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In the October 2008 issue of Consumer Reports, an article titled “Energy Star has lost some luster” included a number of statements and assertions that mislead consumers about ENERGY STAR. EPA was not interviewed for the article and would like to address some of the issues that the article raised about ENERGY STAR.

One of the most misleading aspects of the story is that Consumer Reports confuses three different programs run by the federal government that address energy use and energy efficiency of energy-using products. These are:

- the minimum standards program operated by the Department of Energy (DOE),
- the EnergyGuide label overseen by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and
- the ENERGY STAR labeling program administered by EPA and the DOE.

The Consumer Reports article misses the basic point of the ENERGY STAR program. ENERGY STAR is designed to help consumers find energy-efficient products that will cost-effectively help save them money and help them protect the environment. It has been doing this successfully for more than fifteen years. Last year alone, the program prevented 40 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions while saving Americans more than \$16 billion on their utility bills.

To accomplish this, EPA initially seeks to have about 25 percent of available models meet the ENERGY STAR criteria when they are first established for a product category. Increasing the market share of qualifying products from their initial levels is a goal of the program – not a fundamental flaw, as the article suggests.

Further, there are other important considerations in developing these criteria that the Consumer Reports article does not mention. These include that the criteria:

- allow for a reasonable level of product availability,
- are set so that consumers will get their money back through lower energy bills fairly quickly if there is a price premium for the products, and
- can be met without sacrifice in product performance.

These are all very important considerations and are balanced in the development of ENERGY STAR specifications so that the consumer is satisfied with their energy-efficient product. These considerations are also taken into account when EPA explores whether or not a specification can be revised once ENERGY STAR qualified products represent 50% or more of sales. If the conditions do not call for a tightening of a product specification, it does not mean that the standards are lax, as Consumer Reports claims.

Contrary to the suggestion of the Consumer Reports article, no matter what the market share of ENERGY STAR qualified products, a consumer who purchases a labeled product gets one that will contribute to a cleaner environment and save them money without sacrifice in performance.

EPA stands by the integrity of the ENERGY STAR program. The ENERGY STAR program includes a comprehensive set of activities to maintain the integrity of the label. Activities include testing of the performance of products where warranted, spot checking products pulled from the marketplace and coordination with a number of product testing certification programs. When issues are identified, they are addressed.

The ENERGY STAR program now includes products across more than 50 product categories ranging from lighting to home electronics, office equipment, and home heating and cooling. In each case the ENERGY STAR criteria are based on established testing procedures for the energy use of the products. These testing procedures have been consistently updated as necessary to appropriately measure the energy efficiency of individual products, except in just a few cases.

Consumer Reports did raise an important issue with the federal test procedure for refrigerators. To be clear, this federal test procedure is used to qualify any refrigerator for sale in the US. As the existing federal test procedure, it is the one used to qualify products as ENERGY STAR. We agree this procedure should be examined and that the ENERGY STAR specification for refrigerators should be modified as necessary to ensure labeled products deliver promised savings.

For information on the complete set of program integrity activities that ENERGY STAR undertakes, see the ENERGY STAR 2007 Integrity Report at www.energystar.gov/partners.