal situation is Google-like you've got a quick answer, but you're one click away from deeper information if you want it.

I would disagree with Miss Clifton quite frankly. I don't think brands get to control the message any more. I don't think they get to tell us what to believe or not to believe. I think more people want to know, more people can know, more people get information from Facebook, from Twitter, from Pinterest, from their friends, from curated information, from NGOs they trust, whoever.

They aren't gonna trust her brands. They're not gonna trust her as a consultant to brands. They're gonna want to get it from people they trust -- corporations, Aron saw this, it was the Edelman Reputation Survey looks at America, has the lowest trust level in any year they tested. It's NGOs, it's academics, it's other groups that people trust, and so I don't think people are gonna go to brands any more to hear the full story of their products and their supply chains.

Greg Dalton: And you have an example of -- was it McDonald's that tried to put out a message? They were -- social media. They got caught in -- it flipped on its head.

Dara O'Rourke: Well, yeah, we see that. And really this last year has been a phenomenal learning experience I think, for everyone. In Twitter speak, we call these 'hashtags,' and McDonald created a hashtag, which was, you know, "My first McDonald's experience" was the hashtag. And it turned into what -- we actually now call 'bashtags.' People used their hashtag and turn it against them to say, "My first experience was seeing a rat scurry through the McDonald's." "My first experience was getting sick from how disgusting the food was," whatever, whatever. And this thing went viral. We saw that happen, you know, with Bank of America on prices. We saw that happen to Susan G. Komen this year. We saw it happen over and over again. Things in 24 hours can turn against a corporate message or a corporate attempt to control the dialogue where, I think, the age of brands controlling the message and telling us what to believe about them is coming to an end.

Greg Dalton: William Brent?

William Brent: I -- absolutely, it's true. And, you know, the nature of my business has shifted dramatically over the past five, seven years. I mean we used to be a one-to-many culture of communications, right? You have a message that's disseminated from the powers that be in

corporate America. It would then disseminate down through traditional media, and people either read it; they didn't read it. They believe it if they did, or they didn't believe it. And today's world is extremely different.

And, you know, the corporations I think, are certainly understanding that and moving very quickly, some of them, to embrace these new avenues of not only engaging with their consumers and trying to learn, but also in trying to learn from their consumers. I mean the ability to crowdsource suggestions to make your business, to make your product better are out there today, and I think brands are very aware of that and understand that they need to tap into that if they're gonna be relevant and continue to sell their products going forward.

Greg Dalton: Aron Cramer, do you agree?

Aron Cramer: I -- I thoroughly agree, and I think we live in, you know, the mesh. It's been used in terms of describing consumption patterns which are also changing, but it's in that work world that we live in. And again, this speaks of fragmentation. It speaks of the fact that there are a lot of attributes that people want to see in products and, you know, to use the phrase that's used so widely, you've got to be part of the dialogue that it is absolutely not a one-way channel.

Greg Dalton: And one of the hard things here is for people to think about tradeoffs. Well, I think there's performance of a product, and there's also some values I have, maybe there's some hierarchy that I've defined, maybe not, but I want something that works and doesn't hurt the world and doesn't cost a lot. Well, that's a pretty tall order.

Dara O'Rourke: But that's because -- as Aron said earlier, those are the products that are succeeding. This is -- if you're gonna have a product that's a high-quality product that people like you like, that your friends have tried and they liked it and it works and it tastes good, it smells nice, whatever, so you've got kind of a social peer recommendation. It's in your price point or within 10 percent of your price point, and it's sustainable; it's healthy; it's green. Those are the products that do really great. So that's, you know -- the Toyota Prius, example, where it's a great car from a great company that does well, and it's better on fuel efficiency. You see that--Patagonia products--where you see these ones that do really well, but they've got to be high-quality products at a good price and sustainable.

William Brent: Well, wouldn't you also say that it has to be more than just about the products? I mean -- because you think about it, people buy brands, and, you know, there are products underneath those brands, but they -- they're buying on brand reputation and corporate reputation.

So I'm wondering, you know, is it more important than therefore for the brand to be able to show overall, you know. Step away from the specific attributes and, you know, the good things of a specific product. But if they've created an overall halo for their company based on behavior from the -- throughout the supply chain and everything that they do, isn't that what's really the most important? Not the fact that -- and so then the specific average attributes of products come less important, right? Because I know that if I'm buying a Toyota product, you know, they're lean, you know, in their supply chain. And so--

Dara O'Rourke: Well, we found so -- we rate about a dozen product categories through GoodGuide.com, and there are categories where people basically make decisions on brands. Let's say footwear; you're kind of thinking, "Do I like Nike better than Reebok?" And you're not really going down to the level of the Nike Air Pegasus 3 whatever, whatever. But in shampoo, baby shampoo, people are going, "I wanna know that this specific bottle does not have this specific chemical that could have this impact on my daughter." They're thinking at the product level. And in automobiles,

you know, Toyota has gotten this great halo from the Prius, but they're doing more Tundras and more huge SUVs. And their overall corporate performance is pretty middling, so they have gotten a little bit of a kind of a PR halo effect from this one product line which is doing very well, but it's not their full story. I mean this is something that I think these big very complex corporations have a tough time being really consistent in their overall portfolio.

Greg Dalton: Aron Cramer? Yeah.

Aron Cramer: Well, they, yeah, but they do in part, because I think we're talking about still a very small segment of American consumers so far -- so far today. And for most people, they want to get the most product at the lowest price -- simple as that. And we had a conversation with a restaurant company and suggested that they look at freshening the menu in order to put out more healthful products, maybe smaller portion size. We've got an obesity epidemic in this country, and their response was, you know, "Those are your values. Our consumers have different values." And, you know, I didn't agree with that, but I think the fact remains that for a lot of people, "I wanna get the most calories I can for my family at the lowest possible price. And if it tastes good, that's really important. Where does it come from? Is it organic? All of those things -- that still doesn't add up for enough people. So I think the elephant in the room in all of this actually is not only the nature of each product but the overall volume of products, because we've got an economy that's actually predicated on massive levels of consumption so that we can have niche products over here and a completely unsustainable economy overall.

And companies, because of the way markets work, continue to need to drive volume and so on. So I think that's a big part of the equation, and that's why stimulating demand through the GoodGuide and other steps is so important, because until there is the market demand for sustainable products, greener products, whatever you call it, I think we're stuck in a volume economy, which is inherently unsustainable.

Greg Dalton: So we're just talking about a small percentage of companies and a small percentage of consumers who are even having this conversation, most of the companies and consumers are not on the same page.

Aron Cramer: Most companies, but about a small percentage of products, I would say. Every company's in this conversation right now, but it's not yet the dominant model for most businesses.

Greg Dalton: So they have one product line that's sort of their green line, but most of about it -- the Prius -- well, Toyota sells one Prius and they sell a lot of trucks and other things, but it's that Prius that people talk about. Dara O'Rourke?

Dara O'Rourke: Yes. So this is one where, you know, William, you mentioned only 25 percent of Americans look at these and things, and, Aron, you just mentioned all these small percentages, but, you know, all major transitions and transformations start off from a very small group of early adopters that -- in packets in Silicon Valley--but in these issues, you know we saw that Fair Trade Coffee started basically with churches on Sundays switching to Fair Trade Coffee, and that growing and switching the market -- it's only about five percent of the market, but it has moved that into the mainstream. Organics started from little health food stores. It was tiny, and now it's a major force. Sweat-free clothing was just with college campuses. There was a few colleges tried their campuses to switch.

So we got to start from small base, and we are in the small base, but I think we don't need to get to 50 percent. I mean I think if you told any brand, where that you could help them get the 25 percent of the market, you know, the brand manager fighting over 10 basis points every quarter. You tell

them, "I got you 15 percent of the market." Now, P&G might scoff at it, but any other brand manager in America is going to say, "That's unbelievable." If I can access 15 percent of the market and get my products and convince them, that's a huge opportunity and that's enough, I think, to shift -- to begin to shift the economy -- not totally, but we see organics as part of the most successful beginning to shift what agriculture looks like globally.

Greg Dalton: And so that's where we get into the conversation about yes, companies as agents of change. But some companies can overreach. We're talking about brands here. Dara O'Rourke, Whole Foods has one of those pretty clean brand reputations, yet their own CEO acknowledged they were selling a lot of crap, and there are parabens and phthalates and things, toxic chemicals and stuff that they were selling, so what they were selling did not correspond with their green brand.

Dara O'Rourke: Yeah. Whole Foods is probably the most successful case of a retailer who convinced the world that just walking into their store, everything inside -- it would be sustainable. And the fact --

Greg Dalton: And you are a good person for doing it.

Dara O'Rourke: Right, and it's worth your whole paycheck to shop at Whole Foods -- [laughter] and to get the stuff. It turned out, as John Mackey pointed out, there's a lot of stuff on their shelves that was not very good stuff. He could -- actually, he called it crap. He said, "Fifty percent of the stuff on our shelves is crap. It's soda and it's crap, and the stuff, even in our 360 brand that we own."

And so, I think, you know, that's an example where the overall goal was to build this feeling, and they've done this phenomenally well. You know, they've gone from a tiny chain based in Texas to national and billions of dollars in revenues. So again, I think it's a great sign that companies like Whole Foods are taking a look at what they're doing and saying, "We're gonna continue to improve, and we're not gonna live on this halo. We're gonna, actually, clean up our act."

You see it also -- Patagonia, they're a great example that went forward on transparency. They launched something called the "Footprint Chronicles" a few years ago that began a process of them admitting both the good, the bad and the ugly of their products. So that's pretty dangerous for a green brand -- their kind of environmental clothing brand to say, "Look, we put these toxic chemicals that are durable water repellants that are on the jacket. Now, the jacket is recycled polyester, but we have to -- that's good. The bad news is we put a toxic chemical on top to make it water repellent."

But that actually got them more credibility. It got them a better conversation with their customers. It built their brand by admitting their weaknesses and talking about what they're going to do to fix it, because they haven't fixed it yet. But I think that's the future -- this really is honest, open transparency into the full supply chain -- the good, the bad and the ugly, and then an honest two-way conversation with your stakeholders about what you're doing to improve.

Greg Dalton: You know, Aron Cramer, this is a new thing to sort of engage consumers in this way in corporate America where they have these hierarchies as William mentioned earlier, and they make decisions but to actually involve consumers and to share things that might not be always favorable. That's, culturally inside organizations, that's really tough.

Aron Cramer: It's one of the most counterintuitive things for business to do. You know, no one, no company, no CEO stands up in the morning and says, "We're number 3." Or, "We're not doing very well, but we're gonna get better." But in fact, you now have something like 80 percent of the S&P

500 producing sustainability reports that are of variable quality, but the norm has become a degree of transparency.

Now, taking that to the behavioral level with consumers is really challenging. You know I was talking with someone at Unilever last month, and they know that for a lot of their products the consumers' usage is the biggest part of the footprint. So let's talk about shampoo a little bit. Well, all of the sudden, Unilever is saying, "How do we engage in a dialog with our consumers about how long their showers are, because that is actually going to make a bigger difference in terms of our product's impact on the world than anything else." And they're really scratching their heads saying, "Should we get into this to start making ads about length of showers? That would be a departure for us. [Laughter] We can't go door-to-door and encourage people to change their showering habits."

So these are really interesting questions that ultimately do come down not only purchasing practices, but also consumer behavior. I happen to believe that's one of the areas though that has the most potential, because we waste a third of the food that we buy, we waste a third of the energy that's generated, we waste a comparable amount of water in this country, and that's throwing money away. So that's where companies and consumers actually have something in common that they -- a problem they can solve together.

Greg Dalton: And let's talk about that consumer behavior. There are some people, Dara O'Rourke, would say that the GoodGuide is a disservice -- that it leads people to believe that we can shop our way to the solution. That by -- that sustainable consumption in itself is an oxymoron. We're not going to solve by buying, you know, greener products, so take that up.

Dara O'Rourke: Who said that [crosstalk]

Greg Dalton: I read it on the internet, so [crosstalk].

Dara O'Rourke: Some guy said that, yeah. Exactly. Some comment on the--Tweet or something.

Aron Cramer: Don't you look at me; I didn't say that. [Laughter]

Dara O'Rourke: No, Aron would never say that. So it is, I think, really, we're at the very starting point of getting to the kind of transparency and provision of information and provision of not data, but useful information that can be turned into action, and that can actually influence behaviors. That is where we want to go.

And so GoodGuide is basically the starting point. So we are an early example of where the market is going. And this is -- the market is going towards radical transparency. It will not be possible to hide behind brand marketing in the future. There will be sites like ours that will be basically providing information to the public on your products, your company's supply chain, what you're doing on these different issues. The thing that we've learned over the last couple of years though is providing scientific information alone. And this hurts me as both an academic and as, you know, a practitioner providing information to the public about how screwed we are on climate change or how screwed we are on biodiversity loss, has almost no effect on actually motivating behavior change.

So we really do need to understand human behavioral psychology and behavioral economics to understand how is it that people really make decisions in the marketplace, what is it that really influences them to change their behavior, how do you move them beyond habit? Most of our purchases are based on habit; it is what we've done or what we saw our parents do or whatever. Can we dislodge that and help them understand that there really are changes you can make that will make your life better and that will also be better for the world around you. And so I think that

we are really early in not only providing the better information and allowing consumers to have the information they need in the aisles, in that 20 seconds that they have to make the decision in the aisles which has been our first challenge -- get this on your iPhone and your Android and in the aisles or on your iPad or wherever it is you're making shopping decisions, but then also connect it to how we actually make decisions which is habit, peer influence, status -- we buy cars and clothes because of how people think we are not because of some kind of rational optimization of the utility of the product versus the cost. So there's all these other things involved that we're really now pushing up against and trying to take the next leap forward where this really can empower people to live better lives and to make better decisions.

Greg Dalton: So sustainable consumption is not an oxymoron.

Dara O'Rourke: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: And it is part of the solution; it's not a delusion.

Dara O'Rourke: That's right. And we don't believe that you can buy your way out of our sustainability crisis, but we do feel like we do need to be more informed about the impacts of our decisions, that we are spending billions of dollars on things that cause carbon emissions and wasted water and wasted emissions of toxins and sweat shops. And that most Americans have ethics and values that tell them they want to live a good life, they want to take care of their family, they want to do good. And so in the past we basically have, I think, lived in the dark ages. We knew nothing when we walked into the store except brand and price. That's all we knew. So we're at the very starting points of knowing the things we need to know to align our spending with our values, but it's still early days.

Greg Dalton: Aron Cramer, is it possible to buy and consume our way out of this to a happier place? Or are we just kind of deluding ourselves along this as we go toward the cliff?

Aron Cramer: Well, better choices are clearly better, but new models I think, can help quite a lot. You know a couple of examples, the average electric drill purchased in America is used for nine minutes over the course of its lifetime. Now -

[Laughter]

Greg Dalton: But it looks good in the garage, doesn't it? I mean --

Aron Cramer: Yeah. Now, if my wife were here, she'd say, "That's nine minutes more than you've ever used a power tool." [Laughter] But we don't need to buy those kinds of things. So where I live in Berkeley, there's a local tool library. That's great. I can go in and I can have my nine minutes of fun and bring it -- bring it on back.

But the best example in a business sense is Zipcar. Zipcar, which was just purchased, I think, by Avis, so that the notion of collaborative consumption, the sharing economy, is taking hold. And to Dara's point, these things do start small, but we're starting to see, especially people, you know, in their 20s on college campuses -- they love this idea. So notion that drove the American economy in the postwar years where the archetype was a suburban family to, you know, two parents, three kids, two cars in the driveway; that model is fading away.

And what's really exciting is these are creating new business opportunities. And, you know, you saw the setup video had Bill Ford. He's taking Ford in a direction to think about how that company can look at mobility as a business option and just the sale of a car every three years to a suburban dweller -- that may be a model that's gone for good.

Greg Dalton: William Brent.

William Brent: I think at one point -- to add on to that is that I mean I think most of these conversation has been about consumers in America and having lived overseas myself for many years, I think, you don't want to overlook the fact that dynamics in emerging markets are very different than here in the United States. And, you know, the -- why I told you we reviewed that there's a lot of positive in where we are today with the emergence of the collaborative, you know, consumption, sharing economy, plus the rise in purchase of these products that people are demanding more information about, all very well and good. But you got, you know, four-fifths of the world that are, you know, consumers now coming online who are thinking in very different ways in many cases.

And so, you know, to go back to the original question, is, you know, sustainable consumption a viable, you know, approach to moving forward? You know, we can't just look at it from a U.S. perspective. It has to be looked at from a global perspective, and I think that we're far from, you know, having a solution to solve that issue.

Greg Dalton: And you've been to China. You think that that's sort of -- in China that just the sheer numbers, the volume of consumers, the growing middle class, that they live like we do, that it's going to be pretty messy?

William Brent: Well, I mean I had gotten into this whole arena 20 years ago, because, you know, the writing was pretty clearly on the wall in China, that if they moved, you know, on the same path that we had taken to get where we are to the advanced and industrialized economy, that, you know, that was going to bit lead to a vortex of consumption. I mean that China would end up consuming itself and consume us with it, right?

And so, you know, I think that right now, the mindset for the vast majority of China, as the new studies just came out that talked about the emergence of the affluent class in China and the purchasing power of that class, and that's just one-fifth of China that's moved into that area of income. You know that's going to have major impact. And, you know, they're at a mindset right now where they want to acquire, and, you know, I don't have a problem with that. I mean, you know, that's their right to do that, but that's the reality. I mean their whole mindset is, "I'm gonna accumulate stuff. I'm gonna get my toaster. I'm gonna get my air conditioner." And so, you know, the discussion that we're having is important one, but, you know, I think I don't want to overlook that.

Greg Dalton: Let's talk about the role of government. We haven't talked about government yet. The Federal Trade Commission recently came up with some guidelines about what companies can or can't do. Is that a meaningful role here -- the role of government in terms of preventing companies from overreaching or making exaggerated claims? Or is that something where there just never gonna be a real player? Dara O'Rourke?

Dara O'Rourke: Well, the Federal Trade Commission, after 18 or 19 years, finally issued this thing called "The Green Guides" on marketing claims related to environment, and it was very disappointing, I would say, in how limited it was. It didn't even cover the word sustainability. It didn't get close to life cycles assessment or green chemistry. It basically caught up with kind of 1980 conversations. And so --

Greg Dalton: It talked about compostable recyclables [crosstalk] --

Dara O'Rourke: Yeah. So it got the most basic things on. You can't say certain things about biodegradable or compostable or natural, but it really is not a leader in showing us where the market's gonna go. So I think there's a lot that needs to be done through corporate leadership,

through institutional purchasers, retailers, NGOs, the advocacy community that's going to be the lead on this. The federal government obviously could be playing a really important role in moving this forward and has to play an important role in stopping the worst forms of greenwash.

So that's really where they've gotten up to. There's -- now starting to enforce -- blocking companies from making the most egregious false claims.

Greg Dalton: And I think a lot of people would say that we don't want the government sort of leading this, that they're not gonna be a leader nor should they be, but you're saying that their appropriate role is to sort of -- is to stop the most egregious transgressions. Aron.

Aron Cramer: I think the government could have a much more proactive and productive role than that, but that's basically what they've caught up to. And we see also California has enforcement actions around false marketing claims, false advertising claims. And we see that with the Federal Trade Commission around false claims related to green. Because in this boom of green products, there was -- it became the Wild West, and you'd see a packet of eggs at Whole Foods which has nine different certifications and claims on it, and no one could interpret them and what they meant. And so there needs to be someone who is regulating what can be said and this, you know, this is advertising.

Greg Dalton: And in case that happens in the courts, Windex was taken to court for a logo that had something about green list ingredients. So the green list ingredients which the court ruled has actually kind of plausibly a consumer could conclude that that was some kind of certification when really it wasn't. It was something that they just made up.

Dara O'Rourke: Yeah. That was an internal rating that the SC Johnson had created up on their own and put on the packaging not realizing that it would violate the --

Greg Dalton: So is there any cost to overreaching? I guess that's part of the question is, you know, is there any penalty? Or you just kind of get away with greenwashing and you might take up, you know, or is it really sort of -- it's the Twitter; it's the 'bashtags' sort of the real enforcement mechanisms more than the courts? Aron Cramer?

Aron Cramer: Well, Windex should never be accused of a lack of transparency. That would be very hurtful to their brand.

[Laughter]

I think you have the answer. I do think that the government is -- absolutely needs to take a vigilant roles, but there are so many ways that companies can get caught up these days. We've seen it.

We see it almost daily that, I think, that the government really, in some ways, is the -- is the enforcer of last resort. And, you know, there's crowd-sourcing. There's also crowd-bashing or crowd-truthing that takes place, and that's a pretty potent force.

Greg Dalton: Have you ever dismissed or not worked with a company because you thought that they were sort of overreaching or not genuine in their commitment to sustainability at Business for Social Responsibility?

Aron Cramer: We have declined, on several occasions, to pursue projects when we felt that that project was about reputation, not about performance. I mean, as an organization, we take the point of view that there's no company that is perfect, and there is no company that can't improve. But if the activities that we're asked to undertake are about reputation, don't have integrity, we don't do it.

Greg Dalton: William Brent, have you ever fired any client?

William Brent: We have resigned clients.

Greg Dalton: Oh, that's a nice way [crosstalk]

William Brent: Yeah. We have. It's -- you know there are certain industries that as an agency, we have determined not to work with such as tobacco, but, you know, in other cases, it's in a case-by-case basis oftentimes. You know, similar to what Aron was talking about, we had a company that was in the resource business, and there was a group within the firm who felt that they were behaving badly and were not a company that we wanted to work with. We lobbied our leadership to resign that client, had a long and in-depth conversation about it, all the ins and outs of doing that and why we should. And eventually, we decided to move on. So that does happen.

Greg Dalton: William Brent is executive vice president of Energy, Cleantech, and Sustainability at Weber Shandwick. We're also talking today with -- about green marketing at Climate One with Aron Cramer, president and CEO of Business for Social Responsibility, and Dara O'Rourke, co-founder of The GoodGuide and associate professor at UC Berkeley.

We're going to take a pause right now and put a microphone up here and invite your participation to join us with one one-part question or a comment.

And if you need some help with that, we're here for you. And if you're on this side, we invite you to please go around through those backdoors and a line formed with our producer, Jane Ann, right there. And this is often the best part of the program, so I encourage you to come up and join us for that part. Meanwhile, I'm going to ask -- we're talking before about the Prius and the halo effect. Some people think that there's a phenomenon where people would do one big thing like buy a Prius. And that gives them a license to do other things in their life that are not so carbon-friendly. It's like if you eat your vegetables, you can have a big dessert afterwards and somehow it washes out, you're okay. Dara O'Rourke?

Dara O'Rourke: Yes. So there actually are a couple interesting academic studies that show this kind of negative effect of doing something green. Unfortunately, if you dig into them, they're almost all done by economists, on economics majors at universities where they study other economists. And economists are notoriously greedy and self-interested and really bad subjects. So what we have found is actually the opposite -- it's that even small, mundane consumption choices that change your perception about a product or a life decision can be a kind of entry point into a broader discussion, that most of the consumers we see come in focused on personal health and wellness -- avoiding things that hurt themselves, their family.

But that there is -- once you realized the baby shampoo might have toxic chemicals that you start thinking about the cleaning supplies in your house, and the food you're feeding your baby, and the broader environmental health things that could be affecting your family, and I think that there's a potential of an on-ramp through consumption rather than a dead-end through consumption, but it has to -- you have to think about how you woo people and move them from individual actions to collective action, and move them from thinking they can buy their way out to thinking "we're gonna need regulation," we're gonna need broad changes in our economy to really get at some of these problems.

Greg Dalton: Excellent. Let's have our audience question. Yes. Welcome to Climate One.

Male Audience: Yes. This is a great -- this is a great panel. I get irked when I open up the

magazine, see full-page ads from Chevron about some very tangential aspect. And I'm just wondering what impact these ads have, whether the company views it as something that's really gonna happen and affect on how they're perceived. Thanks.

Greg Dalton: Dara O'Rourke?

Dara O'Rourke: Yes. Sorry. [crosstalk] You know, one that I've seen just on the bashtag is that Chevron had this whole marketing campaign called, "Chevron Does." Like, does Chevron care about communities, blah-blah-blah? Chevron does." And the activist community took that and ranted as a whole series of ads about "Does Chevron really destroy the Amazon?" Yes, Chevron does. And they took their exact iconic -- iconography of their ad and turned it into a viral campaign bashing Chevron.

So I know at least one group has used their exact language against them, but I don't know -- I mean, they obviously -- they spend millions of dollars doing this, so they must get something out of it. William?

William Brent: Well, you know, they are all constantly looking, I assume. I don't work for them. I'm looking for ways to try and, you know, be seen as contributing to society and the benefits to society. You know, they do, to their credit, have a energy services business that is focused on developing energy efficiency projects and wind power developments, etcetera, etcetera. So it's not as if they are only engaged in the fossil fuel industry. You know, I think that that's uh -- that's a -- that's an industry that, you know, simply is bound by who they are, and there's very little opportunity for them, at this point, to really change the perception of the fossil industry or themselves, and I just don't think it's going to happen.

Greg Dalton: That's all right. Next question, welcome.

Female Audience: Hi. Thank you. We've been talking a lot about companies that may have kind of a select product line that fits within the sustainability context or, you know, maybe companies that are kind of trying to remake themselves through branding and through kind of a sustainability -- have a sustainability caché. What about companies that are more, you know, focused on having sustainability at the core of their business? I'm curious. You kind of mentioned something interesting about Unilever which maybe fits into the former category about, you know, talking about how they might advertise about taking shorter showers, and that could be a really -- have a big impact on the sustainability of the product. Have you seen any really interesting innovative branding, communications out there for maybe some of the companies that are really driven by core sustainability principles?

Greg Dalton: Who'd like to tackle that one? Aron Cramer?

Aron Cramer: Let me just start with the first part of your question, which I think is interesting, and it makes me think of Marks & Spencer, which is a big UK based retailer, and they talk about these as actions below the line and above the line. And I think that's really simple and really smart, because there's a lot of -- there are a lot of things that they do below the line -- the production process, the logistics process -- that no consumer ever sees, no consumer ever cares about, but actually has a huge impact on things.

And then there's above the line, you know, what is your purchasing decision, how do you use the product, and so on. So I think that's a really smart way to think about it, and every company can do things below the line, including - the B companies. And that's where there's a lot of progress to be made separating their part from the complexities of consumer behavior and marketing. So I think

the best companies think about both of those things, and if they do both of those things well, then they're really on to something.

Greg Dalton: And below the line, a lot of times are thinking about their employees. They want their employees to like where they work, to think they're a good corporate citizen, they're working for a good company, right, that there's some employee pressure and that serving that constituency [crosstalk].

Aron Cramer: Well, one other -- they're just pulling on, you know, companies are brands that are doing an interesting job with sustainability. You know, Tesla's an interesting company and that, you know, they're making electric cars here in the Bay Area. But Elon Musk, the head of the company who started it, I mean, you know, I think he -- the way he frames is, "You know, I'm not in the business of making a great electric vehicle. I'm in the business of making a great vehicle that happens to take advantage of electric and battery technology." And I think that that's sort of a trend, as I see it for the brands that are communicating well. They're sort of stepping away from the green first and really, you know, trying to be the best they can be, you know, across the board. It's not about just being a green company or a sustainable company; it's actually coming out of it from a different angle and saying, "Hey, we wanna be the best period, and we'll use the technologies and the ways to get there." And so it's almost not a question of who's doing it -- the sustainability marketing best, it's who's doing the product and the development of the business with.

Greg Dalton: Dara O'Rourke?

Dara O'Rourke: And I would just add. I think some of the most interesting things that I see are coming from startups -- little tiny companies that are easily born with this in their DNA, that I think the major innovations in chemistry are not gonna come from; they're going to come from little green chemistry startups, and probably major innovations in energy, in transport are going to come from startups that are going to have a built in from the beginning and not try to be transitioning billion dollar business units to something that really is tough. So there's a lot of, I think, potential in these little companies coming up.

Greg Dalton: And just one footnote, we mentioned Zipcar and sharing, later this month -- I think it's in March, we're going to have Scott Griffith, the CEO of Zipcar will be here, and Andy Ruben, who's co-founder of Yerdle, which is a sharing economy companies. So we'll have a whole event on the sharing economy here in a couple of months.

Let's have our next audience question.

Male Audience: So speaking of the promise of the small companies and innovating and embedding sustainability into who they are, there's been a lot of talk about the legal corporate structure and how important that is in this conversation. Do you think that one day most, if not all, companies should be B corps to benefit corporations?

Greg Dalton: And explain what a B corp is -- whoever's going to tackle that, we'd like to take that on. Aron Cramer?

Aron Cramer: That's a great question. B corporations are -- it is a new way that a company can be chartered in several states, so that they have an explicit social purpose built into their by-laws essentially, that it's not only about maximizing shareholder values as that concept is understood traditionally.

This is hugely important question. I don't think that all companies, really in most companies will

take on a new form. What I do think will happen -- although I think it could take 10 years or more, is that public companies who are regulated by the SEC are going to be required to provide more information and more rigorously tested information about the social and environmental performance, their governance, and the things that have traditionally been considered external to financial performance. That day is going to come, and I think it's going to come, because we recognize the business risk, we recognize the risks to society, and we live in a much more transparent world. So, personally, I'm a big fan of B corps and other models. I'd rather see the SEC change, because I think it'll get much bigger pick up more quickly with big companies if you see that change happen.

Greg Dalton: And not many companies have registered as B corps yet, so far. William Brent?

William Brent: One other non-structural things of -- it's not structural change, I mean, I think the other interesting thing that I've seen is around the placing value on externalities by corporations. So you got Patagonia starting to value ecosystem services, and I think that it's not going to necessarily change the structure of the corporation itself, but it's going to change the way that corporations look at the use of natural resource and sourcing supplies for the products that they make.

Having understood that, without those, their business doesn't exist.

Dara O'Rourke: So what I'm saying, GoodGuide was founded as a B corporation, and it actually, I think has been incredibly beneficial in getting that clear in the articles of incorporation, the legal structure that the board and officers are working in the interest, not just of shareholders, but also stakeholders, the environment workers community. It's a very powerful simple changes that can allow our company to have a much longer view and do some really interesting things.

Greg Dalton: Let's have our next question. Welcome.

Female Audience: Thank you for having me. Absolutely a wonderful discussion. My question here is on the consumer behavior side. The whole notion of payback or giving back -- now, the old charity model has been -- so like these brands have actually pivoted on the strings of emotions of the consumers and, you know, companies are very much into, you know, if you buy a certain amount, the percentage goes to this charity and that. What's going to take to shift the mindset of these consumers whereby they're going to start demanding that new charity model whereas the brand says, you know, when you buy, were actually going to provide back on the supply chain side versus to a different charity that may also be fun but more towards the sustainability side? When is that tipping point going to happen?

Greg Dalton: Who'd like to tackle that one? Dara O'Rourke.

Dara O'Rourke: This is one example. I think Tom's Shoes, Warby Parker -- some of these buy one-give one models, have been phenomenally successful, right? These startups that are basically just -- it resonates so much with consumers. My daughter was so excited that a pair of shoes will lead to another pair of shoes, and it's the company's core business has been impacted. It's exactly, like I said, it's not -- oh they're going to donate something over here, it's they're going to try to change their impact on where they control it.

It's a little bit off, but I think there's a really interesting innovation going on that space. It's still only a few companies doing kind of different things, but, you know, corporate philanthropy, I think, really has a law that can be done to make it more accountable, more focused, more representative of what the real impacts are.

Greg Dalton: And lot of corporate philanthropies is really corporate marketing, right? [crosstalk] --

Dara O'Rourke: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: Next audience question, welcome, sir.

Male Audience: Yes. I was surprised with what you said about Wal-Mart -- the kind of water-shed event that happened in, apparently, 2007, with respect to their kind of understanding or attempt to understand life cycle analysis. I was on a webinar a couple of years ago, and someone was commenting on the point system that they use for sustainable product and life cycle. And the guy said, "You mean if Huggies Disposable Diapers turn out to have a terrible score, you'll no longer sell them in your stores?" And you could have heard a pin drop. The guy completely talked around us. So what -- I'm sure there's more to the story than that, but that was a parent. That was just a couple of years ago, and it seemed to me to be an extremely awkward moment.

Greg Dalton: We could do a whole program on Wal-Mart, and there've been books written about Wal-Mart, and there is an initiative. In fact, their senior vice president on sustainability will be here later this year. But right now, let's talk about the Huggies and whether Wal-Mart gets too much credit. I guess -- is that part of -- Aron Cramer.

Aron Cramer: Wal-Mart, you know, did a good thing in helping to launch the sustainability consortium which is going to provide scientific basis for judging products. I think that's a contribution. Is it a panacea for everything? Absolutely not. I also think that while Wal-Mart's done a lot of things to make it's model more efficient, it is still predicated on selling large volumes of things, and as -- though I know Mark writes well on this, there's a problem with the American economy as we have a lot of people buying stuff they don't need with money they don't have.

And you might add, you know, with negative impacts on the environment. So I think, a lot of questions still to be resolved -- the initial index that Wal-Mart aimed to put in place -- you can critique it in terms of the degree of implementation. I think there are also questions about, again, how you ensure that there's enough complexity to lead to good science, good rigor, and also make it simple enough, and of course, uptake in the market place. So lots of questions remain to be resolved.

Greg Dalton: And Wal-Mart's having a huge impact on the supply chain, factories around the world, and there it's largely driven by cost savings, but they're having a huge impact, a rippled effect throughout the manufacturing industry, because of the factories that they deal with. We could -- Dara.

Dara O'Rourke: And this here -- really quick at your specific question -- they're buyers are not making decisions on what goes on the shelf based on sustainability index yet. They claim that, at some point in the future, they will, but they are not taking bad products off the shelves, putting good products on, yet.

Aron Cramer: Although I think that some products with good scores were getting much better placement on the shelf, so it's not yet all or nothing test. It's working its way into the system with the long ways to go.

Greg Dalton: There was one survey by a group called TerraChoice that actually found that there was less greenwashing in products in big box retailers than boutique retailers, and so I thought that was kind of surprising.

Let's have our next audience question, please.

Female Audience: Hi. Firstly, thank you for the insights. It's really nice. My question here is what are your comments on the price points for the organic products or, for example, it's not possible or it's not feasible for everybody to buy a dollar a tomato. It's just not. So don't you see it has a cash 22 situation where the prices are not attracting the volumes that are required to attain the critical mass? So when does that change?

William Brent: It's just a slow bit of a chicken and the egg wherein you can't bring out the price unless you achieve scale. How you'll achieve scale if you can't bring down the price. I think that, you know, that's a great question, and I think that, you know, it's going to take time. I mean, I think you were at the beginning, right?

Dara O'Rourke: Yeah. I think -- and this goes back to something you said a little bit earlier, William, I think if you exclude the externalities in our food production system, and you fairly priced our goods and services, ultimately, what you want to get to is the good products actually are price competitive or cheaper; that they are being priced fairly. And right now, there are these differentials that you have to pay more to get the organics thing, the whatever. But, I think, long term, you've got to figure out how you actually priced the market, so that the real costs to our health, to the environment are included in the price of the product, then those products will look better.

Greg Dalton: Dara O'Rourke is co-founder of The GoodGuide and a professor at UC Berkeley.

Let's have our next audience question, welcome.

Female Audience: Hi. I wanted to add to what you said that truism about not only are Americans buying stuff we don't need, but money we don't have; it's not making us happier according to the happiness index. My question is about green fatigue. I'm someone who's been trying to get the first green talk show on mainstream radio or television. For 15 years, I really think 2013 is going to be our breakthrough year [laughter] after 2012 being the year of extreme weather events.

Among the crazy reasons or excuses that I've gotten for why we can't have one green talk show in America, environmentally focused on climate change, oceans, forest, transportation, food, you name it. It's not just one topic, right. Is -- well, there's green fatigue. Aren't people tired of hearing about environmental issues? And I've been hearing that for 15 years from when I started 1996. That blows my mind, because I say, "How about one designated, dedicated show? What about -- how many programs and whole networks are devoted to sports and business and celebrities and all that stuff? What is behind that? Why is there the screen bias that makes people? And I've contacted everyone from programmers to friends -- "A whole hour? On the environment? I don't know if that's safe?"

Greg Dalton: Well, there's some news today on this, William Brent, about New York Times.

William Brent: Yeah. The New York Times just announced today that they're going to shut down their environmental news desk which was like a shock coming from The New York Times. I really thought that they would continue to, you know, focus on that. It's not that they're doing away with environmental coverage, but they're going to get rid of their desk. You know green fatigue -- it's there for sure.

Greg Dalton: Do you see it in the media?

William Brent: Absolutely. The media that we talked to on a day-to-day basis, their editors, the beat reporters, the far few review reporters. I think there was a initial high after, you know,

"Inconvenient Truth" and all the focus that was brought around that, and very quickly, people in the media business decided, a, "Okay. We've heard the story enough -- that it's really not new anymore," and b, they oversold and under-delivered. There -- all of the -- many of the startups that you alluded to earlier, yeah, many of them have failed or promised things that they cannot deliver on and a price point that is economical and viable in the market place. And so, I think, there's a lot a skepticism and for a good cause in many cases about the legitimacy and the viability of green marketing green products. That's my point of view.

Greg Dalton: Dara O'Rourke.

Dara O'Rourke: Yeah. I don't know anything about television but it seems to be if there's room enough cupcake wars and all these other shows, there should be -- if you could get one hour on environment, I think, as Aron said earlier, just kind of frame around the environment and green is problematic right now, and so we're more and more framing around personal health and wellness. And health is something that -- almost everyone cares about their health in some degree, and so figuring out how you connect to the things that resonate -- it is really hard talking about climate change to a mainstream audience, or talking about biodiversity laws, or talking about these very complex global issues.

So figuring out a way to tell these stories to communicate in a way that resonates is a huge challenge, and it's something that I think really -- the academic community, the science community, the NGO community has not done a create job of, so figuring out a way to make it resonate the way cupcake wars does, is going to be big.

Aron Cramer: and I'd say that cupcakes haven't done a very good idea, just based on the manner of -- the product part of the job.

Dara O'Rourke: I'll go out on a limb. I think it can be done better than cupcake wars. [Laughter] I really do. Look, we have -- there's a short attention span theater problem, right? And we had massive, you know, hour-by-hour coverage of this film, "Gulf of Mexico," hour-by-hour coverage of Fukushima, there was the coal mining accident in West Virginia. None of those things had remotely the impact on our health and our environment than our use of coal -- not close. How much attention does that get? Well, you can't show a child's lungs being damaged by coal the way you can show an oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico. So we have a culture that responds to these images, and they're very vivid. I understand that, but there's a lot of underlying stuff that's really important that it's very hard to depict at least through visual images. So we've got to find new ways. We're talking before this session, new ways of storytelling. I put the question to Paulo Coelho once, the Brazilian novelist, "How would you tell the story about climate change?" And if we have to think about those kinds of things, he had a particularly good answer, by the way.

[Laughter]

Dara O'Rourke: But I think cupcakes -- I think it's got to be about the cupcakes.

Greg Dalton: Well, one good TV show we're going to wrap up here is Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution. It did go, and very visually, it was real people about their health and it was quite dramatic.

Let's wrap up by asking you personally about how you've changed your consumption patterns, and what you think your biggest piece remaining is of your own personal carbon footprint.

Aron, we'll come down this way. Aron Cramer.

Aron Cramer: I would like my house to be more energy-efficient. That's the goal I should achieve.

I read a book a couple years ago by a woman named Sarah Murray who talked about how food travels, and she basically learned to debunk the notion of food models by saying, "The impact on your food purchasers come more from how you get to and from the store than how the food got to the store." And so I take part, I get off part, I buy my food daily, I don't add any more miles to my journey to get food. That's hopefully making some impact.

Greg Dalton: Dara O'Rourke.

Dara O'Rourke: Yes. So the big to get items for personal consumption or your big environmental impact are your housing, your transportation, and your food. Those are the big three, and so really if people can think about what they can do in those, so living closer to where you work, commuting on mass transit, or driving a single efficiency vehicle, and eating less meat. That -- if all of us could just have one day less of meat per week, that would have a huge benefit on carbon emissions and overall climate initiatives.

Greg Dalton: And what's one thing you've given up that you miss -- one --

Dara O'Rourke: You know, this is a thing where I think is really kind of a myth of the mainstream around environmentalism and this health is that that you're going to be immiserating yourself, and your life will be worst -- I think --

Greg Dalton: Living like a European.

Dara O'Rourke: Right. And I think it's like, you know, Aron and I both live in the East Bay, and we can walk to our stores, and there are farmers' markets, and you can consume less but live better and live healthier and so, you know, our family has one car not two, so that would be a kind of giving up to the American lifestyle, but it's actually better for us, and now we're happier for it to not be in traffic jams. So I really --

Greg Dalton: That's less expensive.

Dara O'Rourke: It's less expensive. It's better in every way, and so I really think there's -- we need to be thinking about changing quality of life and changing how we live and how we structure our economy so that we can live close to where we work, and we can shop close to where we live, and eat locally. And these things really can be better and not worse.

Greg Dalton: We'll see if your teenager agrees when they're driving [crosstalk] -- William Brent.

William Brent: Cucumbers -- I love gardening. I want to grow more food.

Yeah. And I think it a great opportunity to, you know, be back in touch with the ground, which not a lot of people touch these days. And it's great to walk out your back door. I have, you know, a small garden, but I'd like to, you know, expand it and doing great to walk out your back door and pick a piece of the tomato off the vine and eat it, and it's really, really good. And it doesn't cost you anything.

Greg Dalton: We tried that for a year or two, and the novelty kind of wore off, but we do have electric car and solar panels. The thing I miss are the wood in the fireplace. We gave that up. That's one think I miss, that I had to do it.

Thank you for coming today to Climate One. We've been talking about sustainability with William

Brent from Weber Shandwick, Aron Cramer, CEO of Business for Social Responsibility, and Dara O'Rourke, co-founder of The GoodGuide and professor at UC Berkeley. I'm Greg Dalton. Thanks for coming today.

[Applause]

[END]