



Are any of your company's products or services environmentally certified (i.e. under a third party certification scheme addressing environmental aspects, such as eco-labelling or organic certification)?

Rationale for question

Environmental certification, or 'eco-labelling', provides an indication for the consumer that a product or service meets certain environmental standards, normally guaranteed by an independent third party, when compared with other products or services of the same type. For example: eco-certification schemes for tourist accommodation encourage operators to minimise their environmental impacts; energy labels identify energy efficient electrical equipment; forest certification schemes ensure that timber is grown and harvested in a sustainable way and, depending on the scheme, may also signify that it has been legally sourced.

Reliable environmental certification and labelling is an effective way of informing customers about the environmental impacts of selected products and services, and the choices they can make. It empowers buyers to discriminate between products and services that may be harmful to the environment and those that are more

compatible with responsible environmental objectives. However, some claims are not verifiable or are too imprecise to be of use; this is an increasing problem as ever more labels are created. The UK [Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#) (defra) has produced various guides for businesses and other organisations choosing and using environmental labels and other credentials for green products and services.

Credible labelling schemes include: Blue Angel, Bluesign, Demeter, Dolphin Safe, Ecocert, Energy Saving Recommended by Energy Saving Trust, Energy Star, European Ecolabel ('The Flower'), Florimark, Forest Stewardship Council, Green Tourism Business Scheme, LEAF Marque, Marine Stewardship Council, NAPM approved mark (National Association of Paper Merchants), Nordic Swan Ecolabel, Oeko-Tex Standard 100, Organic Farmers and Growers, Organic Food Federation, PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification), Rainforest Alliance, Scottish Organic Producers' Association, and the Soil Association Organic Standard. This is not, however, an exhaustive list. There are many schemes available and others will be added as we are told about them.

There are still several business sectors where there is no good voluntary labelling scheme, or in which well-known standards or labels do not address all the issues which matter to buyers or do not meet market needs in other ways. So, even though they are not eco-labels, ISO 14001 and [EMAS](#), the European Union Eco-Management and Audit Scheme, are included in this question because such certification indicates a serious concern to address environmental issues within a business. However, although having a certified environmental management system guarantees that the company has a system in place to tackle its environmental impacts, it does not guarantee that a particular product or service meets a given standard.

ISO 14001 is an international standard for environmental management systems, externally monitored by independent bodies, which ensures that an organisation can manage its operations in an environmentally responsible way, appropriate to its particular needs. Users of such certified schemes are not allowed to use it on their products but they can make reference to it on company headed notepaper, on the sign in front of their factory, or on their website or on their vehicles. EMAS similarly incorporates the ISO 14001 requirements but is a higher standard as it requires a commitment to continuous environmental improvement and also includes a public reporting process, appropriate to the specific business operation, to communicate to its stakeholders what has been achieved. EMAS also uses a logo to indicate that a company is accredited.

For the purposes of this question, therefore, it might be certain products or services that are identified by an environmental label, such as an organic certification, to signify that products and services meet defined environmental standards, or it might be an entire company that is certified, using ISO 14001 or EMAS, as proof that its operations are managed in an environmentally responsible way.

Defining terms

'Eco-labelling' is an effective way of informing customers about the environmental impacts of selected products and the choices they can make. It empowers people to discriminate between products that are harmful to the environment and those more compatible with environmental objectives.

'Organic' is used to describe food grown without most artificial fertilisers or pesticides and in a way that emphasises crop rotation, making the most of natural fertilisers and ensuring that the life of the soil is maintained. Animals are kept in ways which minimise the need for medicines and other chemical treatments.

Organic certification requirements generally involve a set of production standards that include:

- avoidance of synthetic chemical inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, hormones, food additives, etc) and genetically modified organisms;
- use of farmland that has been free from chemicals for a number of years (often, three or more);
- keeping detailed written production and sales records (audit trail);
- maintaining strict physical separation of organic products from non-certified products; and
- undergoing periodic on-site inspections.

Organic food production has a legal definition within the EU. Within the UK, a minimum legal standard is set by government, with advice from ACOS (Advisory Committee on Organic Standards). Each stage of the organic food chain, from farms to shops (if they process the food in any way) must be inspected and registered in the UK by bodies such as the Soil Association, Organic Farmers and Growers or the Organic Food Federation. Each country within the EU and many outside has its own registration bodies.

'Biodynamic' farming is an approach based on the work of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. In addition to organic practices such as crop rotation and composting, biodynamic farmers rely on special plant, animal and mineral preparations and the rhythmic influences of the sun, moon, planets and stars. It meets the legal definition of organic.

Primary and Secondary answer requirements

ANSWERING YES

Companies must:

1. Say if it is the company itself that is certified and/or specify which products or services are certified; and
2. identify the labelling scheme(s) used or the environmental certification(s) held.

Companies may:

1. describe any plans to expand certification in the future.

ANSWERING NO

Companies must:

1. explain why they do not use a credible certification scheme that exists for their business sector, listing any business reasons, mitigating circumstances or other reasons that apply.

Companies may:

1. discuss any future plans regarding environmental certification and labelling; and/or
2. explain alternative ways to display responsible environmental behaviour.

ANSWERING NOT APPLICABLE is not a permissible answer to this question.

DON'T KNOW is not a permissible answer to this question.

NO ANSWER YET is only permissible under extraordinary circumstances and then for only a limited period.