

## The ACT Label – It's Time to Act!

The non-profit organization My Green Lab launched the ACT label in October of 2017 to improve purchasing decision-making for laboratory products. My Green Lab recognized that researchers need consistent, transparent, and third-party verified information about the environmental impact of lab products if they are to make an informed purchasing decision. They decided to create “a nutrition label for laboratory products.” This is the ACT (Accountability, Consistency, and Transparency) label, which summarizes all aspects of the production, use and disposal of the described product into an easy-to-understand environmental impact factor.\* An example of this label can be seen below. The label evaluates manufacturing, user impact and end of life processes and provides a score for individual aspects of each of these categories as well as a comprehensive score for the product. This information can be useful for a consumer concerned with overall sustainability or concerned with only a single aspect of sustainability, such as energy consumption or packaging content.

The label development requires a thorough investigation of the entire life cycle of the product. As a first step, the manufacturer provides documentation and other forms of proof for their processes. For example, utility records could be used to show a reduction in electricity or water use. MSDS and CAS Registry Numbers for the products and/or their raw materials can be used to determine responsible chemical management and product content. Additional investigations may include:

- the product destination relative to the country in which it was manufactured
- the recycled, renewable or bio-based material content of the product and/or packaging
- the energy and water use of the product
- the expected lifespan of the product
- the ability to recycle the product (e.g. recyclable pieces fixed to other non-recyclable pieces are not considered recyclable)

These claims are evaluated by Sustainability Made Simple, an external auditor that specializes in sustainability. Lastly, the audit findings are verified by My Green Lab and compiled into an ACT label. Each category is rated on a 1-10 scale, with 1 indicating the least environmental impact and 10 representing the most. Those scores are then compiled into an environmental impact factor, with a smaller score being better. As the ACT label matures and gains a larger database of products, the values displayed on the label will provide easy product-to-product comparisons.

The ACT label has already been adopted by a few large companies like Eppendorf, Micronic, MilliporeSigma and Thermo Scientific. These companies have funded ACT labels for select products, the results of which can be found on the [My Green Lab website](https://mygreenlab.org). The ACT label benefits these companies by

<b>ACT.</b> Accountability, Consistency, Transparency.	
The Environmental Impact Factor Label	
Product Name	
Manufacturing Location	
<b>Manufacturing</b>	
Manufacturing Impact Reduction	6
Renewable Energy Use	No
Responsible Chemical Management	10
Shipping Impact	7
Product Content	5.3
Packaging Content	5.4
<b>User Impact</b>	
Energy Consumption	5
Water Consumption	N/A
Lifetime Rating	2
<b>End of Life</b>	
Packaging	5.2
Product	8
<b>Environmental Impact Factor</b>	53.9
<b>Label Valid Through</b>	September 2019
My Green Lab  mygreenlab.org	
<small>**Energy and water consumption reported as daily values, all other values on a scale of 1-10. 1 indicates the least environmental impact and 10 indicates the greatest.</small>	

allowing them to showcase products that have a reduced environmental impact, along with highlighting efforts the company has taken to preserve the environment. The ACT label also benefits consumers by providing them critical information necessary to make a quick decision about the environmental impact of a laboratory product. As the ACT label continues to grow in popularity, we want to ensure our NIH staff are familiar with this sustainable labs tool. My Green Lab representatives will be at the 2019 NIH Green Labs Fair to raise ACT label awareness. If you are interested in learning about this label directly from its creators, please stop by the Green Labs Fair on September 11!

\* The NIH does not endorse the ACT label or any companies/products mentioned in this article.