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

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

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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.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2. www.iso.org/directives

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received. www.iso.org/patents

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [Foreword - Supplementary information](#)

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Environmental labelling*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 14021:1999), of which it constitutes a minor revision. It also incorporates the Amendment ISO 14021:1999/Amd 1:2011.

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 ensured 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 International 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 documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 7000, *Graphical symbols for use on equipment — Registered symbols*

ISO 14020, *Environmental labels and declarations — General principles*

ISO/TS 14067, *Greenhouse gases — Carbon footprint of products — Requirements and guidelines for quantification and communication*
<https://www.iso.org/standard/5726cffb-f149-4c4c-8511-ccb1008fc7cc/sist-iso-14021-2016>

3 Terms and definitions

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

3.1 General terms

3.1.1

biomass

material of biological origin, excluding material embedded in geological formations or transformed to fossilised material and excluding peat

Note 1 to entry: This includes organic material (both living and dead) from above and below ground, e.g. trees, crops, grasses, tree litter, algae, animals and waste of biological origin, e.g. manure.

3.1.2

co-product

two or more products from the same unit process

[SOURCE: ISO 14040:2006, 3.10, modified]

3.1.3

environmental aspect

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

3.1.4

environmental claim

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

Note 1 to entry: 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.

3.1.5

environmental claim verification

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

3.1.6

environmental impact

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

3.1.7

explanatory statement

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

3.1.8

functional unit

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

[SOURCE: ISO 14040:2006, 3.20, modified]

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3.1.9

greenhouse gas GHG

gaseous constituent of the atmosphere, both natural and anthropogenic, that absorbs and emits radiation at specific wavelengths within the spectrum of infrared radiation emitted by the Earth's surface, the atmosphere and clouds

Note 1 to entry: GHGs include, among others, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆).

Note 2 to entry: A list of recognized GHGs is provided by IPCC, *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis*, Chapter 2, Table 2.14.

3.1.10

life cycle

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

[SOURCE: ISO 14040:2006, 3.1]

3.1.11

material identification

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

Note 1 to entry: A material identification symbol is not considered to be an environmental claim.

Note 2 to entry: References^[10] to^[13] in the Bibliography give examples of International Standards, national standards and industry publications dealing with material identification symbols.

3.1.12 offsetting

mechanism for compensating for the carbon footprint of a product through the prevention of the release of, reduction in, or removal of, an equivalent amount of GHG emissions in a process outside the boundary of the product system

EXAMPLE External investment in renewable energy technologies; energy efficiency measures; afforestation/reforestation.

3.1.13 packaging

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

Note 1 to entry: 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.

3.1.14 product

any goods or service

[SOURCE: ISO 14040:2006, 3.9, modified]

3.1.15 qualified environmental claim

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

3.1.16 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

3.1.17 sustainable development

development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: Sustainable development is about integrating the goals of a high quality of life, health and prosperity with social justice and maintaining the earth's capacity to support life in all its diversity. These social, economic and environmental goals are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Sustainable development can be treated as a way of expressing the broader expectations of society as a whole.

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.23]

3.1.18 upgradability

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

3.1.19 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

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4 Objective of self-declared environmental claims

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

- accurate and verifiable environmental claims that are not misleading;
- increased potential for market forces to stimulate environmental improvements in production, processes and products;
- prevention or minimization of unwarranted claims;
- reduction in marketplace confusion;
- facilitation of international trade; and
- increased opportunities 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.