

Moving Towards Sustainable Plastics

Report Key Results

To help consumers and other stakeholders evaluate the progress of automakers towards sustainable plastics, the Ecology Center, in collaboration with Clean Production Action, graded the top six auto companies in the U.S. on their policies, goals, and actions. The following is a summary of our findings.

Sustainable Grade Point Averages (GPA) and Grades

Automaker	GPA (Grade) for all Topics	GPA (Grade) for Overview Topics	GPA (Grade) for Measurable Goals & Objectives	GPA (Grade) for Progress Towards Sustainable Plastics
Toyota	2.1 (C)	2.5 (B-)	1.9 (C)	2.0 (C)
Honda	1.3 (D+)	2.0 (C)	0.9 (D)	1.4 (D+)
DaimlerChrysler	1.2 (D+)	2.0 (C)	1.0 (D)	1.1 (D)
Ford	1.2 (D+)	2.2 (C+)	1.1 (D)	1.0 (D)
Nissan	1.1 (D)	2.2 (C+)	0.6 (D-)	1.3 (D+)
GM	1.0 (D)	2.2 (C+)	0.9 (D)	0.6 (D-)

C

Toyota

Toyota ranked first in our evaluation because it has taken a number of steps toward establishing sustainable plastics policies and practices that other automakers have not. Toyota has made commitments to selecting renewable, recyclable and recycled materials, and materials with reduced environmental health toxicity. Toyota is the only automaker that has set some measurable goals that relate to these commitments, including the goal of using renewable or recycled material in 20% of its resin parts by 2015. Toyota is also the only automaker that has committed to the same end-of-life vehicle management practices in North America as it has committed to in Europe and Japan.

Though Toyota has done more to achieve sustainable plastics than other automakers, there is still plenty of room for improvement. For example, Toyota failed to define measurable goals for all of its commitments and failed to define any interim objectives toward achieving the measurable goals that it did define. In addition, when calculating its end-of-life vehicle recovery rate, Toyota included energy recovered during incineration—a practice that has several negative impacts on the environment and public health and should be avoided.

(continued on reverse)

D+**Honda**

Honda has also made several commitments to improving the sustainability of its plastics, however Honda failed to commit to selecting renewable materials—something several of its competitors have already committed to—and also failed to commit to the same end-of-life vehicle management practices in North America as it committed to in Europe. Likewise, Honda failed to develop any measurable goals or objectives relating to the commitments that it did make. While weak at defining goals, Honda was relatively strong at reporting on progress. Honda provided information on several relevant activities that are occurring within the company, including information on the reduction in PVC use. Honda’s relative strength at reporting on progress helped it rank second overall among the automakers evaluated.

D+**DaimlerChrysler**

DaimlerChrysler has stated several commitments to improving the sustainability of its plastics, but has fallen short of defining any measurable goals or objectives relating to those commitments. Like most other automakers evaluated, DaimlerChrysler also failed to commit to the same end-of-life vehicle management practices in North America as it committed to in Europe. DaimlerChrysler’s reporting on progress was also limited. Though, it noted some activities that are occurring within the company and provided some data on the recycled content of its plastic components, it failed to provide any information on the reduction of PVC or other substances with environmental health toxicity.

D+**Ford**

Ford has committed to developing materials that never become waste and using recycled materials in its Model U concept vehicle. However, Ford failed to commit to the same end-of-life vehicle management practices in North America as it committed to in Europe and also fell short of defining any measurable goals that relate to the commitments that it did make. Ford’s reporting on progress was also limited, though it did note that it is evaluating the use of allergen free materials using the Oeko-tex standard and is also evaluating the use of renewable materials like the “eco-effective polyester” fabric. Ford failed to provide any quantitative data on the improved practices that have been implemented, including any reductions in PVC use.

D**Nissan**

Nissan has made very few commitments to improving the sustainability of its plastics and it therefore received the lowest grade among the automakers in this area. In particular, Nissan failed to commit to selecting renewable materials and also failed to commit to selecting plastics with recycled content. Though weak at defining commitments and goals, Nissan was relatively strong at reporting on the progress that it has made. Nissan listed several activities that have occurred within the company and also provided some data on PVC reductions.

D**General Motors**

GM has made several commitments to improving the sustainability of its plastics, but failed to develop any measurable goals or objectives relating to those commitments. GM’s reporting on progress towards sustainable plastics was very poor—GM ranked lowest among the automakers in this area. GM reported very few activities that are occurring to improve the sustainability of its plastics, and in fact, stated that its leading activities are happening within its European subsidiaries (such as increasing the use of recycled plastic materials in its Opel and Vauxhall vehicles). This admission demonstrates the corporate double standard for the environment that Americans are being subjected to by automakers and other companies that are slow to adopt the same environmentally safe practices and materials in the U.S. as they adopt in other countries.

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