

Some products have their biggest environmental impacts during manufacturing, some during use or disposal.

Life cycle assessment Before a product is awarded the European Eco-label, rigorous studies are performed on the item's environmental impact over its entire life cycle.

This holistic analysis begins with the extraction of raw materials, and follows the product's ecological tracks through manufacturing, distribution (including packaging), use by the consumer and, finally, disposal.

Naturally, different products take their biggest environmental tolls at different stages of their lives. **Cotton fabrics**, for instance, have their biggest impacts during **manufacturing**, due to the processes of dyeing, printing, bleaching and finishing. Reducing a cotton T-shirt's environmental impact, therefore, focuses on finding less harmful ways of completing these processes.

By contrast, the impacts of **appliances** are felt during their **use phase** as they consume energy, water and chemicals. Environmental criteria for these products, therefore, focus on the efficiency with which they use these resources.

EXTRACTION OF RAW MATERIALS

The environmental toll caused during mining, crop cultivation, petroleum extraction, forest management and other activities. Given the right incentives, these activities can be better harmonised with nature.

MANUFACTURING, PACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTION

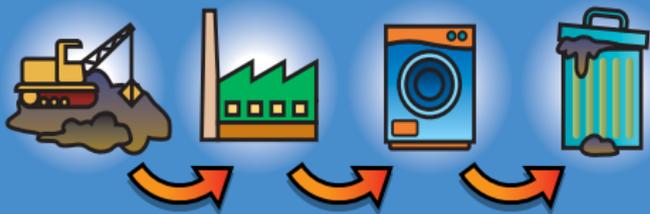
Pollution emitted and resources used to construct or produce the products and get them to market. Firms can green their operations and reduce their environmental impacts.

USE BY CONSUMER

Consumption of energy and other resources while the product is being used. Energy efficient design and conscientious practices by consumers can minimise some of these impacts.

END OF LIFE

When the product wears out or is no longer useful, it takes its final toll on the environment. Eco-labelled products are easily recovered and recycled.



Why the European Eco-label? Many environmental labels exist, here in Europe and elsewhere. Some of them focus on particular environmental concerns such as recyclability, biodegradability or energy efficiency. Others are valid and recognised in specific countries only. Many green claims are placed on products by the manufacturers themselves with no independent verification of how they measure up.

The European Eco-label Scheme is a voluntary tool that promotes environmentally sound goods and services by awarding them with a distinctive symbol of environmental quality — the Flower. The label goes only to the most environmentally friendly brands in each product group. The Flower is a valuable tool to public purchasers, as it helps them identify green products. Alone among similar initiatives, the European Eco-label Scheme:

- is recognised throughout the European Union, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland;
- requires product screening by an independent party; and
- assesses a product's total environmental impact, from extraction of the raw materials to eventual disposal (the "cradle to grave" approach).

The label is available to:

- manufacturers and service providers
- importers; and
- retailers with their own environmentally friendly house brands.

The scheme covers 23 types of products and services (with the exception of food, drink and medicines), with further groups being continuously added. Among other things, the European Eco-label criteria address energy consumption, pollution and waste production. What's more, Eco-labelled products perform among the best in their class.

The Flower makes it easy to choose green!

The European Eco-label is recognised throughout the 25 Member States of the EU, as well as in Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Look for the Flower!



Goods and Services Bearing the European Eco-label

More than 300 companies have been awarded with the European Eco-label on their products and services and nearly 280 million Eco-labelled items were sold in 2004, with an ex-factory sales value of EUR 700 million. Criteria are available for more than 23 types of products and services, and new categories are continually being added.

The Flower can be found on all the products and services listed below. For information on the European Eco-label and what it means when it adorns these products, visit the website <http://ec.europa.eu/ecolabel>.



APPLIANCES

- washing machines
- dishwashers
- refrigerators
- vacuum cleaners



TVs AND ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

- television sets
- light bulbs



HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS

- bed mattresses
- textiles



COMPUTERS

- personal computers
- portable computers



CLOTHING

- textiles for clothes and accessories



FOOTWEAR

- shoes and boots



PAPER PRODUCTS

- copying and graphic paper
- tissue paper products



DO-IT-YOURSELF

- hard floor coverings
- indoor paints and varnishes



LUBRICANTS

- hydraulic oils and greases



GARDENING

- potting compost
- soil improvers



CLEANING UP

- all-purpose cleaners
- detergents for dishwashers
- hand dishwashing detergents
- laundry detergents



HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

- campsite service
- tourist accommodation service



CONTACT INFORMATION

The European Commission: ecolabel@ec.europa.eu
 Your national Competent Body:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/tools/competentbodies_en.htm
 General information on the Flower: <http://ec.europa.eu/ecolabel>
 The Green Store: www.eco-label.com
 The European Eco-label on tourism services: <http://www.eco-label-tourism.com>

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The European Eco-label





The **European Eco-label** distinguishes products that meet high standards of performance and environmental quality. For manufacturers and retailers the **European Eco-label** (the **Flower**) gives added value to their products and competitive advantage in the growing market of greener goods and services.

For shoppers, the Flower is a reliable token of environmental care. To be awarded with the Flower, products must pass rigorous compliance tests in a process verified by an independent, publicly accountable body.

Why have environmental labels? Consumers have a major impact on the environment. The extent of this impact depends on how we choose to meet our needs. We can make a difference through buying greener products. Our demand for environmentally friendly goods drives companies to create wares that:

- use less energy while performing as well as or better than other products;
- last longer through more durable design and availability of spare parts;
- are easier to recycle due to more thoughtful assembly and use of materials; and
- consume fewer natural resources (such as water and raw material).



Getting the European Eco-label on your Product or Service



Check if your product is eligible. Confirm that your product comes under one of the product groups included in the scheme, and then check the detailed criteria. Go to <http://ec.europa.eu/ecolabel> and choose "product groups" on the menu on the left.



Check if you are eligible. Manufacturers, importers and service providers can all apply for the Flower. Traders and retailers can also apply, but only for products marketed under their own brand names.



Contact your Competent Body. Whether you are a manufacturer, importer or retailer, contact your national Competent Body (CB). You will receive an application form with a fee schedule (EUR 300-1,300 with a 25% discount for small and medium-sized enterprises and firms from developing countries).

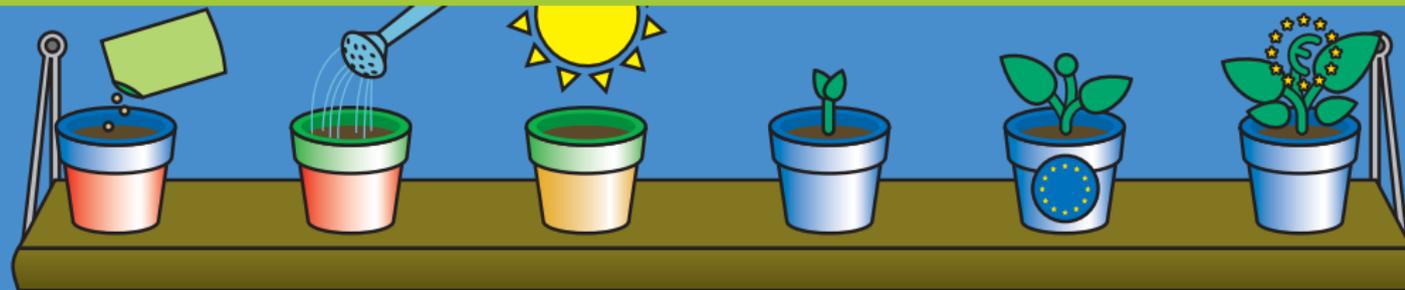


Complete the application. The national Competent Body assesses the application. If the criteria are met, documentation found to be in order and fees paid, the Competent Body informs the European Commission about the award.



Make the best of the award. In a rapidly growing market for greener products, producers can increase their market share by obtaining the European Eco-label. Once awarded the Eco-label, you can benefit from all the marketing initiatives undertaken by the European Commission and national CBs and use existing communication tools like the Green Store at www.eco-label.com to advertise your products. Special discounts are available to SMEs, companies from developing countries, firms registered under the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), and those certified under ISO 14001.

The Criteria-Setting Process for the European Eco-label



The **European Union Eco-label Board (EUEB)** appoints one of the **national competent bodies (CBs)** to lead the criteria-setting process for a product group.

Lead competent body forms an **ad hoc criteria development working group** seeking diverse viewpoints.

All competent bodies gather input from stakeholders (**environmental groups, industry, consumer associations and others**).

During the **criteria drafting**, the working group seeks stakeholder consensus while upholding strong environmental standards. It then passes the **draft criteria** to the European Commission and the Regulatory Committee who votes on them.

The **European Commission** adopts the criteria in the form of a Commission Decision and publishes them in the Official Journal.

Competent bodies across the EU begin awarding the Flower to products and services that meet the criteria.

The **European Union Eco-labelling Board**, the central body of the European Eco-label award scheme, includes competent bodies and the Consultation Forum, a voice for industry and service providers, importers, environmental protection groups and consumer organisations.

When a product group needs new criteria, a **lead competent body** takes charge, gathering input from all interested parties.

At both the EU and national levels, **stakeholders**, including environmental groups, industry, retailers, consumer organisations and others, give their input in the criteria-development process.

The **national competent bodies** are independent and neutral organisations that run the European Eco-label Scheme at the national level. They receive and assess applications, and award the Flower to qualified products.

Criteria Product criteria are based on scientific studies and extensive consultation within the European Union Eco-labelling Board (EUEB). This board includes national offices ("competent bodies") from each EU Member State, environmental groups, consumer and industry associations, commerce unions and businesses big and small.

Official approval of the criteria Proposed criteria for any product group must meet the approval of the Member States and the European Commission. Once the criteria are official, they remain valid for three to five years. After that, the criteria can be tightened up to keep pace with advances in technology. Standards must remain sufficiently high to maintain the Eco-label's distinction of environmental quality.

Environment and health Consumers care about their environment because they care about their health. Therefore, Eco-labelled products have

comparatively modest impacts on air, water and soil quality; natural resource consumption; global warming; and bio-diversity. At the same time, they contribute to waste reduction, energy savings, ozone layer protection, environmental safety and noise reduction.

Quality's crucial Products bearing the Flower must also meet stringent performance criteria, ensuring that consumers get value for money while also doing the right thing for the environment. For example, Eco-labelled bed mattresses must undergo rigorous durability trials that show they retain their bounce through thousands of compressions. Laundry machines and dishwashers are guaranteed to operate a minimum of two years, and manufacturers must ensure that spare parts are available for 12 years, even for models taken out of production. Eco-labelled appliances must be easily taken apart and recycled. Manufacturers have to offer free take-back of worn-out products.

The Flower stands for high quality as well as care for the environment. The label adorns top performing products only.