

# Going green takes on new meaning for retailers

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Study shows that SA stores are keen to get in on the act.

Retailers are introducing environmentally friendly strategies, but customer loyalty programmes are not popular, according to a recent survey.

Out of 27 retailers in six countries, in the report entitled *Retail Rewards Programmes Around the World*, only Tesco in the UK integrated environmental issues into the programme design for its club card. Customers were awarded “green points” for activities such as recycling at the store, and bringing their own bags instead of using plastic ones.

The managing director of research firm Razor's Edge, Bruce Conradie, said: “[Though] many retailers are marketing themselves as eco-friendly there is still a lot of scope for direct interaction with customers.”

South African companies analysed in the study were Clicks, Dischem, Meltz, Edgars, Woolworths and Exclusive Books.

Simon Susman, Woolworths chief executive, said: “We have a five-year plan to change the way the way we do business, and incorporate a series of challenging targets and commitments.”

Woolworths aims to increase the sales of organic and free-range food fourfold to more than R1-billion. The company aims to reduce the carbon footprint by 30%, transport emissions by 20%, and electricity usage.

Conradie said, “Woolworths is very vocal, but the stores freak me out. They are highly chilled and most of the refrigeration goes out of the front of the store, wasting huge amounts of electricity.”

Exclusive Books has not implemented an eco-friendly strategy, but has promised to start one.

Marius Greess, Exclusive Books' deputy marketing manager, said: “We are looking at a lot of ways to improve our book stores, but we don't want to do something just because everyone else is doing it.

“We have looked at a number of ways to reduce our carbon footprint and to ease the burden on paper industry (including alternative paper sources such as hemp). Many major publishers are already using recycled paper.”

Conradie said that opportunities for incentive programmes for environmentally conscious activities were being severely under-used.

“The advantages of doing so are just too good to be ignored,” he said.

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