

Sustainable Product Claims 2.0

A guideline for the transparent communication of sustainability claims





Summary

When marketing products, statements are made as to their origin, constituents, properties, manufacture and packaging. Increasingly often, these product claims are connected with sustainability messages. As a result of growing legal requirements and customer expectations, a sensitive approach to this issue is needed.

The Sustainable Product Claims 2.0 Guideline aims to support company marketing and communications experts in complying with the strict standards for sustainability related product communication.

It also serves to foster a more uniform understanding of terms by both companies and consumers. The reference document was developed in collaboration with six retail and industrial companies, with contributions from other experts.

The results of an exclusive study give the Guideline's readers insights into the way consumers understand sustainable product claims. They show that there has been a general increase in the clarity and relevance to purchasing of sustainable product claims since the comparable study conducted in 2014. At the same, it was found that there is a high degree of variability between the individual terms. In order to achieve transparency in communication, the Guideline therefore recommends adhering to principles such as formulating targeted advertising messages and providing background information in support of individual product claims.

The heart of the document is a glossary of 55 sustainable product claims arranged in topic clusters such as "Climate", "Recycling and recovery" and "Constituents". An agreed definition, recommendations for use, examples of use and the associated labels and certificates are summarised for each claim. In addition, readers are provided with insights into current consumer understanding.



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Background and purpose of the guideline



On course to ensuring uniform sustainability messages at the point of sale

“You cannot not communicate.”¹ This also applies at product level: **the look and feel of packaging and the statements - or claims - made about a product send messages to consumers.** Climate-neutral, regional, biodegradable – many terms are used to extol a product’s sustainability. Product claims relate to how goods or services are produced, packaged, distributed, used, consumed and/or disposed of.² With the growing relevance of sustainability to consumers’ purchasing decisions, the use of these kinds of product claims is steadily increasing. However, there is one challenge: the large number of different messages. Companies with a leading role in sustainability therefore face difficulties differentiating themselves from their competitors and less ambitious companies are able to “hide” behind claims.

The growing communication of sustainability features is being accompanied by an increase in the inappropriate use of sustainable product claims. For this reason, companies have repeatedly faced allegations of greenwashing in recent years. Various court rulings have prohibited the use of certain claims in some cases or required advertising to include additional information.³ The incorrect use of sustainable product claims resulted in direct costs and reputational damage to companies which could have been avoided by using the claim correctly or not at all.



In order to ensure comparability, the legal framework for sustainability-related product communication is being continuously expanded and amended.

Whereas existing laws and guidelines govern product communication and prohibit misleading advertising in particular,⁴ further regulation is planned for sustainability communication. With its Green Claims Initiative, the EU is reacting to the growing significance and use of sustainability-related product communication and the different scope for interpretation. A first draft is planned for the end of 2022 at the earliest. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure that, within the EU, claims about the environmental impact of products are reliable, comparable and verifiable and avoid misleading the consumer.⁵ Companies should monitor developments in this respect and comply with the resulting regulations in order to minimise potential business risks because legal requirements will always have precedence over guidelines.

The Sustainable Product Claims 2.0 Guideline is aimed at fostering a more uniform understanding of sustainable product claims. The aim is to assist companies in making transparent claims and help consumers understand them correctly and take informed decisions. This requires the widespread and uniform use of identical claims. Certain aspects should be considered when using claims (see page 11: Principles of sustainable product communication) in order to ensure greater transparency and thus facilitate customers' understanding.

This version of the Guideline is based on the first version from 2014 which has been revised to reflect the evolution of the terms connected with sustainability and all the changes that have occurred in this context. **The Guideline is intended to serve as a joint reference document for sustainability-related product communication between business partners (B2B) and between businesses and consumers (B2C).** It provides recommendations and brings together the definitions and requirements of leading global, European and German standards and laws. The approach taken applies across all industries. However, given the broad range of products and the associated use of sustainable claims, the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector is most frequently represented.

While many of the terms which required explanation in the first version of the Guideline are now in common use, others are still rarely used or contribute to customer confusion. **For this reason, the new version of the Guideline focuses clearly on terms which are particularly relevant in practice and delivers clarity as to whether and how they can contribute to transparent communication.**



Findings relating to **consumer understanding** of product claims



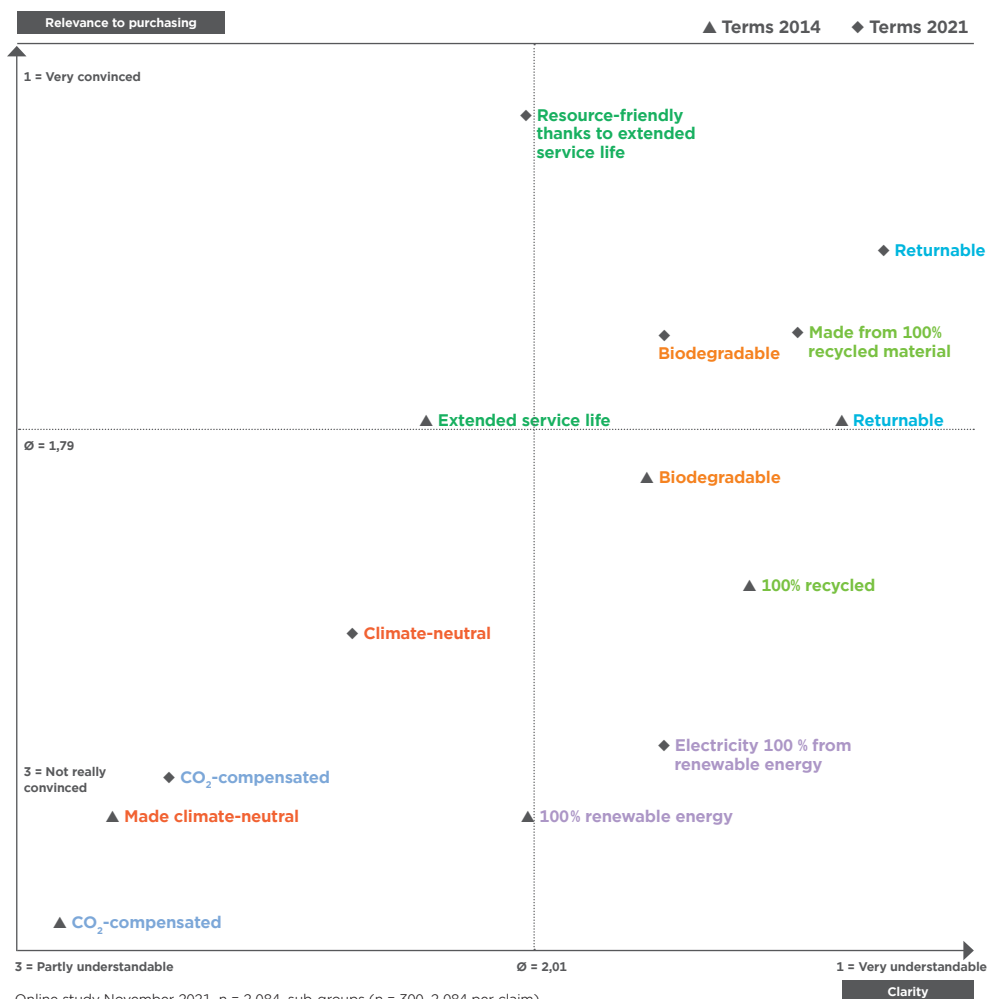
What's important is what the customer understands!

For product communication to be effective, it is important that the consumer understands the content. That is why research findings about consumers' understanding of individual terms were considered in developing this Guideline.

A study commissioned by GS1 Germany and carried out by HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management **examined consumers' current understanding of individual terms**. The results were then compared with those from the 2014 study which had a similar structure.⁶

Comparison of the results obtained in 2014 and 2021 show an increase in the clarity and relevance to purchasing of all the terms considered. There are few differences in understanding based on sociodemographic criteria. Irrespective of gender and education, understanding has improved across all age groups. Understanding is slightly lower in the 14 to 17 age group (88% of this group rated the terms as clear or better; the value was 94% across all age groups). Understanding improved further with rising income (90% for those in poor financial circumstances, increasing to 96% for those in good financial circumstances).

Ranking by clarity and relevance to purchasing – compared with 2014

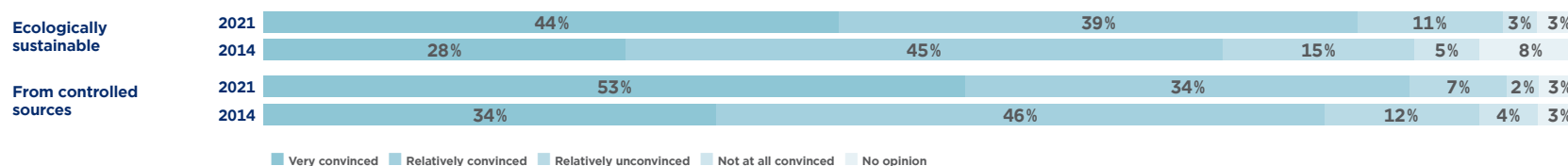


Online study November 2021, n = 2,084, sub-groups (n = 300-2,084 per claim)
Excluding 5 = "No opinion"

Due to developments in the practical use of the terms, their exact formulation may vary between the two survey periods.
The claims have been assigned colours for greater legibility.



Data concerning relevance to purchasing*



The assessment of clarity and relevance to purchasing varies depending on the terms.

Comparison over the years shows that especially terms like “CO₂-compensated” and “climate-neutral” are judged to be only “partly understandable” (see graphic on page 8). Other terms such as “returnable” or “made from 100% recycled material” are considered “understandable”. Compared with 2014, there has been a massive leap in understanding of the terms associated with recycled materials. This might be due to the good communication and information surrounding plastics in recent years. To ensure clear communication, companies should consider customers’ prior knowledge of the various issues.

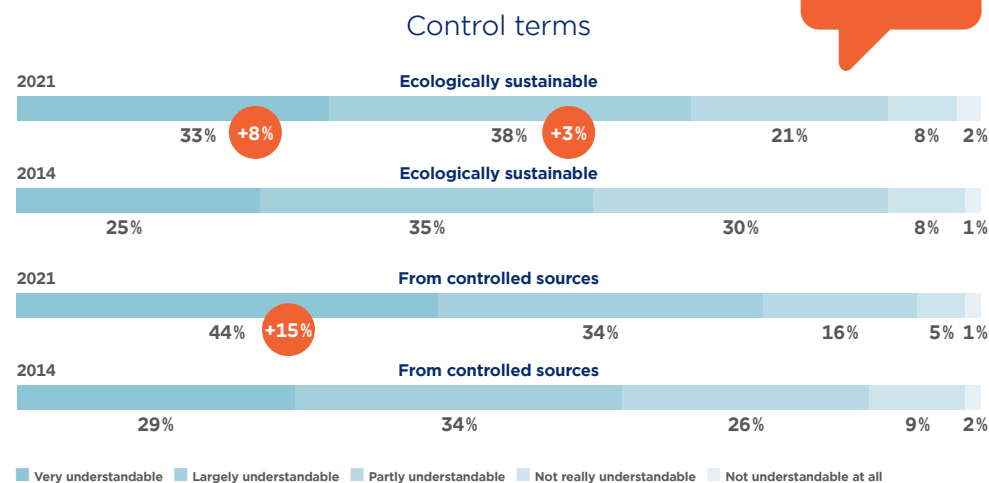
In those areas where little clarity has been achieved in the past, more transparent communication is necessary.

The study findings relating to the clarity of terms and their relevance to purchasing not only reveal which product claims are generally suitable for product communication but also provide indications as to which terms require better explanation in order to improve consumer understanding and make them more relevant to purchasing decisions. Generally speaking, the survey respondents saw a need for more information about labels and quality marks. Just 25% of respondents said they were familiar with their meaning.

The study indicates the importance of standardised and comparable product claims in responsible sustainability communication. **For years, consumers have been informed by the claims used, even though the content of some of these has little basis.** The study design included two control terms: “from controlled sources” and “ecologically sustainable”. Both terms are often used as product claims even though they are not recommendable.⁷ The study shows that respondents feel they understand these terms and that they are relevant to purchasing. In the period from 2014 and 2021, the clarity

of these terms has increased like that of the other terms. Companies which use these terms without any detailed explanation or verification exploit consumers’ lack of knowledge – whether consciously or not – and are guilty of misleading consumers.

Comparison with the 2014 study*



Increase in clarity compared with 2014

* Rounding of the percentages shown may mean that their sum does not always total 100%.



Principles of sustainability-related product communication



Principles of sustainability-related product communication

There are seven principles to support the targeted and transparent communication of sustainable product benefits. Generally speaking, misleading statements should be avoided. In consumer-facing communication, it is always advisable to back claims about product properties with the relevant labels or certificates, if they exist.

1. Factual basis: The use of sustainability claims should always be supported by correct information based on data and/or facts, i.e. the underlying data must be reliable and true.

2. Use of verifiable methods: Product claims should be underpinned by standardised and (scientifically) recognised test methods (e.g. certificates, calculation methods) in order to ensure their comparability and verifiability. The planned EU Green Claims Initiative will be aligned with this principle and will apply a harmonised and standardised process to verify product claims on the basis of facts. In this context, the Initiative refers to the methods for determining the ecological footprint of products and organisations.⁸

3. Holistic approach: To enhance the informational value of a product claim, the entire life cycle of the product has to be considered. This can be done by way of a life cycle assessment. If a claim refers to only a certain phase of the life cycle, this must be indicated in detail.

4. Availability of background information: The credibility of the product claim made can be increased by ensuring that all the information relevant to the claim (e.g. basic assumptions, calculation methods, criteria considered and data sources) can be accessed by potential customers and any other stakeholders. The threshold for this background information should be as low as possible.⁹

5. No implicit advertising: Implicit advertising, i.e. advertising using claims based on legal requirements, is prohibited.¹⁰

6. Formulation of targeted advertising messages: Product claims must be specific, exact and appropriate in their formulation. Very generalised messaging should be avoided. Exaggerations or assertions should not be used.¹¹

7. Relevance and materiality: There is a risk that communication measures based on non-material product features will be perceived as greenwashing. Hotspot analyses can provide indications as to which challenges must be prioritised and are most suitable for communication.¹²

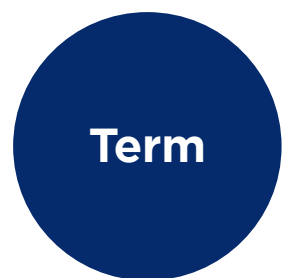
The principles show that many different aspects must be considered and balanced when advertising the sustainability performance of products. In this Guideline, consumer understanding serves as the measure for assessing product claims. In each case, the overall impression is considered. As well as the product claim, factors such as appearance, materials and imagery are critical.¹³ The terms, definitions and communication advice contained in the following glossary are an important aid but provide no protection against public criticism or legal sanctions. In critical cases, legal review by a specialist lawyer is always advisable.



Glossary with definitions and recommendations for use



Structure of the definitions




Definition: Most of the sustainability claims in this Guideline are neither defined uniformly nor protected. They are based on (often very elaborate) definitions produced by various international organisations such as the International Standards Organization (ISO) or the Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN). These definitions were formulated clearly and simply but are well-founded and meaningful at the same time.

Recommendation for use

- Yes** A brief statement about the general suitability for product communication (see the following page for an explanation of the options) is followed by a recommendation for use.
- Limited**
- No**

↑↓ Cross-references

 **Further information**
Further information about the terms and the context for their use is provided in the appendix. The supplementary documents are aligned with established and recognised national and international standards and laws.

Examples of use

The examples of use are examples of claims in which the term is used specifically in line with the recommendation for use. They are based on the communication used in retail outlets, on product packaging or on product websites and are provided as aids.



Verification

Product claims can be supported in part by criteria and control systems which are listed as possible forms of verification. The use of a recognised label or the specification of an established standard is particularly advisable in the case of terms which are not protected or defined by law. The glossary includes examples of relevant certification systems and labels but makes no assessment of these. An evaluation can be found at, for example, Label-Online.¹⁴



Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Poor

Check of understanding

Medium

Credibility

Good

Relevance to purchasing

Very good



The assessment of a term's suitability for use in product communication is based on which additional information is provided:

Option 1: "The term is suitable for use in product communication":

In this case, recommendations are provided for the term's use in sustainability-related product communication. In addition, further advice is given in connection with the use of the claim. As well as further information about certificates to verify a claim (verification), examples of the term's use for specific products are also presented to illustrate the use on product packaging/at the point of sale.

Option 2: "The term has LIMITED suitability for use in product communication":

If the term has only limited suitability for use in communication, a reason for this is given and the conditions defined for its use in the specific context. As in the case of option 1, the relevant verification and examples of use are shown.

Option 3: "The term is NOT recommended for use in product communication":

In this case, a reason is given as to why the term is not suitable for communication. There is no need for verification and examples of use.

Option 4: "The term is NOT suitable for use in product communication but may be used at other levels":

Some of the terms included in the glossary are not used in product claims but may be customary in the context of sustainability communication, e.g. in corporate communications (e.g. "biodiversity"). This serves to raise awareness among stakeholders and provide them with information, thus facilitating greater differentiation. No verification or examples of use are listed for these terms.

Some terms in the Glossary also reference current study results about consumer understanding where available. The following matrix is applied to the terms used in the survey.

Clarity	Check of understanding	Credibility	Relevance to purchasing
Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Good	Good	Good	Good
Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good

- **Clarity** was measured on a scale ranging from "very clear" to "not clear at all". This is an assessment made by the respective respondent.
- The **Check of understanding** is based on an analysis of the consumer responses to open questions. In order to identify opinions and core statements, the respondents' answers were coded. In the "Check of understanding" column, the core statements assessed in the highest category of "understood" were subsumed under the individual analyses of the terms. Despite the uniform approach, the subjective influence of the researchers as a result of coding cannot be ruled out.
- **Credibility** was measured on a scale ranging from "entirely correct" to "absolutely incorrect".
- The **Relevance to purchasing** is based on a scale ranging from "very convinced" to "no opinion".



Glossary topic clusters

Sustainability in general	Climate	Biodiversity	Recycling & recovery	Materials & packaging	Constituents	Water	Animal welfare	Social aspects
Ecological Organic Eco Environmentally friendly Environmentally friendly supply chains Sustainable Sustainable procurement Regional product Natural Untreated	Carbon footprint CO ₂ -compensated Compensation of greenhouse gas emissions Climate-neutral Environmentally neutral Climate-positive Renewable energy Energy efficiency	Biodiversity/contribution to biodiversity Diversity of species Ecological agriculture Sustainable forestry	Recycled content/recyclate Recycled materials/components (From) XX% rPET, rPET Post-consumer recycled material (PCR) Recyclable Circular Refurbished Can be dismantled/modular construction Extended product life/resource-friendly thanks to extended service life Repair-friendly Biodegradable Compostable	Returnable Refillable Reusable Resource-friendly Waste-avoiding/waste-reducing Zero waste product Bio-based plastic Renewable raw materials	Free from.../no... Vegetarian Vegan Seasonal Made from regional/local raw materials Biodegradable	Water footprint Water consumption, direct & indirect	No animal testing Farming method Sustainable fishery	Fair trade Socially compatible supply chains



Sustainability in general

At corporate level, sustainability means operating with a view to the future and taking responsibility for humankind and the environment at all levels. This primarily impacts a company's core business and, therefore, its products. In order to operate as sustainably as possible at this level, it is important to be familiar with the entire value chain and take the measures needed to optimise this in respect of ecological, social and economic aspects. Consumer communication is an important tool for drawing attention to more sustainable products and supporting more sustainable purchasing decisions. Since sustainability is a very diverse issue, it is not possible to clearly assign all the product claims used in this context to the clusters. For this reason, these usually more general terms are found under "Sustainability in general".



Ecological

“Ecological” describes products which are environmentally compatible in terms of their production, use and disposal. In the case of foodstuffs, minimum legal requirements must be observed which encompass the following principles:

- Environmentally friendly practices
- A high degree of diversity
- The protection of natural resources
- The application of high animal welfare standards*

Example of use



“Our grain is produced in accordance with the principles of ecological agriculture such as:

- no chemical fertilisers/crop protection products
- promotion of sustainable soil fertility
- no genetic engineering processes”

Verification



Examples: Bioland | Demeter | German organic label | EU organic label | Blue Angel | Naturland | EU Ecolabel | Green Button

Recommendation for use

Yes

Food

This term is suitable for use in food product communication, provided legal requirements are observed. It is of limited suitability for non-food product communication.

Limited

Non-food

In the EU, foodstuffs may only be labelled “eco” or “ecological” if they satisfy and are certified to the minimum standards for organic products specified by the EU Organic Regulation. In the case of non-food products, it may only be used if it is justified by a substantial reduction in a product’s key environmental impacts and verified by an appropriate label.



Cross-references

organic; eco; ecological agriculture; environmentally friendly



Further information



Organic

“Organic” agricultural products limit the impact of human activity on the environment to a minimum. Key principles include (minimum requirements, depending on the label):

- The use of chemical pesticides, synthetic fertilisers, antibiotics and similar substances is greatly restricted.
- Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are prohibited.
- Local resources are used appropriately, e.g. farmyard manure as fertiliser.*

Examples of use

“Organic orange blossom and almond moisturising cream*
*organic constituents make up X% of the finished product.”



Verification

Examples for food:
Bioland | Demeter | EU organic label | Naturland

Examples for natural cosmetics:
Natrue label | COSMOS standard

Examples for textiles:
GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) |
Naturtextil IVN-certified BEST



Recommendation for use

Yes

This term is suitable for use in product communication, provided legal requirements are observed.

In the EU, foodstuffs may only be labelled as organic if they satisfy and are certified to the minimum standards for organic products specified by the EU Organic Regulation. For a non-food product to be referred to as organic, it must satisfy the following requirements of the standard:

- Only agricultural raw materials can be referred to as organic, e.g. the cotton but not the T-shirt.
- Organic constituents must be clearly recognisable and their content in the overall product identified.
- A significant proportion of the product must originate from certified organic production.
- The product may contain no or only small amounts of synthetic chemicals.

Note:

Used in connection with textiles, cosmetics and toiletries, organic is not a protected term.



Cross-references

ecological; eco



Further information



Eco

“Eco” may stand for ecological, economical or both (eco-efficiency). While it is often used in a more technical context as a synonym for economical or eco-efficient, it almost always implies a comparatively low environmental impact.*

Recommendation for use

Yes

Food

This term is suitable for use in food product communication, provided legal requirements are observed.

It is of limited suitability for non-food product communication.

Limited

Non-food

The intended meaning (ecological, economical, both) must be clearly recognisable. If the statement refers to ecological benefits, the type and extent of the benefit must be specified. In this case, the product should display a significant environmental benefit over a comparable product with the same function. In the EU, foodstuffs may only be labelled as organic if they satisfy and are certified to the minimum standards for organic products specified by the EU Organic Regulation.

Example of use

“The washing machine’s ECO programme uses low temperatures and reduces energy consumption by X%.”



Verification

Examples: Blue Angel | Demeter | EU organic label | EU Ecolabel



Cross-references

organic; ecological;
environmentally friendly



Further information

* Source: French Consumer Council (2012): “A practical guide to environmental claims for traders and consumers”



Environmentally friendly

“Environmentally friendly” designates objects and processes which impact the environment as little as possible.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not suitable for use in product communication because it is too unspecific and untransparent. According to DIN EN ISO 14021, no claims may be made which present a product as beneficial for the environment or environmentally compatible. Such claims include “environmentally friendly”, “nature-friendly” and “environmentally safe”.



Cross-references

ecological; eco;
environmentally friendly supply chains



Further information

* Source: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/de/worterbuch/englisch/environmentally-friendly>, Umwelt & Co. „umweltfreundlich“



Environmentally friendly supply chains

“Environmentally friendly supply chains” are supplier networks which avoid negative environmental impacts and comply with, for example, environmental standards. The aspects considered include the use of hazardous substances and chemicals, the use of raw materials, disposal, greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, use of water resources and waste water treatment, air pollution and biodiversity.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not recommended for use in product communication. However, it is used in corporate communication if it is explained in detail and verified.



Cross-references

socially compatible supply chains;
environmentally friendly; sustainable
procurement; fair trade



Further information

* Source: UN Global Compact Office (2015): “Supply Chain Sustainability – A Practical Guide for Continuous Improvement”



Sustainable

According to sustainable development guidelines, “sustainable” characterises the use of resources in a way which meets the needs of present and future generations without exceeding the Earth’s capacity and jeopardising its sensitive ecosystems. In this way, social, ecological and economic aspects are considered.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not suitable for use in product communication because it is too unspecific and untransparent. This also applies to the individual sustainability pillars. Terms such as ecologically sustainable, socially sustainable and economically sustainable contradict the underlying principle of integrated sustainability and are therefore also not suitable for use in corporate and product communication. In accordance with DIN EN ISO 14021, no statements may be made about the achievement of sustainability if this cannot be measured objectively.



Further information



Sustainable procurement

“Sustainable procurement” refers to the purchase of products and services on the basis of environmental, social and economic aspects from production through to disposal. It is based on reliable and effective labelling or audit systems, e.g. eco labels and audits, which can be verified by independent third parties.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not recommended for use in product communication. However, it is used in corporate communication. In accordance with DIN EN ISO 14021, no statements may be made about the achievement of sustainability if this cannot be measured objectively. Raw material or product claims should refer to the elimination of key sustainability challenges (hotspots) in the early stages of the supply chain. Established labelling/certification systems may be used to support the communication of complex procurement challenges and activities.



Cross-references

environmentally friendly supply chains;
socially compatible supply chains;
fair trade



Further information



Regional product

“Regional products” are products whose geographical origin can be determined and which are processed, refined and marketed in this region. The intention of the claim includes identifying short transport routes and support for the regional economy. However, there are currently no uniform definitions regarding the proportion of production (cultivation, rearing, etc.) which must occur in the region or the size of the region.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

A value chain requires the existence of a regional economic cycle (e.g. especially in the case of monoproductions such as fruit and vegetables and products with few individual constituents). The more additives a product requires, the less likely it is to be entirely regional. Product communication should take place at the point of sale because it is relevant that this is in the same region as production. Specification of the region is recommended (e.g. “Lake Constance apple”, postcode).

Example of use



“Regional product for shorter transport routes.”

Verification



Examples: Regionalfenster | PEFC Regional Label | Biokreis regional & fair | Bergisch Pur | Bioregion Niederrhein | German state labels, e.g. QZBW



Cross-references

made from regional/local raw materials; seasonal



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Very good

Check of understanding

Very good

Credibility

Good

Relevance to purchasing

Very good

Regionality plays an important role in communication because the “regional product” claim is perceived as credible. Its relevance to purchasing and understanding of the term are above average. It should be noted that this term is not standardised and no uniform definition exists. Therefore, despite the clarity revealed by the analysis, it should be used in conjunction with further information to ensure uniform understanding.

* Sources: Dorandt, S. (2005): “Analyse des Konsumenten- und Anbieterverhaltens im Hinblick auf eine verbesserte Kommunikation zwischen Konsumenten und Anbietern am Beispiel von regionalen Lebensmitteln”; Gerschau et al. (2002): “Ansatzpunkte für eine regionale Nahrungsmittelversorgung”



Natural

“Natural” designates raw materials that occur in nature and undergo little processing and products that largely consist of such materials. The chemical structure of natural raw materials remains unchanged, even if they undergo chemical processing or treatment or a physical mineralogical transformation, for example, to remove impurities.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

It must be made clear which constituents are of natural origin, if possible giving a percentage of the total weight. In addition, information can be provided as to whether these constituents have other important properties (e.g. renewable).

Examples of use



“This facial repair mask is Natrue-certified.
91% of its constituents are of natural origin.”
“Contains natural aromas”

Verification



Examples: COSMOS standard |
Natrue label



Cross-references

renewable raw materials; untreated



Further information



Untreated

“Untreated” characterises materials and substances whose natural state is unchanged and which contain no additional foreign substances.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

It must be clear which components of the product the term refers to or whether it refers to the entire product. Regulatory requirements apply to some products and product categories, governing when a product is considered natural for a specific application (e.g. edible vegetable oil).

Examples of use



“Untreated Himalayan salt”
“Untreated olive oil”

Verification



Examples: COSMOS standard |
Natrue label



Cross-reference
natural



Further information

* Source: Collins Dictionary “untreated”



Climate

Due to the increasingly visible effects of climate change, companies are facing increasing regulatory and social pressure to make their operations climate-friendly. Many companies are using this public focus to highlight the benefits of their products in this context. However, current study findings show that climate-related statements are still those which are least well-understood by consumers.¹⁵ These findings and a number of recent court rulings¹⁶ show that particular caution is necessary when using such claims.





Carbon footprint

The “carbon footprint” describes the cumulative impact on climate change of total greenhouse gases emitted, typically expressed as carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalents, over a given time frame in the entire value chain (company) or over the full life cycle (product) from raw materials to manufacture, distribution, consumer use, recovery and disposal.*

Example of use

“The carbon footprint of this product is X% lower than its predecessor.”



Verification



Various suppliers certify in accordance with these standards:
Greenhouse Gas Protocol |
DIN EN ISO 14064-1:2019-06: Specification with guidance at the organization level for quantification and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and removals

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

The use of a carbon footprint is only recommended if the product claim is supplemented by information for the consumer explaining what this value means. The calculation method and reporting thresholds must be specified. Comparative statements may provide relevant additional information but are only permissible if the values were obtained using the same methods for life cycle analysis/life cycle assessment or on the basis of the same category rules (PCR – Product Category Rules) using identical assumptions and if the analyses have been published.



Cross-references

CO₂-compensated; compensation of greenhouse gas emissions; climate-neutral; climate-positive



Further information



CO₂-compensated

“CO₂-compensated” describes the financing of projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (e.g. recognised climate protection projects) which are not related to the respective product. Contrary to what might be expected, it covers all other greenhouse gases as well as CO₂. These are known as CO₂ equivalents (abbreviated as CO₂e). CO₂-compensated is used for the sake of greater legibility and clarity.*

Example of use

“Product CO₂-compensated/made climate-neutral retroactively (QR code or URL with reference)”



Verification



Examples: TÜV NORD Standard TN-CC 020 – climate neutrality test mark | TÜV SÜD Standard PAS-2060 climate neutrality
Various providers certify to these standards: Gold Standard | Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) | Plan Vivo Standard

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has only limited suitability for use in product communication and should only be used in connection with verification.

This claim may only be made if it can be verified by a recognised certificate (incl. reference with background information). Unlike “climate-neutral”, the terms “CO₂-compensated retroactively”, “made climate-neutral” and “climate-compensated” provide greater clarity for consumers. Nevertheless, such terms should only be used as a claim if product and process optimisation measures have resulted in emission reductions. The challenge is that customers might think that there is no need to question the environmental impact of a product if it has been compensated. It should be stated what exactly has been made climate-neutral, e.g. product, packaging, production or transport.



Cross-references

compensation of greenhouse gas emissions; carbon footprint; climate-neutral



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Poor

Check of understanding

Good

Credibility

Poor

Relevance to purchasing

Medium

The low perception of the credibility and relevance to purchasing of “CO₂-compensated” as a product claim and of climate-related terms in general stems from their poor clarity.

* Sources: Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Freiwillige CO₂-Kompensation”; The Consumer Goods Forum (2017): “Consumer Communications Glossary”



Compensation of greenhouse gas emissions

“Compensation of greenhouse gas emissions” describes the financing of projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere (e.g. recognised climate protection projects) which are not associated with the product or production process. To this end, certificates can be acquired from qualified companies which comply with the corresponding standards. In a first step, reducing emissions by process and product optimisation should be preferred over compensation. Only unavoidable emissions should be compensated.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not recommended for use in product communication. However, it is used in corporate communication to describe corporate climate activities. An ambitious climate programme based on actual sustainability impacts should focus on minimising CO₂ emissions. Only those emissions which cannot be reduced should be compensated. The terms (made) climate-neutral and CO₂-compensated are used to describe products.



Cross-references

carbon footprint; CO₂-compensated; climate-neutral; climate-positive



Further information

* Sources: Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Kompensation von Treibhausgasemissionen”;
Umweltbundesamt (2010): “Analyse und Bewertung von Waldprojekten und entsprechender Standards zur freiwilligen Kompensation von Treibhausgasemissionen”



Climate-neutral

“Climate-neutral” describes the situation when the climate-relevant gases produced at all stages of the value chain are offset by compensation measures. A holistic approach requires that emissions are reduced to a minimum beforehand.*

Example of use

“Product CO₂-compensated/made climate-neutral retroactively (QR code or URL with link)”



Verification



Examples: TÜV NORD Standard TN-CC 020 - climate neutrality test mark | TÜV SÜD Standard PAS-2060 climate neutrality
Various providers certify to these standards: Gold Standard | Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) | Plan Vivo Standard

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has only limited suitability for use in product communication, requires additional explanation and should only be used in connection with verification.

This claim may only be made if it can be verified by a recognised certificate (incl. link with background information). It should be stated what exactly has been made climate-neutral, e.g. product, packaging, production or transport, and whether compensation applies to just CO₂ or to all climate-relevant gases (CO₂ equivalents). Unlike climate-neutral, the terms “CO₂-compensated retroactively”, “made climate-neutral” and “climate-compensated” provide greater clarity for consumers. Nevertheless, it should only be used as a claim if product and process optimisation measures have resulted in reduced climate impacts. The challenge is that customers might think that there is no need to question the environmental impact of a climate-neutral product.



Cross-references

compensation of greenhouse gas emissions; carbon footprint; CO₂-compensated; environmentally neutral; climate-positive



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Medium

Check of understanding

Medium

Credibility

Poor

Relevance to purchasing

Medium

The low credibility and relevance to purchasing of “made climate-neutral” as a product claim and of climate-related terms in general stems from their poor clarity.

* Sources: IPCC (2018): “Annex I: Glossary”; Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Kompensation von Treibhausgasemissionen”



Environmentally neutral

“Environmentally neutral” refers to greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts which can be measured and compensated, e.g. eutrophication of surface water, soil acidification, summer smog and ozone depletion. Like climate neutrality, environmental neutrality requires process and product optimisation measures to reduce environmental impacts as a first step. The remaining unavoidable emissions are compensated.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not suitable for use in product communication because it is too unspecific and untransparent and no uniform and widespread assessment method exists.



Cross-reference
climate-neutral



Further information

* Sources: Lindenhof Verlag (8/2021): “creativ verpacken”;
City of Frankfurt am Main: “Was ist was beim Klimaschutz? Teil 2”



Climate-positive

“Climate-positive“ means that more climate-damaging emissions are compensated than are caused.*

Recommendation for use

No

The term is not suitable for use in product communication because it suggests to consumers that a product which has been made climate-positive has no negative climate impacts.



Cross-references

compensation of greenhouse gas emissions; carbon footprint; climate-neutral

* Source: Kluthe Magazin: “Was bedeutet klimapositiv?”



Renewable energy

“Renewable energy” describes those forms of energy which, compared with fossil fuels (e.g. oil), can be renewed within a short time frame and therefore used without restriction. These sources of energy include wind and solar power, hydropower, bioenergy, geothermal energy and ambient heat.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not recommended for use in product communication. However, it is used in corporate communication to describe corporate climate activities. It should be noted that the quality of the electricity procured may differ (certificates vs. purchase power agreements). The keyword here is additionality.



Further information

* Sources: Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Erneuerbare Energien”;
DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims



Energy efficiency

“Energy efficiency” describes the relationship between a certain benefit (heating, lighting, etc.) and the amount of energy used. The less energy used to produce a benefit, the higher the energy efficiency of the process.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term is suitable for use in product communication if legally specified communication rules are complied with (e.g. application of the energy efficiency label).

It is recommended that established product-specific data are used to verify energy efficiency in product claims. Product-related communication should always be based on verification documents and specific measured or calculated values.

Example of use



“Our current energy-efficient refrigerators use an average of 40% less electricity than our 2017 product range (application of energy efficiency label).”

Verification



Examples: new EU energy label (from 09/2021) | Blue Angel | Energy Star | EU Ecolabel | TCO Certified



Cross-reference
resource-friendly



Further information

* Sources: Bundesumweltministerium (German Environment Agency): “Was bedeutet „Energieeffizienz?“; The Consumer Goods Forum (2017): “Consumer Communications Glossary”



Biodiversity

The global population is growing and with it the need for land for residential, agricultural and industrial uses. The destruction of animal and plant habitats and high levels of pollution are resulting in enormous losses of biodiversity worldwide. It is a crisis on a par with climate change¹⁷ and a very diverse issue that has acquired a relevant role in product communication.



Biodiversity/ contributes to biodiversity

“Biodiversity” describes the diversity of fauna, flora and ecosystems and genetic diversity.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not recommended for use in product communication. However, it is used in corporate and brand communication, e.g. in the context of more detailed project descriptions by the company. In connection with products, the term is too complex for consumers and often too unspecific. The contribution to biodiversity can be communicated indirectly through the product label used.



Cross-reference
diversity of species



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Medium

Check of
understanding

Good

Credibility

Poor

Relevance to
purchasing

Good

Despite a certain clarity, the product claim “contributes to biodiversity” is not suitable for use in product communication because of its level of abstraction and perceived lack of credibility.

* Source: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)



Diversity of species

“Diversity of species” is a sub-aspect of biodiversity. It also includes the diversity of the functions which species fulfil for each other within ecosystems and through which they interact.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

The specific measures that contribute to the diversity of species should be described, together with their effect if possible.

Example of use

“During production, flower strips contribute to preserving the diversity of species.”



Verification

Examples: Bioland | Demeter | German organic label | EU organic label | Naturland | Rainforest Alliance



Cross-references

biodiversity/contributes to biodiversity; ecological agriculture



Further information

* Source: WWF: “Natur und Artenvielfalt schützen!”



Ecological agriculture

In “ecological agriculture”, soil use and livestock farming are adapted to the individual location. The aim is to achieve circular production cycles that ensure the long-term protection of natural production bases such as soils, diversity of species, water sources and climate. The diversity of the crops grown and animal species reared preserves and increases the stability and resilience of agricultural ecosystems. (The minimum requirements depend on the label used.)*

Example of use



“Our raw materials originate from ecological agriculture. In accordance with (label XY), they were produced without irrigation and in compliance with the ILO core labour standards.”

Verification



Examples: Bioland | Demeter | German organic label | EU organic label | GOTS - Global Organic Textile Standard | Naturland | Rainforest Alliance | RSB - Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

In the context of communication, the respective raw materials from ecological agriculture must be specified together with their certification/label. Reference must be made to the key ecological challenges and measures and figures must be given for any amounts less than 100%.



Cross-references
ecological; diversity



Further information

* Source: Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft: “Was ist Ökologische Landwirtschaft?”



Sustainable forestry

In the context of “sustainable forestry”, woodlands and wooded areas are managed and used in such a way as to preserve their productivity, biodiversity, regenerative capability and vitality. This safeguards their capacity to satisfy the main ecological, economic and social requirements, both now and in the future, without negatively impacting other ecosystems.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has only limited suitability for use in product communication and should only be used in connection with verification.

In the context of communication, it is recommended that the raw materials from sustainable forestry (includes both social and ecological aspects) are specified together with their certificate/label (e.g. FSC certificate).

Example of use



“The wood used in this product comes from responsibly managed forests.” The products are marked with the FSC label, for example.

Verification



Examples: Blue Angel | FSC – Forest Stewardship Council | Naturland | PEFC – Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification | RSB – Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials



Further information

* Source: Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Nachhaltige Waldwirtschaft”



Recycling and recovery

At present, less than 10% of the materials used are recycled.¹⁸ The “Recycling and recovery” category concerns terms which are used in connection with the transition from a linear to a circular economy in which products and packaging are reused. Terms in connection with approaches for reducing the use of resources and waste volumes, e.g. through more sustainable design, are considered in the “Materials and packaging” cluster.



Recycled content/ recyclate

The “recycled content” defines the percentage content of recycled material in a product or product packaging.*

Examples of use



“Cardboard with at least 65% recycled content”
“Bottle with at least 90% recycled content (excluding cap)”

Verification



Examples: Blue Angel | FSC Recycled | RAL Quality Mark for products made from recycled plastics | Global Recycled Standard (GRS for textiles)

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

Product claims should specify the components made from recycled materials or the percentage content of recycled materials. The data for the packaging and the product may not be added together. In addition, information should be given about the further (environmental) benefits of the recycled material (e.g. lower energy consumption or climate-relevant emissions). If the three-arrow symbol is used to indicate the recycling content, the percentage should be given instead of using the term “recyclable”.



Cross-references

recycled materials/components; recyclable; post-consumer recycled material (PCR); (from) XX% rPET, rPET



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Very good

Check of understanding

Medium

Credibility

Medium

Relevance to purchasing

Good

Recycling terms such as the product claim “100% recycled” are already well-accepted but there is a need for additional information and explanation in order to increase their perceived credibility.



Recycled materials/ components

“Recycled materials” are materials which are recovered/ separated from waste streams and processed for use in the production of new products or of a component for a new product. A distinction is made between post-consumer recyclate (PCR) and post-industrial recyclate (PIR). The recyclability of the new product depends on the design and production process and not on the use of the recycled material.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not suitable for use in product communication. However, it is used in corporate communication. It is more common to use “recycled content” in product communication (see previous page).



Cross-references

post-consumer recycled material (PCR);
recycled content/recyclate;
(from) XX% rPET, rPET



Further information

* Sources: The Consumer Goods Forum (2017): “Consumer Communications Glossary”;
DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims



**(From) XX%
rPET, rPET**

The abbreviation rPET stands for recycled polyethylene terephthalate (PET). It is used if the plastic/material contains a certain proportion or consists entirely of recycled PET. It may be used as a sub-term for recycled content.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

Product claims should specify the components made from rPET or the percentage content of rPET. In addition, information should be given about the further (environmental) benefits of the recycled material (e.g. lower energy consumption or climate-relevant emissions). The claim should only be used if the material contains a highquality recycled material.

Examples of use



“Cardboard with at least 65% recycled content”
“Bottle with at least 90% recycled content (excluding cap)”

Verification



Examples: Blue Angel | FSC Recycled | RAL Quality Mark for products made from recycled plastics | Global Recycled Standard (GRS for textiles)



Cross-references

recycled content/recyclate;
recycled materials/components



Further information

* Source: efsa, European Food Safety Authority: “Plastics and plastic recycling”



Post-consumer recycled material (PCR)

“Post-consumer recycled material (PCR)” describes material which is processed for reuse at the end of its use phase in households or in commercial, industrial or public facilities. It is characteristic of PCR that it has already passed through a use phase.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

Product claims should specify the components made from PCR or the percentage content of PCR. The data for the packaging and the product may not be added together. As PCR is not yet commonly used in consumer communication, it requires additional explanation to improve clarity.

Example of use



“Tube contains at least 75% post-consumer recycled material (PCR). It is contributing to keeping material that has already been used in packaging within the material cycle.”

Verification



Examples: RAL Quality Mark for products made from recycled plastics | FSC Recycled | Blue Angel | EU Ecolabel



Cross-references

recycled content/recyclate;
recycled materials/components



Further information

* Source: DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims



Recyclable

“Recyclable” describes the possibility of returning the materials used in a product or packaging to the material cycle in order to manufacture new products. The precondition for this is the availability of suitable recycling programmes which collect and sort recyclable material streams and process them ready for reuse. In the case of components made from various materials, it must be possible to separate the materials for recycling (theoretical vs. practical recyclability). They may not be used for energy recovery.*

Example of use

“X% of the materials are recyclable. This packaging is fully recyclable. Please separate (components X and Y) and dispose of them as household waste. (Component Z) can be disposed of as recycled paper.”



Verification

Examples: Three-arrow symbol | DerGrünePunkt recycling label | Made for Recycling – Interzero



Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

Product claims should specify the recycled materials/components and the conditions for their actual recycling in public recycling systems (DIN EN 13430). This may be supported by additional labelling with e.g. the recycling symbol (three-arrow symbol) or advice on separation and sorting. The free dual system packaging logo with advice on separation can also be used to help consumers separate and dispose of materials correctly. Claims such as “100% recyclable” or “fully recyclable” should be used with caution and only if the materials used are actually 100% recyclable (e.g. in the case of monomaterials).



Cross-references

circular; recycled content/recyclate; can be dismantled/modular construction



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Good

Check of understanding

Good

Credibility

Medium

Relevance to purchasing

Good

Recycling terms such as recyclable are already well-accepted but there is a need for additional information and explanation in order to increase their perceived credibility.



Circular

“Circular” can be applied to two main cycles: the continuous biological cycle and the technological cycle. In an ideal situation, no waste occurs. Substances designated as waste are those which are used as nutrients or raw materials for new product life cycles. In contrast to the term “recyclable”, circular is not necessarily linked with a recycling process. Instead, the quality of the raw materials can be sustained over several life cycles.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not recommended for use in product communication. However, it is used in corporate communication to describe waste management activities and possibly the development approach for the product portfolio.

Example for better distinction from

recycling: A return system can be characterised as regenerative without being directly linked with a recycling process. In an ideal situation, the product is recycled at the end of its life, even if it is from a return system.



Cross-references

reusable; repair-friendly;
recyclable; returnable; refillable



Further information

* Sources: Cradle to Cradle NGO: “Kreisläufe”;
EPEA Switzerland: “Von der Wiege zur Wiege – Produktionsprozesse neu denken.”



Refurbished

“Refurbishment” describes a process which enables used products to be processed for use in a new life cycle. In contrast to recycling, which recovers the individual raw materials used in a product by e.g. shredding or cutting, refurbishment involves reusing the product as it stands. This approach is used in the electronics industry (smart phones, tablet computers), for example.

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

When using the term in product communication, all refurbished components and materials and the type of refurbishment should be specified exactly.

Example of use

“This printer was tested and refurbished in a rigorous process using state-of-the-art technology. Specifically, the jets (list of refurbished components) have been replaced so the device is as new.”



Verification

Example: Blue Angel



Cross-reference

can be dismantled/modular construction



Further information



Can be dismantled/ modular construction

“Can be dismantled” describes the possibility of dismantling a product for repair, refurbishment, updating or at the end of its useful life so that the individual components can be disposed of in different ways, e.g. reuse or recycling, and the materials used in the product can be reused/recycled via the appropriate material streams.*

Example of use



“Our product can be dismantled. The components of the product can be disposed or recycled individually. Please separate (components X and Y) and dispose of them as household waste. (Component Z) can be disposed of as recycled paper.”

Recommendation for use

Yes

This term is suitable for use as a product claim.

If necessary, product claims or additional information should include advice for correctly recycling each component, see also “recyclable”. The free dual system packaging logo with advice on separation can also be used to help consumers separate and dispose of materials correctly.



Cross-references
refurbished; recyclable



Further information



Extended product life/resourcefriendly thanks to extended service life

“Extended product life” is used to describe a product which has a longer service life than alternative products based on specific properties and/or components which can be maintained, repaired, replaced or upgraded easily.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

Product claims should specify the product characteristics/measures which facilitate an extended product service life, perhaps also with advice on how to ensure long use.

Example of use

“The doubled service life of our washing machine XY reduces the costs of its use and the consumption of resources by 50%. To underscore the particular quality of our products, we provide a ten-year guarantee. We also recommend cleaning the machine once every three months using an all-purpose cleaner on washing cycle XY.”



Verification

Example: Blue Angel



Cross-references

resource-friendly;
waste-avoiding/wastereducing



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Medium

Check of understanding

Very good

Credibility

Poor

Relevance to purchasing

Very good

The high relevance to purchasing shows that, as a product claim, “resource-friendly thanks to extended service life” is an important purchase argument, despite the low perception of credibility. The analysis also shows the aforementioned necessity of providing further information to ensure greater transparency.



Repair-friendly

“Repair-friendly describes the possibility of simply replacing defective or worn components in a product in order to extend its functional capability. The conditions for this are ease of handling, a modular product structure, the availability of the necessary replacement parts and the cost-efficiency of repair from the consumer’s point of view.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

Product claims should specify the product assemblies/components which have been designed to be repair-friendly and for which replacement parts are available, if appropriate coupled with information about availability times and locations.

Example of use



“The housing of our kettle can be opened easily without the use of tools. We use screwed and plugged connections rather than welded components. Replacement parts can be purchased from any electronics retailer. Detailed repair instructions have been provided with the product.”

Verification



Example: Blue Angel



Cross-reference
circular



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Good

Check of understanding

Very good

Credibility

Poor

Relevance to purchasing

Very good

The high relevance to purchasing shows that, as a claim, “repair-friendly” is an important purchase argument, despite the low perception of credibility. The analysis also shows the aforementioned necessity of providing further information to ensure greater transparency.



Bio-degradable

“Biodegradable” describes the ability of a material to be entirely decomposed by organisms so that, within a defined period of time, only naturally occurring components remain in the soil and water and have no negative impact on the quality of environmental media. The distinction should be made from the degradation of plastic through the influence of light and mechanical stress, resulting in microparticles which are not biodegradable (oxo-degradable plastics).*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not suitable for use in product communication if it is used to refer to materials in technical cycles (e.g. packaging). Regarding the use of the term in reference to constituents, see “biodegradable” in the Constituents cluster.



Cross-references

biodegradable (Constituents);
compostable; bio-based plastic



Further information

* Sources: The Consumer Goods Forum (2017): “Consumer Communications Glossary”;
European Environment Agency: “Biodegradable and compostable plastics – challenges and opportunities”



Compostable

“Compostable” describes the ability of a material to be entirely decomposed by organisms after a certain period of time. Based on the time and temperature needed for the decomposition process, a distinction is made between industrially compostable materials and materials for home (garden) composting.*

Examples of use

“Product suitable for home composting.”

“Please dispose of XY (product constituents) in your organic waste bin.”

“Please protect the environment and dispose of this product on your home compost or in your organic waste bin.”

“In accordance with DIN 13432, the materials in our products are 90% compostable in industrial facilities.”

“Our products are 100% suitable for home composting. They should only be disposed of by composting and not in the environment.”

Verification

Examples: Blue Angel | DIN-certified industrially compostable | compostability label (paper & packaging)

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

Product claims should specify the composting route (home composting or main/organic waste bin) if the product/package is not suitable for all types of composting. The compostable components of modular products should also be specified. It is important to include additional advice that the products/package should not simply be disposed of in the environment where decomposition will take longer (e.g. due to additives).



Cross-references

biodegradable (Recycling and recovery);
biodegradable (Constituents); bio-based plastic



Further information

* Sources: European Environment Agency: “Biodegradable and compostable plastics – challenges and opportunities”;
DIN EN 13432:2000-12: Requirements for packaging recoverable through composting and biodegradation



Materials and packaging

There are various strategies for reducing waste and high resource consumption at company and product level. In addition to recycling (see “Recycling and recovery”), there are many options for making materials and packaging more sustainable, e.g. by using renewable raw materials or a design that facilitates repeated use.



Returnable

“Returnable” describes the option of making repeated use of packaging (primarily) but also of some products. Many returnable packaging products can be cleaned, reconditioned, repaired, refilled and/or reused. In an ideal situation, returnable packaging products are used many times before being recycled at the end of their useful life.*

Recommendation for use

Yes

This term is suitable for use in product communication.

The product claim can be supplemented by information about the positive environmental contribution (reduced material consumption, reduction of CO₂ emissions during the life cycle with X refills (must be verified by a thorough life cycle assessment)) and by information about the return system (e.g. deposit or loan system).

Example of use

“Returnable and refillable”



Verification

Examples: Blue Angel | return label | PETCycle



Cross-references

circular; refillable; reusable; resource-friendly



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Very good

Check of understanding

Good

Credibility

Very good

Relevance to purchasing

Good

As a claim, “returnable” is well-established in communication, shown by the high degree of clarity and relevance to purchasing.

* Source: DE-PACK GmbH & Co. KG: “Was sind Mehrwegverpackungen?”



Refillable

“Refillable” describes the possibility of refilling a product, component or packaging multiple times after its first use with the same or a similar products. No additional processing is necessary, other than certain cleaning and washing requirements in some cases.*

Recommendation for use

Yes

This term is suitable for use in product communication.

Refillable products and packaging etc. can be labelled as such. If necessary, information should be given about any processing steps required before refilling (e.g. cleaning of the packaging/dispenser).

Example of use

“This refillable printer cartridge protects the environment and saves you money.”



Verification

Example: Blue Angel



Cross-references

circular; reusable; returnable



Further information

* Sources: The Consumer Goods Forum (2017): “Consumer Communications Glossary”;
DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims



Reusable

“Reusable” describes products, components or packaging which have been developed for use a minimum number of times during its use phase in its given application.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

The product claim should refer specifically to a reusable product component (e.g. the packaging or housing). If relevant, it should detail the conditions for reuse (e.g. cleaning, inspection, maintenance, ...).

Note:

It should be ensured that a specific reuse option exists, e.g. filling unit, refill, tab, etc.

Example of use

“The container can be reused/refilled for its original purpose without further processing. Normal cleaning is all that’s required.”



Verification

Examples: Blue Angel | EU Ecolabel



Cross-references

circular; returnable; refillable



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Very good

Check of understanding

Medium

Credibility

Medium

Relevance to purchasing

Good

As things stand at present, “reusable” as a claim is not fully understood by consumers. Analysis showed that further explanatory information is required to ensure transparency when using the term.



Resource-friendly

“Resource-friendly” describes the efficient use of raw materials, minimising their consumption and thus reducing negative impacts on the ecosystem. It can be applied to all phases of the life cycle – raw material extraction, processing, product design, marketing, consumption and reuse or disposal.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

Product claims should specify the resources together with the reduction or efficiency measures. If possible, reductions should be quantified and verification published or kept available.

Example of use

“Resource-friendly as the consumption of new materials could be reduced by 30% through the use of recycled material.”



Verification

Examples: Blue Angel | FSC – Forest Stewardship Council | Bluesign | Cradle-to-Cradle (EPEA International) | UTZ-certified



Cross-references

energy efficiency; zero waste product; waste-avoiding/waste-reducing; returnable; extended product life/ resource-friendly thanks to extended service life



Further information

* Sources: REMEX GmbH: “Ressourcenschonung”; Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Ressourcenschonung in der Umweltpolitik”



Waste-avoiding/ waste-reducing

“Waste-avoiding” describes any measure taken before a substance, material or product becomes waste and serves to reduce the amount of waste. This includes reducing the use of consumables during the use phase, extending the service life and using returnable products. Waste-avoiding may be used as a sub-aspect of resource-friendly.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

Product claims should specify the components and reduction measures. If possible, reductions should be quantified and verification published or kept available.

Example of use

“Waste-avoiding because a new design has reduced the packaging weight by 70% compared with the previous bottle design.”



Verification

Examples: Blue Angel | EU Ecolabel | Cradle-to-Cradle (EPEA International)



Cross-references

resource-friendly; extended product life/
resource-friendly thanks to extended
service life; returnable; zero waste
product



Further information

* Source: §3 (20) KrWG – Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz (German Circular Economy Act)



Zero waste product

The design of “zero waste products” aims to reduce both the volume and harmful impact of waste, at the same time cutting the use of primary materials and energy. Unavoidable waste is used for sustainable purposes.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not suitable for use in product communication.

The term is often used in the context of “unpackaged”, suggesting that no waste is produced during the life cycle (production, transport, sale and use). The product may be zero waste as per the definition but the term misleads the consumer because it can be misunderstood. Resource-friendly can be used as an alternative.



Cross-references

waste-avoiding/waste-reducing;
resource-friendly



Further information

* Source: DIN SPEC 91436:2021-05: “Referenzmodell zum betrieblichen Abfall- und Wertstoffmanagement ausgerichtet an einer Vision „Zero Waste“ ”



Bio-based plastic

A “bio-based plastic” consists in part of plastic produced from biomass, e.g. sugar cane or maize. The raw material used does not necessarily mean that products are biodegradable. They are usually disposed of by conventional recycling but may reduce the recyclate quality.*

Example of use

“Contains X% bio-based plastic (biogenic origin: maize, sugar cane).”



Verification



TÜV Rheinland:
20–50% bio-based
50–85% bio-based
> 85% bio-based

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

The sustainability effect of bio-based plastic depends on the origin of the material (positive: biogenic waste materials; negative: monoculture, competition for land with food production). The term also often causes confusion among consumers regarding disposal. In order to avoid incorrect sorting, the percentage content of bio-based plastic should be specified together with advice on recycling (e.g. recyclable, compostable, recycling bin, etc.). The free dual system packaging logo with advice on separation can also be used to help consumers separate and dispose of materials correctly.



Cross-references

biodegradable (Recycling and recovery);
compostable



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Medium

Check of understanding

Medium

Credibility

Poor

Relevance to purchasing

Medium

As things stand, “made from bio-based plastic” as a claim is not properly understood by consumers and has low credibility. The analysis shows that there is a need for more detailed information.

* Source: Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Biobasierte und biologisch abbaubare Kunststoffe”



Renewable raw materials

“Renewable raw materials” are bio-based materials derived from agricultural and forestry products. They can be used as constituents of products or converted into bioenergy.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

The sustainability impact of renewable raw materials depends on the form of agriculture or forestry. This should be described and verified by way of a certificate.

Example of use

“X% renewable raw materials (biogenic origin: maize, sugar cane); (ideally specify form of cultivation)”



Verification

Examples: RAL Quality Mark for renewable raw materials | Blue Angel | EU Ecolabel | FSC – Forest Stewardship Council



Cross-reference
natural



Further information

* Sources: The Consumer Goods Forum (2017): “Consumer Communications Glossary”; Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft (Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture): “Bioökonomie + nachwachsende Rohstoffe”



Constituents

Depending on the product category, the product must be labelled with mandatory information about its constituents such as the expiration/use-by date or allergens. In addition, consumers are increasingly demanding advice as to whether products are consistent with sustainable lifestyles (vegetarian or vegan) and insist on information about the origin of the product's constituents. The origin and seasonality of products and raw materials are therefore playing an increasingly important role in the sustainable shopping basket.



Free from ... / no...

“Free from” is often used to assure consumers that a product does not contain a substance which has been identified as potentially harmful to health or the environment.*

Examples of use



“Free from microplastics and water-soluble synthetic polymers/silicone-free/no preservatives/parabens”
Example of reduced: “X% less sugar/fat reduced (sausage, coconut milk)”

Verification



Examples: Gluten-free |
No GMOs | No microplastics
(Flustix label)

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

If the term is used, the constituent the product does not contain should be specified. No legal requirements should be used in advertising. The claim may not be the main sales argument for the product but must serve to provide additional information for the consumer.



Cross-reference
no animal testing

* Source: French Consumer Council (2012): “A practical guide to environmental claims for traders and consumers”



Vegetarian

Products are “vegetarian” if they contain no constituents of animal origin (i.e. vegan). However, ingredients such as milk, honey and eggs and products based on these ingredients may be added or used in their production.*

Recommendation for use

Yes

The term is suitable for use as a product claim for foodstuffs.

In the case of foodstuffs with communicated ingredients, no further explanation is needed. It can be complemented by the use of an appropriate label.

Example of use

“Vegetarian”



Verification

Example: European V label - vegetarian



Cross-reference
vegan



Further information

* Source: Lebensmittelverband Deutschland: “Was bedeuten ‚vegan‘ und ‚vegetarisch‘?”



Vegan

Products are “vegan” if they are not of animal origin and contain no constituents of animal origin. This applies to all steps in manufacturing and processing.*

Recommendation for use

Yes

Food

This term is suitable for use in product communication for foodstuffs. It is of limited suitability for non-food items and requires additional explanation.

Limited

Non-food

In the case of foodstuffs with communicated ingredients, no further explanation is needed. In the case of non-food items, it is helpful to make an explicit reference to the fact that they contain no animal products or indicate which alternative materials were used.

Examples of use



“Entirely plant-based” or “mushroom-based vegan leather”

Products are identified with the label of the appropriate provider/organisation, e.g. the European Vegetarian Union’s V-Label

Verification



Examples: European V label – vegan | EcoVeg | The Vegan Trademark | NCP Nature Care Product (vegan) | NCS Natural Cosmetics Standard (vegan)



Cross-reference
vegetarian



Further information

* Source: Lebensmittelverband Deutschland: “Was bedeuten ‚vegan‘ und ‚vegetarisch‘?”



Seasonal

“Seasonal” designates fruit and vegetables which are naturally ripe at certain times of the year. Harvest times depend on the region so the term is often used in conjunction with “regional” in order to emphasise the current availability of local products at specific times, e.g. pumpkin, strawberries and cabbage.

Example of use

“Fresh asparagus – now is the season to enjoy it.”



Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

The term is recommended for use in communication at the point of sale and may be supplemented with explanations, e.g. reference to seasonal calendars, relevant months, growing area.



Cross-references

regional product; made from regional/local raw materials



Further information



Made from regional/local raw materials

“Made from regional/local raw materials” indicates that the precursors used in a product and its raw/auxiliary materials mainly come from the region in which they are processed and marketed.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

As there is no fixed definition of regionality, information should be provided about the region itself and the proportion of regional raw materials used in the product. Specific information is recommended (e.g. “Lake Constance apple”, postcode).

Example of use

“Produced from Lake Constance apples”



Verification



Examples: Bergisch Pur | Regional-fenster | Bio-Region-Niederrhein | Biokreis regional & fair



Cross-references

regional product; seasonal



Further information

* Source: Deutscher Bundestag (2016): “Zum Begriff der Regionalität bei der Lebensmittelerzeugung”



Bio-degradable

“Biodegradable” describes the ability of a material to be entirely decomposed by organisms so that, within a defined period of time, only naturally occurring components remain in the soil and water and have no negative impact on the quality of environmental media. A distinction should be made from the degradation of plastic through the influence of light and mechanical stress, resulting in microparticles which are not biodegradable (oxo-degradable plastics).*

Example of use

“Biodegradable in accordance with (standard). Advice on disposal (varies depending on community): NOT suitable for disposal in the environment.”



Verification

Examples: Blue Angel | EU Ecolabel



Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in the communication of products in biological cycles (e.g. detergents) and requires additional explanation.

In addition to advice about the product's biodegradability, the product claim should specify the test standard that underpins this statement. Regarding the use of the term in the context of packaging, see “biodegradable” in the “Recycling and recovery” cluster.



Cross-references

biodegradable (Recycling and recovery); compostable



Further information

* Sources: The Consumer Goods Forum (2017): “Consumer Communications Glossary”; European Environment Agency: “Biodegradable and compostable plastics – challenges and opportunities”



Water

At least 11% of Europe's population and 17% of EU territory are impacted by hot summers and sinking groundwater tables.¹⁹ As a result, there is a growing necessity to use this resource carefully. In particular, companies with water-intensive production processes are required to balance their consumption with the interests of other users in the region and to ensure the long-term protection of what is a joint resource (e.g. groundwater). With growing scarcity, consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the issue so its significance at the product level is also likely to rise in the future.



Water footprint

The “water footprint” of a product refers to the amount of fresh water that is used, evaporates or is polluted during the manufacture and transport of a product. It not only considers the volume of water used but also the time and location of water extraction.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

It is currently used rarely in marketing but mainly for raising consumer awareness. The use of the water footprint requires further information about:

- the standard or recognised measurement method applied
- the significance of the product claim for the consumer, e.g. “The water footprint of 560 l is equivalent to four full bathtubs”

Example of use

“The amount of water used in the manufacture of this vegan schnitzel (150 grams) is X litres lower than the amount used to produce a pork schnitzel (150 grams). This represents a saving of around Y full bathtubs. The water footprint of this product was determined in accordance with ISO 14046.”



Verification



Examples: Alliance for Water Stewardship | Blue Angel



Cross-reference

water consumption, direct & indirect



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Poor

Check of understanding

Good

Credibility

Poor

Relevance to purchasing

Good

There is a need for action regarding the clarity and perceived credibility of “water footprint” as a claim, e.g. with a uniform standard for comparing products.

* Sources: Water Footprint Network: “What is a water footprint?”; Institut für ökologische Wirtschaftsforschung (IÖW) (2013): “Virtuelles Wasser und der Wasserfußabdruck”



Water consumption, direct & indirect

The term “water consumption” describes the amount of water required for a certain purpose. “Direct water consumption” is limited to the amount of water used by a company in its processes. By contrast, “indirect water consumption” describes the amount of water used in the upstream supply chain (e.g. for the production of the materials procured) or consumed by the customer when using the product.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is currently not recommended for use in product communication. However, it is used by companies to provide details of their water consumption and water management activities.



Cross-reference
water footprint



Further information

* Source: The Consumer Goods Forum Glossary (2017): “Consumer Communications Glossary”



Animal welfare

In recent decades, global meat consumption has more than doubled and, as a result, meat production has quadrupled.²⁰ To meet this high demand, large numbers of animals are kept in indoor systems which means that is not always possible to ensure their welfare. In Germany, animal welfare law²¹ and various labels define criteria for husbandry to ensure animal welfare.



No animal testing

“Animal testing” refers to “interventions or treatments of animals or their genetic material for test purposes [which] may be associated with pain, suffering or injury to the animals (...).”

Animal testing also includes interventions or treatments which are not for test purposes but for:

- the manufacture, extraction, preservation or reproduction of substances, products or organisms
- the removal of organs or tissue in order to cultivate, transplant or study them for scientific purposes
- training purposes*

Examples of use



“No animal tests were carried out or commissioned in connection with product XY. This also applies to the suppliers of materials for product XY and their suppliers.”

Use of product labels such as “controlled natural cosmetic product”, the DTB rabbit or the Humane Cosmetics Standard leaping bunny

Verification



Examples: Leaping bunny | rabbit with protective hand | Vegan Trademark | Natrue label

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional verification.

The term should only be used in product communication in conjunction with verification such as certification. In Germany, court rulings assume that not all consumers know that all the raw materials used in cosmetics could theoretically have been subject to animal testing at some time. For this reason, product claims such as “no animal testing” are considered misleading.



Cross-references

vegan; free from... / no...



Further information

* Source: §7 (2) Tierschutzgesetz (German Animal Welfare Act)



Farming method

“Farming methods” translate mandatory standards and animal welfare labels into four categories for the purposes of comparison. They provide information about the level of animal welfare associated with each label. The higher the number, the higher the level of animal welfare applied in farming. Therefore, farming method 4 designates the highest standard of welfare.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

The farming method can be communicated by the corresponding label and/or by stating the way the animals have been kept (e.g. free range). It should always be verifiable.

Example of use



“Labelling of animal products with farming method 4 (organic products or products bearing the organic label)”

Verification



Examples: farming method label | Initiative Tierwohl | NEULAND label



Further information

* Source: Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Tierwohls in der Nutztierhaltung mbH: “Haltungsform”



Sustainable fishery

“Sustainable fishery” describes fishing methods which do not have a negative effect on fish stocks and their ability to reproduce. Moreover, they are aimed at minimising the impact on the marine ecosystem and unintended by-catch.*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has limited suitability for use in product communication and requires additional explanation.

The term should only be used in product communication in conjunction with verification.

Examples of use

“Sustainably caught (specify label)”
“Sustainably certified fishery (specify label)”



Verification



Examples: Naturland sustainable fishery | Naturland aquaculture | FOTS | Bioland | ASC (Aquaculture Stewardship Council)



Further information

* Source: WWF Deutschland: “Nachhaltige Fischerei”



Social aspects

Alongside environmental aspects, social aspects in the value chain play a very important role. These include ensuring humane working conditions during production, fair pay and no child labour. Public awareness of the issue has grown which is reflected in, for example, the introduction of supply chain legislation (LkSG in Germany aligned with the planned European directive).²²



Fair trade

“Fair trade” describes partnerships aimed at ensuring better trading terms and social rights for disadvantaged producers and workers. The goal is to enforce fair trade internationally. Generally speaking, it involves direct long-term collaboration with raw material producers and guaranteed minimum purchase quantities and prices to ensure the coverage of varying socially and environmentally compatible production and living costs. (minimum requirements depending on the label).*

Recommendation for use

Limited

This term has only limited suitability for use in product communication and should only be used in connection with verification.

As a rule, claims about fair trade are made at the company level. However, in the case of certain products/raw materials (e.g. cocoa or coffee), the use of the corresponding label ensures clarity. This should specify the standard used or the measures implemented in collaboration with the disadvantaged supplier/producer. Any reference to a company's own cultivation projects must be transparent and understandable.

Example of use



“The cocoa and sugar in our chocolate are purchased in strict and verified compliance with the Fairtrade Standard. We pay higher prices, thus supporting fairer and more humane agriculture.”

Verification



Examples: Fairtrade label | Cotton made in Africa | GEPA – fair-plus | Naturland Fair | Naturtextil IVN-certified BEST | Rainforest Alliance | bluesign® standard | FairWild | Hand in Hand



Cross-references

environmentally friendly supply chains;
socially compatible supply chains;
sustainable procurement



Further information

Study results concerning consumer understanding

Clarity

Medium

Check of understanding

Very good

Credibility

Poor

Relevance to purchasing

Good

As a product claim, “from fair trade” is very comprehensible and is primarily associated by consumers with fair payment. However, the assessment of credibility shows that further verification and more detailed information are necessary.



Socially compatible supply chains

“Socially compatible supply chains” designate supplier networks or recognised supply chain certificates that comply with human rights and labour standards. These cover aspects such as no forced labour or child labour, fair working hours, fair pay and social benefits, humane treatment, non-discrimination, freedom of association and pricing and occupational health and safety.*

Recommendation for use

No

This term is not recommended for use in product communication. However, it is used in corporate communication. If a company merely complies with mandatory requirements, these are implicit and should not be used in advertising (e.g. references to the LkSG – German Supply Chain Act).



Cross-references

environmentally friendly supply chains; sustainable procurement; fair trade



Further information

* Source: UN Global Compact Office (2015): “Supply Chain Sustainability – A Practical Guide for Continuous Improvement”



Appendix



Study overview and methodology

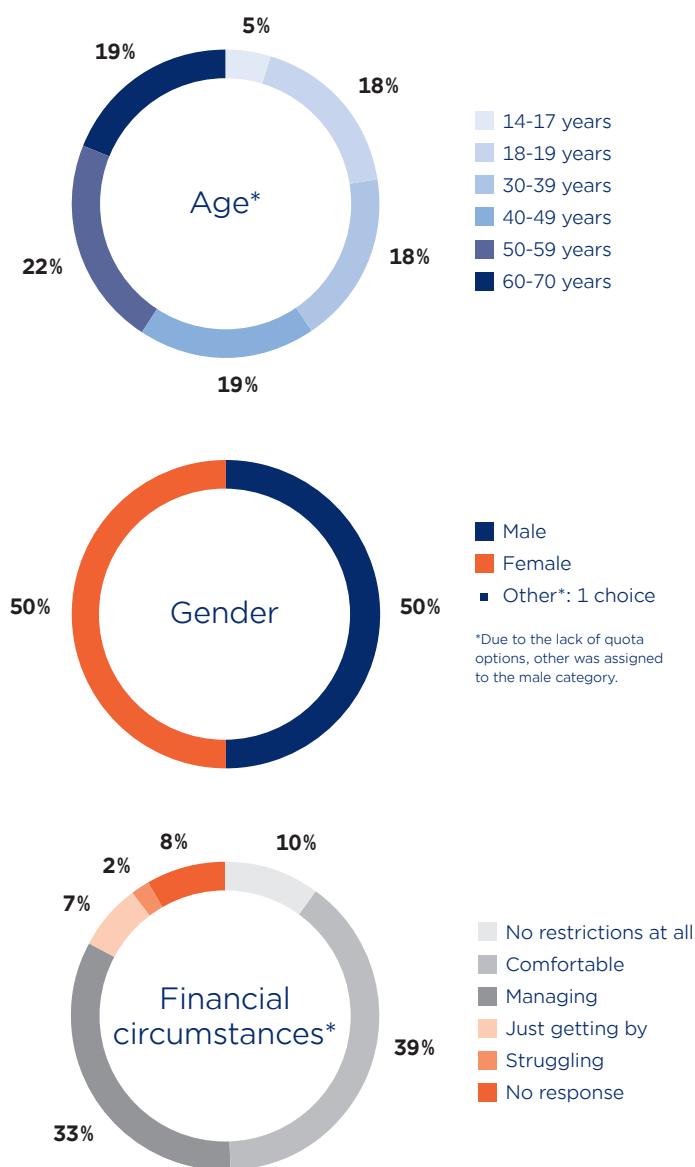
In developing the Sustainable Product Claims 2.0 Guideline, a study was carried out by the Faculty of Marketing Management and Sustainability at HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management. The aim was to investigate how consumers assess the clarity, relevance to purchasing and perceived credibility of various product claims. A similar study was already conducted when preparing the first version of the Guideline. The methodology and relevant features of the study are described below.

The study was a representative online survey of people aged 14 to 70 in Germany. The terms used in the 2014 study were updated on the basis of a secondary analysis which explored the changes in consumer understanding of sustainability-related product communication since the first version of the Guideline. As a result, some terms were removed and new ones added. In addition to selected product claims, two control terms were included in the survey: “from controlled sources” and “ecologically sustainable”. In terms of study design, it was ensured that the results of the 2014 survey could be compared with the results of the 2021 survey in order to identify any trends.

The survey was conducted via an online panel in November 2021. A total of 2,084 adjusted data sets were evaluated.²³ Each respondent was asked specifically formulated, closed questions about the clarity, credibility and relevance to purchasing of selected product claims related to sustainability and general attitudes as well as three open questions to assess their understanding of three randomly selected terms. After adjustment, 981 people participated in the 2014 study.

The comparable study design made it possible to analyse consumer understanding and the implications for the glossary and for the uniform use of the product claims.

The graphics at right show the sociodemographic distribution of the study participants.



* Rounding of the percentages shown may mean that their sum does not always total 100%.



Further information

Sustainability in general [↗]

Ecological [↗]

- Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products
- Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft e. V.: "EU-Öko-Verordnung – das Bio-Grundgesetz"
- French Consumer Council (2012): "A practical guide to environmental claims for traders and consumers"

Biological [↗]

- Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products
- Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft e. V.: "EU-Öko-Verordnung – das Bio-Grundgesetz"
- "Übersicht über die neue Öko-Basisverordnung EU 2018/848 und ergänzende Rechtsakte"
- "Regeln der Bio-Kennzeichnung"
- French Consumer Council (2012): "A practical guide to environmental claims for traders and consumers"
- DIN CEN/TS 16822:2015: Textilien und textile Erzeugnisse – Umweltbezogene Anbietererklärung – Verwendung von Begriffen

Eco [↗]

- Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products
- Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft e. V.: "EU-Öko-Verordnung – das Bio-Grundgesetz"
- "Übersicht über die neue Öko-Basisverordnung EU 2018/848 und ergänzende Rechtsakte"
- "Regeln der Bio-Kennzeichnung"

Environmentally friendly [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: "Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims"
- Rödl & Partner: "Echter Umweltschutz oder „Grünfärberei: Was Unternehmen bei Green Claims zu beachten haben"

Environmentally friendly supply chains [↗]

- BMZ, Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development): "Das Lieferkettengesetz"
- LkSG – Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz (Supply Chain Act)

Sustainable [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims
- Kompetenzzentrum nachhaltiger Konsum: "Nationales Programm für nachhaltigen Konsum"
- BMUV, Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, nukleare Sicherheit und Verbraucherschutz (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection): "Die 2030-Agenda für Nachhaltige Entwicklung"

Sustainable procurement [↗]

- The Consumer Goods Forum (2017): "Consumer Communications Glossary"
- ISO 20400:2017-04: Sustainable procurement – Guidance
- Beschaffungssamt des BMI – Kompetenzstelle für nachhaltige Beschaffung (Procurement Office of the Federal Ministry of the Interior): "Das zentrale Portal für nachhaltige Beschaffung öffentlicher Auftraggeber"
- BMZ, Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development): "Das Lieferkettengesetz"
- LkSG – Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz (Supply Chain Act)

Regional product [↗]

- Verbraucherzentrale NRW e. V.: "Regionale Lebensmittel – nicht immer aus der Region"
- RENN.süd: "Nachhaltiger Konsum vor Ort"

Natural [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims
- French Consumer Council (2012): "A practical guide to environmental claims for traders and consumers"
- Regulation (EC) Nr. 1334/2008 on flavourings and certain food ingredients with flavouring properties for use in and on foods

Untreated [↗]

- ISO 14021:2016/Amd. 1:2021 "Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims"
- French Consumer Council (2012): "A practical guide to environmental claims for traders and consumers"
- Verordnung des EDI über Lebensmittel pflanzlicher Herkunft, Pilze und Speisesalz (2016)

Climate [↗]

Carbon footprint [↗]

- Greenhouse Gas Protocol
- DIN EN ISO 14064-1:2019-06: Specification with guidance at the organization level for quantification and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and removals
- DIN EN ISO 14067:2019-02: Carbon footprint of products
- DIN EN ISO 14040/44: Environmental management – Life cycle
- PAS 2050:2011: Specification for the assessment of the life cycle greenhouse gas emissions of goods and services
- PCF Pilotprojekt Deutschland: "Product Carbon Footprinting – Ein geeigneter Weg zu klimaverträglichen Produkten und deren Konsum?"
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): "Changes in Atmospheric Constituents and in Radiative Forcing"



Further information

CO₂-compensated [↗]

- Gold Standard
- Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)
- Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standard (CCBS)
- Primaklima Standard
- Plan Vivo Standard
- Verified Carbon Standard (VCS)
- GRI G4 – EN19: Reduction of GHG emissions

Compensation of greenhouse gas emissions [↗]

- Carbon Disclosure Project (2020): “Foundations For Science-Based Net-Zero Target Setting In The Corporate Sector”
- Gold Standard
- Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)
- Plan Vivo Standard
- GRI G4 – EN19: Reduction of GHG emissions

Climate-neutral [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14064-1:2019-06: Specification with guidance at the organization level for quantification and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and removals
- DIN EN ISO 14067:2019-02: Carbon footprint of products
- DIN EN ISO 14040:2021-02: Environmental management – Life cycle
- Klima Arena: “Klimaneutral – Was heißt das eigentlich?”

Environmentally neutral [↗]

- ISO 14001:2015: Environmental management systems
- DIN EN ISO 14040/44:2021-02: Environmental management – Life cycle
- HeimatERBE

Renewable energy [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims
- DIN EN ISO 52000-1:2018-03: Energy performance of buildings

- DIN EN ISO/IEC 13273-2:2016-06: Energy efficiency and renewable energy sources
- DIN EN 15316-4-6:2009-07 “Heating systems in buildings”
- Greenhouse Gas Protocol: “Scope 2 Guidance”

Energy efficiency [↗]

- EU Ecodesign Directive 2009/125/EC
- Energy Labelling Regulation (EU) 2019/2015
- EVPG – Energieverbrauchsrelevante-Produkte-Gesetz (German Energy-Related Products Act)
- EnVKG – Energieverbrauchskennzeichnungs-Gesetz (German Energy Efficiency Labelling Act)
- DIN EN ISO 50001:2018-12: Energy management systems
- Nationaler Aktionsplan Energieeffizienz (NAPE 2.0)

Biodiversity [↗]

Biodiversity/contributes to biodiversity [↗]

- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Biodiversität”
- 10 Must-Knows aus der Biodiversitätsforschung 2022

Company-related:

- EMAS
- DNK
- GRI G4 – EN12 Significant impacts of activities, products, and services on biodiversity
- GRI G4 – EN11 Operational sites owned, leased, managed in, or adjacent to, protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value outside protected areas

Biodiversity [↗]

- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Sustainable Forestry Initiative
- GRI G4 – EN12 Significant impacts of activities, products, and services on biodiversity
- GRI G4 – EN11 Operational sites owned, leased, managed in, or adjacent to, protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value outside protected areas

Ecological agriculture [↗]

- Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft: “Was ist Ökologische Landwirtschaft?”
- Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency) “Ökologischer Landbau”
- Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft (Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture) “Ökologischer Landbau”

Sustainable Forestry [↗]

- Sustainable Forestry Initiative
- Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency) “Nachhaltige Waldwirtschaft”
- The Consumer Goods Forum (2017) “Consumer Communications Glossary”

Recycling and recovery [↗]

Recycled content/recyclate [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims
- Stiftung Zentrale Stelle Verpackungsregister: “Mindeststandard recyclinggerechtes Design”
- VerpackG – Verpackungsgesetz
- BMUV, Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection) (2019): “Umweltinformationen für Produkte und Dienstleistungen – Anforderungen-Instrumente-Beispiele”

Recycled materials/components [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: “Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims”
- Forum Rezyklat (2022): “Leitfaden Rezyklat”
- United Nations Environment Programme (2020): “Can I recycle this? A global mapping and assessment of standards, labels and claims on plastic packaging”
- GRI 301 Materials (2016): Disclosure 301-2 Recycled input materials used
- Rödl & Partner: “Echter Umweltschutz oder „Grünfärberei: Was Unternehmen bei Green Claims zu beachten haben”



Further information

(From) XX% rPET, rPET [↗]

- European Commission: “Food Safety”
- GlobeNewswire: “Recycled PET (rPET) Market (2022-2028)”
- VerpackG – Verpackungsgesetz (German Packaging Act), §21 “Ökologische Gestaltung der Beteiligungsentgelte”

Post-consumer recycled material (PCR) [↗]

- Forum Rezyklat (2022): “Leitfaden Rezyklat”
- VerpackG – Verpackungsgesetz (German Packaging Act)

Recyclable [↗]

- KrWG – Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz (German Circular Economy Act)
- VerpackG, Verpackungsgesetz (German Packaging Act)
- Stiftung Zentrale Stelle Verpackungsregister: “Mindeststandard recyclinggerechtes Design”
- DIN EN 13430:2004-10: Packaging – Requirements for packaging recoverable by material recycling
- Trennhinweis der dualen Systeme
- BVSE, Bundesverband Sekundärrohstoffe und Entsorgung: “Neue Verpackungslogos der Dualen Systeme als Trennhinweise für Verpackungen”
- Initiative Mülltrennung wirkt

Circular [↗]

- Ellen MacArthur Foundation: “Material Circularity Indicator (MCI)”
- Sphera: “Kreislaufwirtschaft – Circular Economy”

Refurbished [↗]

- Wuppertal Institut für Klima, Umwelt, Energie gGmbH “ARETE – Augmented Reality in Refurbishment of Technologies”
- VDI – Zentrum Ressourceneffizienz: “Kreislaufführung und Recycling – Kreislaufführung im verarbeitenden Gewerbe”

Can be dismantled/modular construction [↗]

- BVSE, Bundesverband Sekundärrohstoffe und Entsorgung: “Neue Verpackungslogos der dualen Systeme als Trennhinweise für Verpackungen”
- Trennhinweis der dualen Systeme

Extended product life/resource-friendly thanks to extended service life [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims
- ONR 192102:2014-10-01: “Gütezeichen für langlebige, reparatur-freundlich konstruierte elektrische und elektronische Geräte”

Repair-friendly [↗]

- EU Directive 2002/96/EG: Waste electrical and electronic equipment

Biodegradable [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14855-1:2013-04: Determination of the ultimate aerobic biodegradability of plastic materials under controlled composting conditions
- Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Biobasierte und biologisch abbaubare Kunststoffe”
- KrWG – Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz (German Circular Economy Act)
- DIN EN 17033:2018-03: Plastics – Biodegradable mulch films for use in agriculture and horticulture
- DIN EN ISO 17556:2019-09: Plastics – Determination of the ultimate aerobic biodegradability of plastic materials in soil by measuring the oxygen demand in a respirometer or the amount of carbon dioxide evolved
- OECD Guideline 301: Ready Biodegradability
- OECD Guideline 302: Inherent Biodegradability

Compostable [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: “Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims”
- DIN EN 14995:2007-03: Plastics – Evaluation of compostability
- TÜV AUSTRIA Deutschland GmbH: “Zertifizierung von Bioplastik”
- ISO 17088:2021: Plastics – Organic Recycling – Specifications for compostable plastics
- ASTM D6400-04: Standard Specification for Compostable Plastics

Materials and packaging [↗]

Returnable [↗]

- § 33 VerpackG – Verpackungsgesetz
- Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Mehrwegflaschen”
- Deutsche Pfandsystem GmbH

Refillable [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims

Reusable [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims
- EU Circular Economy Action Plan
- KrWG – e.g. §25 Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz
- GRI G4 – EN28: Reclaimed products and their packaging materials

Resource-friendly [↗]

- Deutsches Ressourceneffizienzprogramm (ProgRess)
- EU Circular Economy Action Plan
- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims

Waste-avoiding/waste-reducing [↗]

- EU Circular Economy Action Plan
- KrWG – Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz
- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims
- Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): “Waste prevention”

Zero waste product [↗]

- EU Circular Economy Action Plan
- KrWG – Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz (German Circular Economy Act)

Company-related:

- GRI G4 – EN23: Waste by type and disposal method



Further information

Bio-based plastic [↗]

- Fachagentur Nachwachsende Rohstoffe: "10 Punkte zu biobasierten Kunststoffen"
- ASTM D6866 measurement method
- DIN CEN/TS 16137:2011-07: Determination of bio-based carbon content
- DIN EN 17228:2019-06: Bio-based polymers, plastics, and plastics products
- DIN EN 16785-2:2018-05: Determination of the bio-based content
- Trennhinweis der dualen Systeme
- BVSE, Bundesverband Sekundärrohstoffe und Entsorgung: "Neue Verpackungslogos der dualen Systeme als Trennhinweise für Verpackungen"

Renewable raw materials [↗]

- Informationssystem für nachwachsende Rohstoffe: "Verzeichnis der Kulturpflanzen"
- DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10: Environmental labels and declarations - Self-declared environmental claims
- KrWG – Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz (German Circular Economy Act): § 45 (2)
- **Company-specific:**
- GRI G4 – EN1: Materials used by weight or volume

Contents [↗]

Vegetarian [↗]

- ISO 23662:2021-03: Definitions and technical criteria for foods and food ingredients suitable for vegetarians or vegans and for labelling and claims

Vegan [↗]

- ISO 23662:2021-03: Definitions and technical criteria for foods and food ingredients suitable for vegetarians or vegans and for labelling and claims

Seasonal [↗]

- Bundeszentrum für Ernährung: "Saisonkalender"
- NABU: "Saisonkalender – Heimisches Obst und Salat"

Made from regional/local raw materials [↗]

- European Committee of the Regions: "The European Green Deal is Going Local"

Biodegradable [↗]

- KrWG – Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz (German Circular Economy Act)
- OECD Guideline 301: Ready Biodegradability
- OECD Guideline 302: Inherent Biodegradability

Water [↗]

Water footprint [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14046:2016-07: Environmental management – Water footprint
- DIN EN ISO 14050:2021-04: Environmental management – Vocabulary
- Water Footprint Network
- Umweltbundesamt (German Environment Agency): "Wasserfußabdruck"

Water consumption, direct & indirect [↗]

- DIN EN ISO 14046:2016-07: Environmental management – Water footprint
- **Company-specific:**
- GRI G4 – EN8: Water withdrawal by source
- GRI G4 – EN9: Water sources significantly affected by withdrawal of water

Animal welfare/animal protection [↗]

No animal testing [↗]

- TierSchG – Tierschutzgesetz (German Animal Welfare Act)
- Tierschutzbund: "Tierversuche"

Farming method [↗]

- Verbraucherzentrale: "Haltungsform-Kennzeichnung im Handel"

Sustainable fishery [↗]

- Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft (Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture): "Für eine nachhaltige Fischerei"
- Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development): "Nachhaltige Fischerei und Aquakultur"

Social aspects [↗]

Fair trade [↗]

- BMZ, Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development): "Das Lieferkettengesetz"
- LkSG – Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz (Supply Chain Act)
- Fairtrade International: "Fairtrade Standards"
- World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO)
- Fair Wear Foundation
- Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development): "Fairer Handel – ein Beitrag zur nachhaltigen Entwicklung"
- GEPA – The Fair Trade Company
- Weltladen-Dachverband e.V.

Socially compatible supply chains [↗]

- BMZ, Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development): "Das Lieferkettengesetz"
- LkSG – Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz (Supply Chain Act)



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⁴ E.g. Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market and its amendments; OECD 2011: "Environmental Claims: Findings and Conclusions of the OECD Committee on Consumer Policy", Paris; UWG – Gesetz gegen den unlauteren Wettbewerb (German Act against Unfair Competition), especially § 5 (1)(1), § 5a and § 9 (2). A number of technical standards (e.g. DIN EN ISO 14021:2021-10) are also relevant because their application is being mandated increasingly by law.
[↩]

⁵ European Commission: "Initiative on substantiating green claims", last accessed 07.02.2022
[↩]

⁶ See Appendix: Study overview and methodology
[↩]

⁷ The lack of suitability for use in product communication is based especially on the fact that the terms in this form are neither protected nor can they be verified by documentation. Moreover, their imprecise formulation can mislead consumers. See also Chapter 3: Principles of sustainable product communication + term "sustainable" (Recommendation for use) in the Glossary
[↩]

⁸ European Commission: "Initiative on substantiating green claims", last accessed 09.02.2022; BDI/UBA/BMUV (editors), 2019: "Umweltinformationen für Produkte und Dienstleistungen: Anforderungen – Instrumente – Beispiele", 7th revised version, refers to principles 1 & 2, last accessed 09.02.2022
[↩]

⁹ BDI/UBA/BMUV (editors), 2019: "Umweltinformationen für Produkte und Dienstleistungen: Anforderungen – Instrumente – Beispiele", 7th revised version, refers to principles 3 & 4, last accessed 09.02.2022
[↩]

¹⁰ § 3 (3) UWG (German Act against Unfair Competition) in conjunction with No. 10 of the Annex to § 3 UWG
[↩]

¹¹ Kirchgeorg, 2019: "Werbung für ökologisch nachhaltige Produkte – Ein Forschungsüberblick mit Gestaltungsempfehlungen für die Praxis", Leipzig, pp. 18 & 27
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¹⁴ Label-Online
[↩]

¹⁵ See Chapter 2: "Findings relating to consumer understanding of product claims"
[↩]

¹⁶ Vgl. Anwaltskanzlei Hild & Kollegen „Irreführende Verwendung des Begriffs "KLIMA-NEUTRAL", zuletzt abgerufen am 11.02.2022.
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[↩]

²¹ TierSchG (Animal Welfare Act), last accessed 11.02.2022
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²² Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs): Sorgfaltspflichtengesetz (Due Diligence Act), last accessed 10.02.2022
[↩]

²³ Exclusion of respondents who rated the environmental and social compatibility of products as very unimportant and screen-out using an attentiveness question and response duration < 4 min
[↩]



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In line with its claim to neutrality and its not-for-profit approach, a project group made up of retail and industry representatives was established on the GS1 Germany platform to revise and update the Guideline. Some members of the group were also involved in drafting the first version of the Guideline.

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