

Demystifying green purchasing standards July 29th, 2014

All of the different labels, logos, standards, programs and organizations associated with green purchasing can be confusing. Some of the most important green organizations are profiled below.



Chlorine-Free – Chlorine-Free Products Association is a nonprofit organization that certifies products to be chlorine-free, including office paper products and bath & facial tissue. Totally Chlorine Free is used for virgin paper fibers only, while Processed Chlorine Free is used for recycled content paper.



CIMS – CIMS is the first consensus-based management standard that outlines the primary characteristics of a successful, quality cleaning organization. Implemented as the sixth dimension of CIMS, the new criteria and designation offers cleaning organizations a certification that is tailored to help their customers secure points under the LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance (LEED-EBOM) Green Building Rating System, while greening their operations overall.



BPI Compostable Program- The Biodegradable Products Institute is a nonprofit that certifies biodegradable products in commercial composting facilities. Products must meet ASTM standards that they will biodegrade leaving no synthetic residues.



Design for the Environment – EPA's Design for the Environment (DfE) works in partnership with industry leaders, environmental groups, and academia to find ways to prevent pollution. DfE helps consumers and industrial purchasers make wise choices by identifying safe and effective products. It has evaluated and allowed more than 1,500 products to carry the DfE logo.



Energy Star- ENERGY STAR is a government-backed program helping businesses and individuals protect the environment through superior energy efficiency. EPA's ENERGY STAR partnership offers a proven energy management strategy that helps in measuring current energy performance, setting goals, tracking savings, and rewarding improvements. EPA provides an innovative energy performance rating system which businesses have already used in more than 130,000 buildings across the country. ENERGY STAR qualified products help consumers & businesses identify energy-efficient appliances.



E-Peat – EPEAT combines comprehensive, objective criteria for design, production, recycling, energy, and materials use with ongoing independent verification of manufacturer claims after registration. Products registered in EPEAT must meet 23 required environmental performance criteria. They are then rated Gold, Silver or Bronze based on the percentage of 28 optional criteria they meet.



E-Stewards – Certification program founded by the Basel Action Network (BAN) that restricts trade in hazardous wastes to stop the dumping of toxic waste on developing nations. Certification of electronics recyclers was initiated in late 2008, and in early 2010 the first certified e-Steward recyclers and the first three accredited e-Stewards certification bodies were announced. Businesses that commit to targeting the use of e-Stewards Recyclers for their electronic asset disposition services can become e-Stewards Enterprises.



Fair Trade Certified– The Fair Trade Certified™ Label guarantees consumers that strict economic, social and environmental criteria were met in the production and trade of an agricultural product. Fair Trade Certification is currently available in the U.S. for coffee, tea and herbs, cocoa and chocolate, fresh fruit, flowers, sugar, rice, and vanilla.



by SCS Certified.

Floor Score (Scientific Certification Systems) – SCS Certification systems developed by the Resilient Floor Covering Institute (RFCI) in conjunction with Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) that tests and certifies hard surface flooring and flooring adhesive products for compliance with rigorous indoor air quality requirements. Individual volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are evaluated using health-based specifications.



Food Alliance Certified – Comprehensive third-party certification for social and environmental responsibility in agriculture and the food industry. Food Alliance works at the juncture of science, business and ethics to define and promote sustainability in agriculture and the food industry, and to ensure safe and fair working conditions, humane treatment of animals, and careful stewardship of ecosystems.



Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certified – International certification and labeling system for products that come from responsibly managed forests and verified recycled sources. FSC has 3 distinct labels for paper (100% FSC, Mixed Source FSC and Recycled FSC) which varies on paper content (virgin or recycled). Certification is guided by 10 principles and criteria that include both environmental and social considerations.



GreenGuard – The GREENGUARD Environmental Institute (GEI) was founded in 2001 with the mission of improving human health and quality of life by enhancing indoor air quality and reducing people's exposure to chemicals and other pollutants. In keeping with that mission, GEI certifies products and materials for low chemical emissions and provides a free resource for choosing healthier products and materials for indoor environments.



Green-e – Independent consumer protection program for the sale of renewable energy and greenhouse gas reductions in the retail market. Green-e offers certification and

verification of renewable energy and greenhouse gas mitigation products. It is a program of Center for Resource Solutions.



Green Label & Green Label Plus Certified– In 1992, Carpet & Rug Institute launched its Green Label and Green Label Plus Testing Programs to test carpet, cushions and adhesives to help specifiers identify products with very low emissions of VOCs. CRI has recently launched its next series of improvements called Green Label Plus for carpet and adhesives. This enhanced program sets an even higher standard for IAQ and ensures that customers are purchasing the very lowest emitting products on the market.



Green Seal - Non-profit organization that uses science-based programs to empower consumers, purchasers and companies to create a more sustainable world. Green Seal develops life cycle-based sustainability standards for products, services and companies and offer third-party certification for those that meet these standards.



Green Restaurant Association Certified – The GRA is a national non-profit organization that provides a convenient and cost-effective way for restaurants, manufacturers, distributors, and consumers to become more environmentally responsible.



LEED - An internationally recognized green building certification system, providing third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance across several metrics: energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts. Developed by the US Green Building Council (USGBC), LEED provides building owners and operators a concise framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions. There are four levels of LEED Certification – Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum.



Level – level™ is the product certification program based on BIFMA International and NSF International ANSI/BIFMA e3-2010 Furniture Sustainability Standard. The standard is an open, consensus based method to evaluate the sustainable attributes of furniture products. It includes criteria for evaluating materials selection and usage, energy, human and ecosystem health, and social responsibility impacts.



Marine Stewardship Alliance Certified – The MSA is global organisation working with fisheries, seafood companies, scientists, conservation groups, and the public to promote the best environmental choice in seafood. The Marine Stewardship Alliance Certification identifies seafood that comes from a sustainable source and satisfied the requirements of MSA.



Rainforest Alliance Certified – Rainforest Alliance certification identifies agriculture that complies with strict guidelines protecting the environment, wildlife, workers, and local communities. The Rainforest Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior.



UL Environment – Certification program that addresses multiple environmental attributes throughout the entire lifecycle of the product or service. All EcoLogo certified products must also meet performance requirements to ensure they perform as well as their conventional alternative. Standards are developed in an open, public, and transparent process spanning approximately 12-18 months, and are designed so that only the top 20% of products available on the market can achieve certification.



USDA Organic – Organic Production is a system that is managed in accordance with the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) of 1990 (PDF) and regulations in Title 7, Part 205 of the Code of Federal Regulations to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. The National Organic Program (NOP) develops, implements, and administers national production, handling, and labeling standards.



WaterSense – The EPA WaterSense program provides a 3rd party, independent, testing and certification program. Products bearing the WaterSense label are 20 percent more water efficient and provide measurable water savings results.

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