



ECO BUY

ECO-FIND LISTING CRITERIA

An overview of the general criteria for listing suppliers of green products.



October 2010

Background

ECO-Buy works from the definition of 'green product' whereby:

"Green or environmentally preferred products are defined as products that have less harmful effects on human health and the environment than competing products that serve the same purpose."

Our focus is not only on increasing the quantity, quality and range of green products purchased by our government and business members; it is also about influencing behaviours and methodologies around green purchasing.

Our approach to assessing new products and suppliers is aligned with our behaviour change philosophy – we want to encourage manufacture and distribution of quality green products. While some products on our database will have superior environmental attributes to others, all products on the database are an improvement from their conventional counterparts. We are not a certification or research body, so we rely on suppliers to provide evidence of their product attributes.

Green product attributes

Green products typically have one or more of the following attributes:

- Recycled/Remanufactured content
- Low toxicity
- Energy Saving
- Water saving
- Reduced impact on biodiversity

A Life Cycle Approach

ECO-Buy takes a life cycle approach to determine how the criteria should be applied to a specific product. This helps ensure that the criteria is being applied to the aspects of the product that represent the main areas of environmental impact. For example, recycled content may not be the primary criteria for a product if the key impact of the product is energy use.

Competing products that serve the same purpose

ECO-Buy's compares green products with existing or competing products that serve the same purpose. When considering your product, ECO-Buy will make an assessment of the existing product that serves the same purpose. If there is no direct comparison with an existing product, ECO-Buy will either attempt to find a best fit or undertake an assessment to determine environmental benefits and environmental safety attributes, using its existing criteria as a guide. In addition, ECO-Buy may ask for evidence that the product achieves the performance results claimed before it is listed.

Examples of Green Product Attributes

The following examples act as a guide to the types of attributes that products can have to be listed on ECO-Find.

Reduced resource intensity

- The product contains a high proportion of recycled content compared to comparable products on the market.
- The product is made from reused or remanufactured materials (reducing the use of resources and the disposal of waste.)
- The product is made from recyclable resources where competing products serving the same function are made from non-recyclable materials.
- The product is made from renewable resources where there is evidence (for example an eco-label or certification) that the renewable resources are being managed sustainably (specific conditions apply to timber and paper products, see below).

Reduced toxicity of raw materials

ECO-Buy specifically looks for low toxicity alternatives in plastics, cleaning product and timber glues and treatments. Typical examples of low toxicity in products include:

- The product is made from lower toxicity ingredients than competing products. Suppliers must demonstrate that ingredients in the product are low harm for example through the MSDS.
- Composite Boards and Laminates are rated as E0 /Super E0 formaldehyde rating or formaldehyde free.
- Timber treatments are Preservative Free or ACQ (alternative to Copper Chrome Arsenic Treatment –CCA)
- Low toxicity pest control treatments (must be able to show evidence of both low toxicity and effectiveness)

Proven water and energy efficiency

Water:

- The product is labelled under the WELS Australian government water rating scheme and is in the top 20% of products listed.
- The product has a proven reduced water consumption during operation compared to equivalent available products but is a product type not currently rated under the WELS scheme.
- The product is eligible for receiving government rebates on water saving.

Energy:

- The product carries a star rating in the Australian government Energy Rating scheme and is in the top 20% of products listed.
- The product has a proven reduced energy consumption during operation compared to equivalent available products but is a product type not currently rated under the Energy Rating scheme.
- The product is a green energy product accredited with the Green Power accredited Energy Program
- The product is accredited under the Greenhouse friendly label – subject to overall life cycle impacts.
- The product is eligible for receiving government rebates on renewable energy (e.g. solar panels).

Reduced Impact on Biodiversity

Sourcing certain products, in particular timber and paper, can impact heavily on biodiversity.

To be considered for listing on ECO-Find, timber products must have one or more of the following attributes:

- Be derived from post consumer or post industrial timber waste (examples include sawdust and recycled timber)
- Be plantation grown (for example pine softwood)
- Able to demonstrate a significant reduction in use of native forest derived timber (>20%) compared to existing products (for example engineered timber, veneers)
- Use of certified timber in high value add product areas (for example high value furniture).
- Certified timber in product areas where there is no alternative and certification represents improved practice compared to existing products.

To be considered for listing on ECO-Find, paper products must have one of more of the following attributes (please note additional criteria apply refer paper criteria):

- Minimum of 80% recycled content, with any virgin fibre content being sourced from certified forests (see below).
- Non tree sources will be considered providing supplier can demonstrate sustainability of source (applicable to waste derived sources, bamboo etc)
- Lower recycled content may be considered for certain products where this represents improved practice compared to existing products.

Note that where applicable, accepted certifications include: AFS (Australian Forestry Standard), FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and PEFC (Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certifications). Additional schemes may be considered on a case by case basis.

Product Specific Criteria:

ECO-Buy has developed specific criteria for some product areas including:

- Cleaning products
- Paper
- Timber products
- Commercial printing
- Insulation

These criteria go into more detail than this general criteria. Contact ECO-Buy for more information if you think you have a sustainable product in these categories.

Products with environmental labelling certification.

Products will be considered for inclusion in the ECO-Find database if the supplier has achieved certification under an independent eco-labelling scheme. This means the product has been through an exhaustive certification procedure ensuring that the product contents and manufacturing processes meet a high environmental standard.

Recognised certification programs:

- The Good Environment Choice label (Australia).
- Equivalent international eco-label (certification body member of Global Eco-labelling Network (GEN).
- Greentag

Verification of environmental claims

Suppliers will be asked to provide / demonstrate evidence of environmental attributes of the product and verify material sources where applicable. Proof supporting environmental claims should be attached to the supplier registration form. Examples of acceptable third party organisations that can undertake tests on products include:

- Registered testing bodies (for example: National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) registered testing laboratories)
- Universities
- Government

ECO-Buy will also consider other forms of verification on a case by case basis.

Fitness for purpose

To ensure that users of ECO-Find can be assured of the quality and suitability of the product listed, suppliers are encouraged to list the relevant Australian Standards their product meets, or state in their ECO-Find entry that their product does not meet the standard.

ECO-Buy may also ask for evidence that the product is effective in providing its intended function.

Secondary environmental features for consideration

While products must meet one or more of the criteria outlined above, suppliers are encouraged to promote additional environmental criteria. ECO-Buy places an emphasis on reducing impacts over the life cycle of the product including:

- Manufacturing / production processes
- Packaging
- Distribution
- Potential for reuse and recycling
- Maintenance, and/or
- Disposal of the product.
- Environmental Management System

Products which can show reduced secondary impacts in addition to their primary environmental advantage are likely to be viewed favourably by ECO-Buy members.

Products subject to further investigation

Other ingredients of the product will be considered for impact on environment or human health. If the product is banned, embargoed or under investigation anywhere in Australia or internationally ECO-Buy reserves the right not to put that product on the database until they are satisfied it meets requirements.

If a product meets one criteria but fails in another criteria it will be subject to further investigation. Examples of products requiring further investigation:

- A recycled content product that contains ingredients that are under national, international investigation or if they are identified as toxic for human health by other environmental stakeholders.
- A wood product sourced from an old growth rainforest not certified by a third party process will not be listed as a renewable wood product.

Final decision to list a product rests with ECO-Buy.

Please note the final decision on whether to list a particular product or a supplier rests solely with ECO-Buy Limited. ECO-Buy reserves the right to determine whether or not to list a product and may decide to remove a listing at any time without prior warning (although reasonable efforts will be made to notify a supplier before removal of a listing). Any fee charged for listing will be refunded on a prorata basis.

Disclaimer

It is important that current and prospective suppliers have read and understand the following statement which can be found on the ECO-Find database website:

ECO-Find is not an auditing or accreditation body.

Prior to listing on ECO-Find, ECO-Buy requires suppliers of green products and services to provide evidence that they meet the relevant ECO-Find criteria. While all effort is made to verify claims made by suppliers, ultimately the claims are made by the supplier and not by ECO-Buy.

ECO-Find does not assess either environmental or non environmental attributes of listed products and services beyond those contained in the criteria. All statements made on a supplier's ECO-Find listing are made by the supplier and not by ECO-Buy.

Users of ECO-Find should note that while products and services listed on ECO-Find meet ECO-Buy's environmental criteria at the time of listing, standards and technology continually change. While ECO-Buy has a program of updating its criteria over time and requires ECO-Find suppliers to keep their listings up to date, no responsibility is taken for listings that do not currently meet ECO-Buy's criteria or out of date.

For Further Information

Contact:

Stephen Reardon

Research Manager

ECO-Buy

Ph: 03 9349 0403

sreardon@ecobuy.org.au

www.ecobuy.org.au