The broader context

- Consumers are always part of the broader legal, policy, and economic systems that we’ve heard about. Built-in structures, decision-making systems, and strategic interests may outweigh consumer choices.

  - Example: consumers appear not to demand safer products, yet they lack information needed to choose safer products; they also may think their acts won’t make a difference if most other consumers won’t act similarly, without a regulatory mandate.
Consumer Mobilization

• That said, consumers may have great potential to influence industry to produce safer products, through their purchasing decisions, actions, and voting.
• In recent years, many examples of consumer intervention (boycotts, protests, lobbying politicians).
• Also, examples of companies acting ahead of actual consumer demands to protect their markets.

A few examples of products that have attracted consumer concerns

- Drop That Bottle My Friend
- Teflon
- Spry Cleaner
- Slow Death by Rubber Duck
- Toxic
Company motivations

- Protection of reputation
- Preservation or expansion of market share
- Better relations with government agencies
- Access to consumers
- New markets for safer products
- Prevention of lawsuits
- Ethical commitments
- Forestalling regulation

Some pathways of consumer influence

Consumers

- Boycott (punishing companies)
- Campaigns (lobbying, direct action)
- Buying behavior (rewarding companies)

NGOs

- Information
- Certification, eco-labels, ratings

Supplies chain pressure

- Information
- retailers
- Downstream manufacturers

Manufacturers
Some examples of certification and labels in the food arena

Who are green consumers?

- Green consumers are not a homogenous group. There may be many types of green consumers.
- There is not necessarily a relationship between green consuming and demographic factors or environmental knowledge.
- More important may be to ask: why and when are green purchasing decisions made (or not)?
Questions for our guests:

1. What is the potential role that consumers can play in greening chemistry, and why?

2. Is there really market or consumer demand now for greener chemicals? What is your view on this, and what examples can you provide?

3. What strategies would you use to increase the ability of consumers to stimulate the production of safer products?