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

*Marquages et déclarations environnementaux — Autodéclarations
environnementales (Étiquetage de type II)*

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ISO 14021:1999

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 3.

Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

International Standard ISO 14021 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Environmental labelling*.

Annex A of this International Standard is for information only.

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Introduction

The proliferation of environmental claims has created a need for environmental labelling standards which require that consideration be given to all relevant aspects of the life cycle of the product when such claims are developed.

Self-declared environmental claims may be made by manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers or anyone else likely to benefit from such claims. Environmental claims made in regard to products may take the form of statements, symbols or graphics on product or package labels, or in product literature, technical bulletins, advertising, publicity, telemarketing, as well as digital or electronic media, such as the Internet.

In self-declared environmental claims, the assurance of reliability is essential. It is important that verification is properly conducted to avoid negative market effects such as trade barriers or unfair competition, which can arise from unreliable and deceptive environmental claims. The evaluation methodology used by those who make environmental claims should be clear, transparent, scientifically sound and documented so that those who purchase or may potentially purchase products can be assured of the validity of the claims

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Environmental labels and declarations — Self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labelling)

1 Scope

This International Standard specifies requirements for self-declared environmental claims, including statements, symbols and graphics, regarding products. It further describes selected terms commonly used in environmental claims and gives qualifications for their use. This International Standard also describes a general evaluation and verification methodology for self-declared environmental claims and specific evaluation and verification methods for the selected claims in this standard.

This International Standard does not preclude, override, or in any way change, legally required environmental information, claims or labelling, or any other applicable legal requirements.

2 Normative references

The following normative documents contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this International Standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. However, parties to agreements based on this International Standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the normative documents indicated below. For undated references, the latest edition of the normative document referred to applies. Members of ISO and IEC maintain registers of currently valid International Standards.

ISO 7000, *Graphical symbols for use on equipment* — Index and synopsis.

ISO 14020:1998, *Environmental labels and declarations — General principles*.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this International Standard, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1 General terms

3.1.1 coproduct

any two or more products from the same unit process

[ISO 14041:1998]

3.1.2 environmental aspect

element of an organization's activities or products that can interact with the environment

3.1.3 environmental claim

statement, symbol or graphic that indicates an environmental aspect of a product, a component or packaging

NOTE An environmental claim may be made on product or packaging labels, through product literature, technical bulletins, advertising, publicity, telemarketing, as well as through digital or electronic media such as the Internet.

3.1.4**environmental claim verification**

confirmation of the validity of an environmental claim using specific predetermined criteria and procedures with assurance of data reliability

3.1.5**environmental impact**

any change to the environment, whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from an organization's activities or products

3.1.6**explanatory statement**

any explanation which is needed or given so that an environmental claim can be properly understood by a purchaser, potential purchaser or user of the product

3.1.7**functional unit**

quantified performance of a product system for use as a reference unit in a life cycle assessment study

[ISO 14040:1997]

3.1.8**life cycle**

consecutive and interlinked stages of a product system, from raw material acquisition or generation of natural resources to final disposal

[ISO 14040:1997]

3.1.9**material identification**

words, numbers or symbols used to designate composition of components of a product or packaging

NOTE 1 A material identification symbol is not considered to be an environmental claim.

NOTE 2 References [4] through [7] in the Bibliography give examples of International Standards, national standards and industry publications dealing with material identification symbols.

3.1.10**packaging**

material that is used to protect or contain a product during transportation, storage, marketing or use

NOTE For the purposes of this International Standard, the term "packaging" also includes any item that is physically attached to, or included with, a product or its container for the purpose of marketing the product or communicating information about the product.

3.1.11**product**

any goods or service

3.1.12**qualified environmental claim**

environmental claim which is accompanied by an explanatory statement that describes the limits of the claim

3.1.13**self-declared environmental claim**

environmental claim that is made, without independent third-party certification, by manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers or anyone else likely to benefit from such a claim

3.1.14 upgradability

characteristic of a product that allows its modules or parts to be separately upgraded or replaced without having to replace the entire product

3.1.15 waste

anything for which the generator or holder has no further use and which is discarded or is released to the environment

3.2 Selected terms commonly used in self-declared environmental claims

Requirements for the usage of the terms listed below, in the context of making an environmental claim, are given in clause 7.

Compostable	7.2.1
Degradable	7.3.1
Designed for disassembly	7.4.1
Extended life product	7.5.1
Recovered energy	7.6.1
Recyclable	7.7.1
Recycled content	7.8.1.1 a)
Pre-consumer material	7.8.1.1 a) 1)
Post-consumer material	7.8.1.1 a) 2)
Recycled material	7.8.1.1 b)
Recovered [reclaimed] material	7.8.1.1 c)
Reduced energy consumption	7.9.1
Reduced resource use	7.10.1
Reduced water consumption	7.11.1
Reusable	7.12.1.1
Refillable	7.12.1.2
Waste reduction	7.13.1

4 Objective of self-declared environmental claims

The overall goal of environmental labels and declarations is, through communication of verifiable, accurate information, that is not misleading, on environmental aspects of products, to encourage demand for and supply of those products that cause less stress on the environment, thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continual environmental improvement.

The objective of this International Standard is to harmonize the use of self-declared environmental claims. It is anticipated that benefits will be:

- a) accurate and verifiable environmental claims that are not misleading;
- b) increased potential for market forces to stimulate environmental improvements in production, processes and products;
- c) prevention or minimization of unwarranted claims;
- d) reduction in marketplace confusion;

- e) facilitation of international trade; and
- f) increased opportunity for purchasers, potential purchasers and users of the product to make more informed choices.

5 Requirements applying to all self-declared environmental claims

5.1 General

The requirements set out in clause 5 shall apply to any self-declared environmental claim made by a claimant, whether it is one of the selected claims referred to in clause 7 or any other environmental claim.

5.2 Relationship to ISO 14020

In addition to the requirements of this International Standard, the principles set out in ISO 14020 shall apply. Where this International Standard provides more specific requirements than ISO 14020, such specific requirements shall be followed.

5.3 Vague or non-specific claims

An environmental claim that is vague or non-specific or which broadly implies that a product is environmentally beneficial or environmentally benign shall not be used. Therefore, environmental claims such as "environmentally safe", "environmentally friendly", "earth friendly", "non-polluting", "green", "nature's friend" and "ozone friendly" shall not be used.

NOTE This list is illustrative and not exhaustive.

5.4 Claims of "... free"

An environmental claim of "... free" shall only be made when the level of the specified substance is no more than that which would be found as an acknowledged trace contaminant or background level.

NOTE Attention is drawn to the requirements of 5.7 k) and 5.7 p).

5.5 Claims of sustainability

The concepts involved in sustainability are highly complex and still under study. At this time there are no definitive methods for measuring sustainability or confirming its accomplishment. Therefore, no claim of achieving sustainability shall be made.

5.6 Use of explanatory statements

Self-declared environmental claims shall be accompanied by an explanatory statement if the claim alone is likely to result in misunderstanding. An environmental claim shall only be made without an explanatory statement if it is valid in all foreseeable circumstances with no qualifications.

5.7 Specific requirements

Self-declared environmental claims and any explanatory statements are subject to all requirements in 5.7. Such claims, including any explanatory statement:

- a) shall be accurate and not misleading;
- b) shall be substantiated and verified;
- c) shall be relevant to that particular product, and used only in an appropriate context or setting;
- d) shall be presented in a manner that clearly indicates whether the claim applies to the complete product, or only to a product component or packaging, or to an element of a service;

- e) shall be specific as to the environmental aspect or environmental improvement which is claimed;
- f) shall not be restated using different terminology to imply multiple benefits for a single environmental change;
- g) shall be unlikely to result in misinterpretation;
- h) shall be true not only in relation to the final product but also shall take into consideration all relevant aspects of the product life cycle in order to identify the potential for one impact to be increased in the process of decreasing another;

NOTE This does not necessarily mean that a life cycle assessment should be undertaken.

- i) shall be presented in a manner which does not imply that the product is endorsed or certified by an independent third-party organization when it is not;
- j) shall not, either directly or by implication, suggest an environmental improvement which does not exist, nor shall it exaggerate the environmental aspect of the product to which the claim relates;
- k) shall not be made if, despite the claim being literally true, it is likely to be misinterpreted by purchasers or is misleading through the omission of relevant facts;
- l) shall only relate to an environmental aspect that either exists or is likely to be realized, during the life of the product;
- m) shall be presented in a manner that clearly indicates that the environmental claim and explanatory statement should be read together. The explanatory statement shall be of reasonable size and in reasonable proximity to the environmental claim it accompanies;
- n) shall, if a comparative assertion of environmental superiority or improvement is made, be specific and make clear the basis for the comparison. In particular, the environmental claim shall be relevant in terms of how recently any improvement was made;
- o) shall, if based on a pre-existing but previously undisclosed aspect, be presented in a manner that does not lead purchasers, potential purchasers and users of the product to believe that the claim is based on a recent product or process modification;
- p) shall not be made where they are based on the absence of ingredients or features which have never been associated with the product category;
- q) shall be reassessed and updated as necessary to reflect changes in technology, competitive products or other circumstances that could alter the accuracy of the claim; and
- r) shall be relevant to the area where the corresponding environmental impact occurs.

NOTE A process-related claim can be made anywhere, so long as the environmental impact occurs in the area where the production process is located. The size of the area will be determined by the nature of the impact.

5.8 Use of symbols to make environmental claims

5.8.1 When a self-declared environmental claim is made, the use of a symbol is optional.

5.8.2 Symbols used to make an environmental claim should be simple, easily reproducible and capable of being positioned and sized to suit the product to which the symbol is likely to be applied.

5.8.3 Symbols used for one type of environmental claim should be easily distinguishable from other symbols, including symbols for other environmental claims.

5.8.4 A symbol used to express implementation of an environmental management system shall not be used in such a way that it could be misunderstood as an environmental symbol indicating the environmental aspects of a product.

5.8.5 Natural objects shall be used only if there is a direct and verifiable link between the object and the benefit claimed.

NOTE There are many advantages to be gained by the use of the same symbol to denote the same environmental aspect on competing products. As new symbols are developed, claimants are encouraged to adopt a consistent approach and not to discourage the use of the same symbol to denote the same environmental aspect by others. In selection of a new symbol, due consideration should be given so as not to violate the intellectual property rights (e.g. registered designs) of third parties.

5.9 Other information or claims

5.9.1 Words, numbers or symbols may be used in addition to environmental symbols to communicate information such as material identification, disposal instructions or hazard warnings.

5.9.2 Words, numbers or symbols used for non-environmental claim purposes shall not be used in a manner that is likely to be misunderstood as making an environmental claim.

5.9.3 An environmental symbol as described in 5.10 shall not be modified to relate the symbol to a specific brand, company or corporate position.

5.10 Specific symbols

5.10.1 General

The selection of specific symbols for this International Standard is based on their existing wide use or recognition. This should not be taken to imply that environmental claims represented by these symbols are superior to other environmental claims. Only the Mobius loop is included at present. Other specific symbols which are not provided for in this International Standard will be introduced at an appropriate time.

5.10.2 The Mobius loop

5.10.2.1 The Mobius loop is a symbol in the shape of three twisted chasing arrows forming a triangle. Whenever it is used to make an environmental claim, the design shall meet the graphical requirements for ISO 7000, Symbol No. 1135. There should, however, be enough contrast so that the symbol is clear and distinguishable. Some examples of the form of the Mobius loop are provided in Figure 1. Clause 7 provides detailed requirements concerning the use and applicability of the Mobius loop.

5.10.2.2 The Mobius loop may apply to the product or the packaging. If there is any potential for confusion about whether it applies to the product or the packaging, the symbol shall be accompanied by an explanatory statement.

5.10.2.3 If a symbol is used for claims of recyclable or recycled content, then that symbol shall be the Mobius loop subject to the requirements of 7.7 and 7.8.

5.10.2.4 The Mobius loop shall only be used for claims of recycled content and recyclable, as described in 7.7 and 7.8.

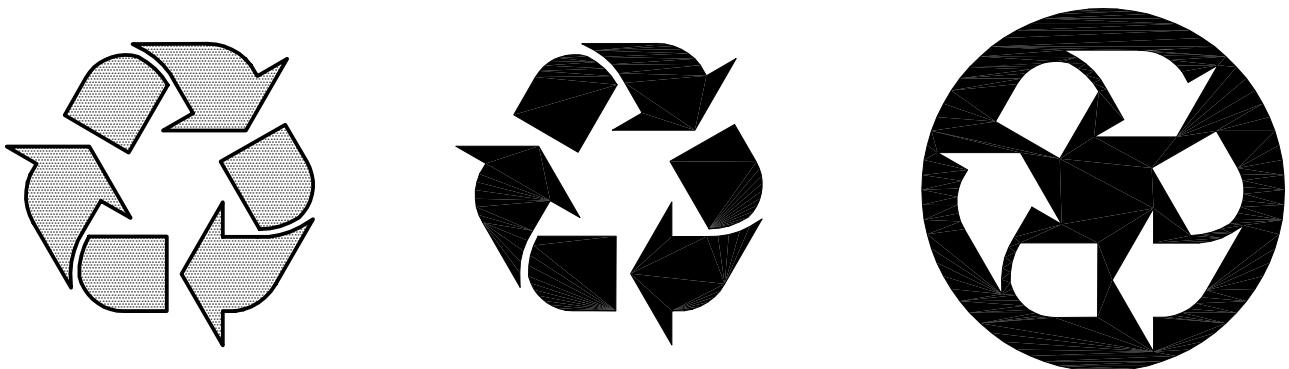


Figure 1 — Examples of the Mobius loop

6 Evaluation and claim verification requirements

6.1 Responsibilities of the claimant

The claimant shall be responsible for evaluation and provision of data necessary for the verification of self-declared environmental claims.

6.2 Reliability of evaluation methodology

6.2.1 Prior to making the claim, evaluation measures shall be implemented to achieve reliable and reproducible results necessary to verify the claim.

6.2.2 The evaluation shall be fully documented and the documentation retained by the claimant for the purpose of the information disclosure referred to in 6.5.2. This shall be for the period that the product is on the market, and for a reasonable period thereafter, taking into account the life of the product.

NOTE For guidance on reproducibility and reliability, see references [8] through [11] in the Bibliography.

6.3 Evaluation of comparative claims

6.3.1 Comparative claims shall be evaluated against one or more of the following:

- a) an organization's own prior process;
- b) an organization's own prior product;
- c) another organization's process; or
- d) another organization's product.

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The comparison shall only be made:
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- using a published standard or recognized test method (as set out in 6.4); and
- against comparable products serving similar functions, supplied by the same or another producer, currently or recently in the same marketplace.

6.3.2 Comparative claims involving the environmental aspects of the product's life cycle shall be:

- a) quantified and calculated using the same units of measurement;
- b) based on the same functional unit; and
- c) calculated over an appropriate time interval, typically twelve months.

6.3.3 Comparative claims may be based on:

- a) percentages, in which case they should be expressed as absolute differences; or

NOTE The following example is provided to clarify how relative measurements could be handled:

For a change from 10 % to 15 % recycled content, the absolute difference is 15 % – 10 % = 5 %, in which case, a claim of an additional 5 % recycled content could be made; however, a claim of 50 % increase, while accurate, could be misleading.

- b) absolute (measured) values, in which case they should be expressed as relative improvements.

NOTE The following example is provided to clarify how absolute measurements could be handled: