

COMING TO WHOLE FOODS

Eco-toys for tots



By Kate Pastor
Special to amNewYork

Wood veggie-cutting sets? Hybrid toy cars? Finally, playtime for kids who want to grow up and be environmentalists.

The toys by ImagiPlay are nontoxic and environmentally friendly, and they will be sold at Whole Foods Market's stores starting Nov. 1. The company would not say for sure if the toys would show up in its New York stores.

Parents shopping at Whole Foods in Columbus Circle, however, said they would welcome the eco-toys.

"The environmentally friendly aspect is a nice bonus," said Amy Schindler, a mother of two. "But what's more important is that it's a nice wooden toy that doesn't make any noise and needs no batteries."

ImagiPlay has tripled its



sales since 2006, according to Barbera Aimes, founder and president of Colorado-based ImagiPlay.

"Recently there's just been such a wonderful newfound awareness in terms of how things are made," Aimes said.

That jump in sales came just after the toxic-toy scare of 2007, when lead and other chemicals were showing up in Chinese-manufactured products. Since then, more parents

are paying attention to what their kids play with.

Also, anything "green" these days is in demand.

"It's definitely a trend that's becoming more the norm," said Gareb Shamus, publisher of Toy Wishes magazine. "You have a lot of younger parents out there today who are just a lot more socially conscious of their impact on the environment."

The partnership with ImagiPlay fits in with

GREEN MONEY

Here's a look at sales in the organic market:

1990:	2008:
\$1 bil	\$25 bil*
U.S. sales	

Non-food organic sales more than doubled between 2003 and 2006

2003:	2006:
\$437	\$938
million	million

*Projected sales
Source: Barbara Haumann, spokeswoman for the Organic Trade Association

Whole Foods' philosophy, according to Cathy Cochran-Lewis, the national media-relations coordinator at Whole Foods.

"We believe this takes us one step further in our mission to support wise environmental practices' while offering children a unique and fun choice for children's toys," she wrote in an e-mail.