

# Environmental Labelling



As interest in the environment has grown, so has the demand for meaningful information to enable consumers to make informed choices. Organisations, either directly on products or by using promotional literature, regularly make environmental claims. Some companies provide useful consumer information, whilst others make claims that cannot be substantiated.

Over recent years, initiatives have been undertaken at national and international level, to develop labelling schemes that provide authoritative guidance and information. "Licencing" of such Ecolabels is only granted after a product or service is proven to meet transparent, published standards for environmental preferability, verified by a qualified, independent third party, and assessed over multiple environmental parameters (not just one single issue). The intention being that the ecolabels are an assurance to consumers and procurement professionals that a product or service is proven "green" and has high environmental values and integrity.

Eco-labelling covers all types of products and services and is used, and recognised, in many international countries.

### Global Ecolabelling Network

Established in 1994, the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN) is a non-profit network composed of some 29 ecolabel organisations throughout the world, representing nearly 60 countries. The stated goal of the Network is to further the exchange of information between national ecolabel organisations that operate "Type I" ecolabels, the strongest category, as defined by ISO 14024 (see below) "Blauer Engel" (Blue Angel), the German ecolabel, established in 1978, was the first of this kind. Ecolabels are "licensed" for use only. Members of GEN comprise:

- Australia – Good Environmental Choice Australia (Environmental Choice Australia)
- Brazil – Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas (ABNT-Environmental Quality) [Brazilian National Standards Organization]

- China – China Environmental United Certification Center (China Environmental Labelling)
- China – China Quality Certification Centre (China Environmentally Friendly Certification)
- Chinese Taipei – Environment and Development Foundation (Green Mark)
- EU – European Commission (EU Ecolabel)
- Germany – German Federal Environmental Agency (Blue Angel)
- Germany – TÜV Rheinland (Green Product Mark)
- Hong Kong – Green Council (Green Label)
- India – Confederation of Indian Industry (GreenPro)
- Indonesia – Ministry of Environment (Indonesian Ecolabel)
- Israel – Standards Institution of Israel (Israeli Green Label)
- Japan – Japan Environment Association (Eco Mark Program)
- Kazakhstan – International Academy of Ecology of the Republic of Kazakhstan (ECO-Labelling Program)
- Korea – Korea Environmental Industry & Technology Institute (Korea Eco-Label)
- Malaysia – SIRIM QAS International Sdn Bhd (SIRIM Eco-Labelling Scheme)
- New Zealand – New Zealand Ecolabelling Trust (Environmental Choice New Zealand)
- Nordic Countries – Nordic Ecolabelling Board (Nordic Swan)
- North America (U.S.A and Canada) – UL (Ecologo)
- North America (U.S.A.) – (Green Seal)
- Philippines – Philippine Center for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development (Green Choice Philippines)
- Russia – Ecological Union (Vitality Leaf)
- Singapore – Singapore Environment Council (Green Label Singapore)
- Sweden – Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (Good Environmental Choice)
- Sweden – TCO Development (TCO Certified)
- Thailand – Thailand Environment Institute (Green Label Thailand)
- Ukraine – All Ukrainian NGO Living Planet (Ecolabelling Program Ukraine)[4]

This fact sheet describes some of the more established initiatives that now impact on internationally traded paper and board products.

## EU - Eco-Label

Launched by the European Union in 1992, the European Eco-label is a voluntary scheme enabling European customers to identify green products across the EU, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The scheme endorses products made with minimum environmental impact, and is an element of an EU strategy promoting sustainable production and consumption.



Using a lifecycle approach and including criteria based on the production cycle of reuse, recycling, and disposal, the objectives of the scheme are to:

- promote the production, marketing and use of reduced environmental impact products;
- provide consumers with better information on the environmental impact of products.

Criteria have been designated to twenty four product groups, excluding food, drink and medicine. So far, criteria have been developed for the following paper product groups:

- Corrugated paper products
- Graphic Paper
- Printed Paper; Stationary paper and paper carrier bag products
- Tissue and Tissue Products

In each country participating in the EU Ecolabel, a national Competent Body is available to give advice on and process an application for an EU Ecolabel. As a prospective applicant, you should get in contact with the Competent Body from the country where you manufacture your product. For manufacturers in the UK, since leaving the EU there is not a UK Competent Body. As such you would need to go a Competent Body from one of the countries of the European Economic Area where your product or service is placed on the market.

Further details available from the EU Ecolabel Website: <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/>

## Germany - The Blue Angel (Der Blauer Engel)

The Blauer Engel (Blue Angel) is the oldest environment label in the world for products and services. It was created in 1977, under the initiative of the Federal Minister of the Interior. The label, owned by the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety, is administered by the Federal Environmental Agency and RAL Deutsches Institut für Gütesicherung und



Kennzeichnung e.V.

It is awarded to products and services that have minimal environmental impact and which do not impair fitness for use or safety criteria. Approximately 580 companies and 3,600 products are using the label in both Germany and abroad.

A number of paper products are covered by the Blue Angel, including toilet paper products, paper towels and kitchen roll.

Further details available from: [www.blauer-engel.de/en](http://www.blauer-engel.de/en)

## Holland - Stichting Milieukeur

The Milieukeur is independently managed by an organisation incorporating consumers, manufacturers, retail, government and environmental experts.



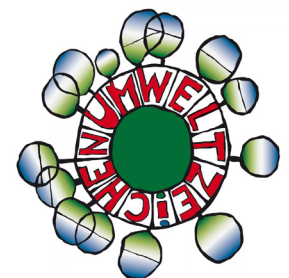
Any product can be awarded the Milieukeur if it is deemed less damaging to the environment compared to similar products. Specific criteria are set for individual product groups.

This label was developed in 1992 by the Dutch Ecolabel Foundation, and to date 32 products carry it. All product testing is done by independent certification organisations recognised by the Dutch Accreditation Council.

Further details available from: [www.milieukeur.com/275/home.html](http://www.milieukeur.com/275/home.html)

## Austria - Umweltzeichen Bäume

Created by the Ministry for the Environment, Youth and the Family in 1991, the criteria for this label cover both the product and the manufacturing process.



Labelling contracts are valid for a year. Products undergo life-cycle assessments to determine their environmental impact.

Further details available from the website: [www.umweltzeichen.at/de/home/stimmen-zum-umweltzeichen](http://www.umweltzeichen.at/de/home/stimmen-zum-umweltzeichen)

## Nordic White Swan (MILJÖMÄRKT)

This label was introduced by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1989. It is the only existing multinational scheme covering Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Finland. In order to gain the label, the manufacturing process has to undergo an environmental assessment. The green symbol is available for approximately 60 products.



In Sweden the Swan label is managed by SIS Ecolabelling, a non-profit organisation commissioned by the Swedish Government and parliament.

The label is usually valid for three years, after which the criteria are revised and the company involved must reapply for a licence.

Further details available from:  
[www.nordic-ecolabel.org/the-nordic-swan-ecolabel/](http://www.nordic-ecolabel.org/the-nordic-swan-ecolabel/)

## Good Environmental Choice (Bra Miljöval)

Established by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation in 1988 and revised in 1998. To be awarded this label, products must meet thresholds for carbon dioxide and sulphur emissions. Fluorescent Optical whiteners and de-inking agents must be readily biodegradable.



Good Environmental Choice

Energy efficiency is taken into account, and the energy used must come from a Good Environmental Choice source.

There are two types of label:

- for products primarily made from recycled fibre;
- products made from virgin fibre, part of it must have been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Further details available from:  
[www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/bra-miljoval/in-english/](http://www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/bra-miljoval/in-english/)

## USA - Green Seal Programme

Established in 1989, Green Seal is an independent, non-profit organisation aimed at achieving a healthier and cleaner environment.



By providing an authoritative environmental label to assist consumer choice, Green Seal aims to reduce air and water pollution, the amount of energy wasted and natural resources used, and to slow down ozone depletion.

Paper products covered under the Green Seal Programme include food packaging papers, printing and writing papers, paper towels and napkins,.

Further details available from: [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org)

## Environmental Choice Programmes

The Environmental Choice Programme has been taken on board by a number of countries, including:

### a) New Zealand

The New Zealand Ecolabelling Trust is a voluntary, multiple criteria based environmental labelling programme, initiated, owned and endorsed by the New Zealand Government. The scheme operates independently, although the government has financially supported the scheme, both directly and indirectly. Approximately \$1.35 million has now been spent.



The programme recognises manufacturers who reduce the environmental impacts of their products, and provides an independent guide for consumers who want to purchase products that are more environmentally sensitive.

Further details available from website:  
[www.enviro-choice.org.nz](http://www.enviro-choice.org.nz)

### b) Australia

The Australian "Good Environmental Choice", launched in November 2001, provides an environmental mark of recognition for a wide range of products to the community.



Further details available from website:  
<https://geca.eco/gecas-services/11477-2/>

## Eco label standards

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) recognises three types of environmental label:

**Type 1:** Labels issued by independent third parties, awarded to the best environmental performers in a number of product categories.

**Type 2:** Self-declared labels which manufacturers use to make claims about their products.

**Type 3:** A label licensed by independent organisations which provides information on the possible environmental impact of a product but leaves the consumer to exercise judgement as to which product is best.

ISO has developed the following standards regarding environmental labelling (further details can be found on [www.iso.org/obp/ui#iso:std:iso:14020:ed-2:v1:en](http://www.iso.org/obp/ui#iso:std:iso:14020:ed-2:v1:en)):

**ISO 14020 2000** - Establishes guiding principles for the development and use of environmental labels and declarations.

**ISO 14021 2016** - Environmental labels and declarations — Self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labelling).

**ISO 14024 2018** - Establishes the principles and procedures for developing Type 1 environmental labelling programmes. It includes the selection of product categories, environmental criteria and covers the certification procedures for awarding the label.

**ISO/TR 14025**, Environmental labels and declarations — Type III environmental declarations.

The European paper and board industry is increasingly aware of the need to provide environmental impact information to consumers. It is therefore involved in discussions aimed at producing a standardised approach to providing environmental impact information on a business-to-business basis.

The European Commission has initiated the development of **Product Environmental Footprint (PEF)**, a methodology that measures the environmental performance of any service or good throughout its Life Cycle (taking into account all the supply chain activities).

The PEF outlines an improved common way of all the steps and specific rules that are necessary to make the appropriate environmental performance calculations. However, the PEF methodology is still in progress with the European Commission further developing the details for the PEF Product Category Rules (also the PEF-PCRs) in order to finalise the PEF methodology. The European paper sector, through CEPI, has been involved in the development of the PEF PCRs for intermediate paper products.

The ultimate intention is for the PEF to be the mandatory standard for green claims within the EU.

**Revised: September 2021**

## Japan - Eco Mark

Following guidance from the Environment Agency, the Japan Environment Association (JEA) commenced the Eco Mark Programme in 1989. The Eco Mark Program disseminates information on the environmental aspects of products, it offers a choice of products with a lower environmental impact.



The Eco Mark is displayed on products that reduce the environmental impact caused by everyday activities. Products sold in Japan are allowed to bear the Eco Mark Products, regardless of their country of manufacture. Currently 5,618 products have been certified covering 59 product categories, including printing and sanitary papers. An applicant granted Eco Mark certification must pay a contract fee, effective for two years, to the JEA for the use of the Eco Mark.

Further details available from the website: [www.ecomark.jp/english/index.html](http://www.ecomark.jp/english/index.html)

## Thailand Green Label

The voluntary scheme promotes resource conservation, pollution reduction, and waste management. Initiated in October 1993 by the Thailand Business Council for Sustainable Development (TBCSD), it was formally launched the following August by the Thailand Environment Institute (TEI) in association with the Ministry of Industry.



- The Thai Green Label is awarded to specific products, which have minimum impact on the environment in comparison to similar products. The scheme applies to all products and services, excluding foods, drinks, and pharmaceuticals. Criteria has been developed for a number of paper products as defined in the following sub-categories: sanitary - toilet tissue, table napkins and paper towels;
- packaging - coated boxboard, uncoated boxboard, corrugating medium, kraft paper;
- printing and writing paper - printing paper, writing paper, paper for continuous forms, xerographic paper and mimeograph paper;
- gypsum liner board;
- fine paper products - envelopes, files, notebooks, books, greeting cards, shopping bags.

Further details available from website: [www.tei.or.th/greenlabel/en/](http://www.tei.or.th/greenlabel/en/)