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Posted on Wed, Dec. 12, 2007

## Starwatch Consumer: Sears wants to cut PVC plastic

### Friendlier packaging

#### **Sears**

said it's working to phase out polyvinyl chloride, or PVC, in its packaging and merchandise. The company will work with suppliers to eliminate the plastic, which can contain harmful chemicals and metals, and to use more recyclable materials.

### Milk mislabeling suit

#### **Costco Wholesale Corp.**

was sued by an Illinois resident who claims the warehouse retailer sells milk it labels as organic, even though it comes from cows raised in conventional dairies. The suit, filed in Seattle federal court, claims Costco failed to independently determine whether the milk sold under the Kirkland and Wilcox brands was organic.

### Toyota incentives

#### **Toyota Motor Corp.**

may increase incentives in the first half of 2008 to counter a projected industrywide decline because of the housing slump and gasoline near \$3 a gallon. The automaker may use "tactical incentives to help stimulate the market," Jim Lentz, president of Toyota's U.S. sales unit, said Wednesday.

### Marie Antoinette pearls

A necklace fashioned from the pearls of Marie Antoinette, who was guillotined in 1793, failed to sell at a

#### **Christie's International**

auction in London Wednesday. The auction house had valued the necklace, incorporating 33 pearls, at as much as \$818,520.

### Logging protest

The **Environmental Investigation Agency**, a nonprofit group based in Washington D.C., said Wednesday that it found Chinese makers of **Wal-Mart's**

wood products, including cribs, are using timber from a Russian region rife with illegal logging of protected forests. Wal-Mart said it is encouraging its suppliers to use "sustainable and ethical sources."

### Debit-card demand

The shift away from checks is accelerating, with consumers submitting more than two-thirds of all cash payments through debit cards and other electronic forms last year, according to a **Federal Reserve** study. Over the last three years, all types of electronic payments grew while check payments decreased, the study showed. Debit cards now surpass credit cards as the most frequently used type of electronic payment.

### China concerns

More than two-thirds of Americans say concerns over product safety have hurt their confidence in Chinese goods, according to a poll by the **Committee of 100**, a group of prominent Chinese-Americans.

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