



THE GREEN CLAIMS GUIDANCE

# EU consumer rules on environmental claims and how to use C2C Certified®

Aligned with the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive

*Updated in March 2026*

---



# Table of Contents

[Regulatory context](#)



# Regulatory context: EU rules on environmental claims

The European Union has strengthened its framework to protect consumers against misleading environmental claims as part of the European Green Deal.

## Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive (EU) 2024/825

Adopted in March 2024, the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive amends the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive. It is legally binding, must be transposed by Member States by 27 March 2026, and will apply from 27 September 2026.

The Directive strengthens rules on environmental and sustainability claims, including:

- A ban on generic environmental claims unless they are clearly specified and substantiated
- Stricter rules on sustainability labels, allowing only labels based on third-party certification or public schemes
- A prohibition of product-level climate neutrality or reduced impact claims based solely on carbon offsetting

These rules apply to business-to-consumer (B2C) communications across the EU and significantly raise the bar for environmental performance.

## Status of the Green Claims Directive

The proposed Green Claims Directive was withdrawn in 2025 and was not adopted. There is therefore no standalone EU Green Claims Directive in force. However, misleading or vague environmental claims remain prohibited under EU law, notably through the Empowering Consumers Directive and existing consumer protection rules.

## What this means in practice

Companies must already ensure environmental claims are clear, specific, substantiated, and verifiable, and prepare for stricter enforcement from September 2026. This guidance aligns with the current binding EU legal framework and supports credible, transparent, and consumer-relevant environmental communication.

# Further guidance depending on your geographic region

Some countries have published their own guidance to provide country-specific rules on green claims. Below you will find a non-exhaustive list of existing guides:

## Guidance Reference

[The Green Guides](#)

[Guidelines regarding sustainability claims](#)

[Valide Umweltaussage oder Greenwashing?](#)

[Advertising Guidance](#)

Misleading environmental claims and social responsibility

[Le Guide Pratique des allégations environnementales](#)

[The Quick Guide on environmental claims](#)

[Virksomheders Miljømarkedsføring](#)

[Guía de comunicación sostenible](#)

Cómo incluir información medioambiental en tus estrategias y campañas

## Country Issued

*The United States*

*The Netherlands*

*Germany*

*The United Kingdom*

*France*

*Denmark - English*

*Denmark - Danish*

*Spain*

# C2C Certified® verifies your product achievements

To substantiate their environmental claims, companies must rely on **robust, science-based, and verifiable methods**. Under EU consumer protection law, including the Empowering Consumers Directive, independent, third-party verification plays an important role in supporting credible, voluntary product-related claims.

## Why C2C Certified® can help support product-related claims?

- C2C Certified® provides **verified and transparent information** on product environmental performance, based on independent assessment against publicly available criteria.
- **The holistic approach of the Product Standard** enables communication on multiple sustainability aspects covered by the certification, such as Material Health, Product Circularity, Clean Air & Climate Protection, Water & Soil Stewardship, and Social Fairness.
- **The Communication Guidance** enables you to select the appropriate claim according to the level of achievement of the certified product (product-related claims and process-related claims).

*Certification supports substantiation, but does not replace the company's responsibility to ensure that all consumer facing claims are accurate, specific, and compliant with applicable EU law.*



# 01. How to substantiate your green claims

Under EU consumer protection law, companies must ensure that explicit environmental claims made to consumers are clear, accurate, and verifiable. In practice, substantiation should be based on the following key principles:

1. Specification
2. Scientific evidence
3. Lifecycle perspective & significant environmental impact
4. No harmful impacts & trade-offs
5. Beyond the law
6. Report GHG emissions in a transparent way
7. Prioritize primary information

## Specification

Indicate clearly whether your claim concerns the whole product or some aspects of it.

### Correct Claims:

- ✓ This packaging is made of 75% recycled paper.
- ✓ This is a fully-electric truck.
- ✓ The cardboard box of the TV is fully recyclable.

### Incorrect Claims:

- ✗ Our product contains some recycled content.
- ✓ *Our product contains 75% of recycled polyester.*
- ✗ This T-Shirt is made of organic cotton.
- ✓ *This T-Shirt is made of 30% organic cotton.*

**These claims are too vague and not specific enough. Here, indicate the exact amount.**

- ✗ The packaging is recyclable.
- ✓ *The packaging is fully recyclable after removing the plastic handle.*

**Make clear what the sustainability benefit is and what part of the product or of the lifecycle the claims refer to (e.g. raw material extraction, transport, production, use, disposal).**

- ✗ We made a conscious choice to manufacture our product using fewer virgin materials.  
**This is too general and therefore not recommended.**
- ✗ Environmentally friendly, eco, green, nature's friend, ecological, sustainable, more sustainable, good for the environment, climate-friendly or friendly to the environment, non-polluting, biodegradable, zero emissions, low on carbon, carbon-neutral, climate-neutral, slave-free, conscious, responsible.

**The use of general or absolute terms is often too vague and misleading. It needs to be nuanced or removed completely from the company's communications.**

# Scientific evidence

Use accurate data and certifications based on widely recognized scientific evidence to demonstrate the accuracy of your claim.

## Correct Claims:

- ✓ The C2C Certified® Product Standard ensures that our environmental claims are backed by accurate data and certifications based on widely recognized scientific evidence. By adhering to this standard, we provide transparent and verifiable information about our products' sustainability, giving consumers confidence in the environmental benefits we promote.
- ✓ We have a list of restricted substances in place, following the requirements of the EU REACH Directive, and engage with our suppliers to ensure compliance.

## Incorrect Claims:

- ✗ We certify that our product contains some recycled content.
- ✓ *Our panels are made from 100% recycled materials tested for potential contaminants against the X analytical test.*

Here it adds value to include a description of the specific tests conducted and materials tested. The recycled content should be evaluated by a third-party to establish the amount and source. Analytical testing required under the C2C Certified® standard provides the scientific evidence to prove the accuracy of this claim.

- ✗ This product does not harm the environment.

Without concrete evidence or certification, such broad claims can be misleading and are often considered greenwashing.

**Good to note that:** C2C Certified® recognizes other programs and certifications that can also support your environmental claims. Please refer to [the C2CPII-Recognized Certification Programs and Standards](#) for the most recent list of recognized programs.

# Lifecycle perspective & significant environmental impact

From the extraction of raw materials to disposal, take into account the entire life cycle of a product to guarantee a holistic assessment and take all the relevant environmental aspects and impacts into account to assess the environmental performance.

## Correct Claims:

- ✓ Based on a cradle-to-grave life cycle assessment, our packaging design prioritises reductions in climate change and resource use, which were identified as the most significant environmental impacts across raw material extraction, manufacturing, transport, use, and end-of-life.
- ✓ To assess the environmental performance of our containers, we evaluate impacts across the full life cycle, including raw material sourcing, production energy use, logistics, and end-of-life scenarios. This assessment showed that material choice and manufacturing energy were the dominant contributors to environmental impact, leading us to redesign the product to reduce both.

These claims are based on a life cycle assessment (LCA) that evaluates the product's environmental performance from production to disposal, ensuring that it takes all relevant environmental aspects and impacts into account.

## Incorrect Claims:

- ✗ Our washing machines are sustainable because we use less water during the rinse cycle.

This claim is incorrect if it only considers the water usage during the rinse cycle and ignores other environmental impacts, aspects, or performance metrics such as energy consumption, material sourcing, and end-of-life disposal. For a valid comparison, the assessment must cover all relevant environmental impacts and performance metrics equivalently.

- ✗ Our product is environmentally friendly because it uses biodegradable packaging.

This claim is incorrect because it only considers one aspect (biodegradable packaging) and does not take into account the entire life cycle of the product, from raw material extraction to disposal. It fails to address all relevant environmental aspects and impacts, such as energy consumption during production, transportation emissions, and end-of-life disposal.

# No harmful impact

## & trade-offs

Take all environmental aspects into account to assess the environmental impact or performance of the product and indicate any environmental trade-offs. Make sure that a positive achievement has no harmful impact on climate change, resource consumption and circularity, sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, pollution, biodiversity, animal welfare and ecosystems.

### Correct Claims:

- ✓ This product has achieved CO2 and water consumption savings.

**This claim is correct but must be nuanced and indicate trade-offs if it leads to any increase in another environmental aspect. For instance, if you want to communicate on CO2 emissions reduction while this reduction led to an increase in water use, then this claim is not complete. If no trade-offs were found, then this claim is accurate, but make sure to verify it before claiming it.**

- ✓ Our washing powder has a reduced environmental impact because it allows consumers to wash clothes at lower temperatures, saving energy during the washing cycle. Additionally, it uses 1/3 less packaging per wash compared to its previous version, and contains fewer hazardous ingredients.

**This claim is based on a life cycle assessment (LCA) that evaluates the product's environmental performance from production to disposal, ensuring that improvements in one area do not lead to greater negative impacts in another.**

**Good to note that:** C2C Certified® takes a holistic approach and aims to ensure that all aspects are considered and that no significant harm is done. The C2C Certified® Products Program verifies across five sustainability performance categories: Material Health, Product Circularity, Clean Air & Climate Protection, Water & Soil Stewardship, and Social Fairness. Additional requirements on packaging, animal welfare, and an environmental policy must be in place to make sure that the product has no harmful impact on people or planet.

# Beyond the law

Demonstrate that your claim is not equal to requirements imposed by law, and indicate whether your product subject to the claim performs significantly better than in common practice.

### Correct Claims:

- ✓ Our LED light bulbs use 50% less energy than the industry standard, significantly reducing electricity consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Unlike traditional incandescent bulbs, which are required by law to meet a minimum energy efficiency standard, our LED bulbs exceed these requirements by offering twice the efficiency. This results in lower energy bills and a smaller carbon footprint for consumers.
- ✓ Our company sources materials from suppliers who not only comply with child labor laws but also provide educational opportunities and living wages to their workers, ensuring a positive social impact beyond legal compliance.
- ✓ Fair business practices are applied in our company's governance and management approach. This is reflected by a diverse, inclusive, and engaged workforce and through training, remuneration, and payment of a living wage.

### Incorrect Claims:

- ✗ Our plastic bottles are environmentally friendly because they are recyclable, which is better than what is required by law.  
**This claim does not provide any comparison to common practice or indicate how the product performs significantly better.**
- ✗ My product is made with materials and components from countries where no child or forced labor is involved.
- ✗ My company strikes for the abolition of child labor.

**These claim are incorrect because it highlights compliance with legal requirements rather than demonstrating sustainability achievements beyond what is mandated by law. Child labor and forced labor are prohibited practices in the European Union. The EU has strict regulations to prevent these practices both within its borders and in the supply chains of products sold in the EU (find out more information on the [EU Forced Labour Regulation here](#)).**

# Report GHG emissions in a transparent way

Separate GHG offsets from GHG emissions, specify whether those offsets relate to emission reductions or removals, and provide information on the quality of the offsets.

## Correct Claims:

- ✓ Between 2020 and 2023, we reduced our operational GHG emissions by 55% through electrification and the installation of solar panels on our facility's roof. To address the remaining emissions, we purchased carbon offsets from the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) program. These offsets are specifically related to emission removals through methane destruction projects (e.g., landfill gas flaring), which are verified by a C2CPII-recognized standard to ensure they provide real, measurable, and permanent GHG removal.  
**Optional further comments:** According to the [Carbon Offset Guide](#), such project types are considered lower risk compared to forestry and land use projects, which face significant challenges in meeting offset quality criteria and are not generally recommended unless rated as low risk by a third-party provider according to C2CPII requirements ([Offset Guide, Annex 1](#)).

## Incorrect Claims:

- ✗ Carbon neutral, climate neutral, 100% CO<sub>2</sub> compensated.  
**Green claims based solely on carbon offsetting schemes are banned. Companies should prioritize reducing emissions within their own operations or value chain. When making climate-related claims, they must clearly distinguish between reductions achieved through their own efforts and those dependent on purchasing offsets.**
- ✗ Green electricity and natural gas.  
**This claim gives the impression that it supplies 100% green energy and natural gas, when this is not the case. It is misleading because it is not clear that the manufacturing process requires the use of fossil gas, but that it is offset by the purchase of carbon offset programs. Clearly state that emissions are reduced by a specific percentage and that the remaining percentage is offset by the purchase of carbon offset/credit programs.**

**Good to note that:** C2C Certified® carefully selects the quality of offset programs. Offsets must come from projects certified according to [C2CPII-Recognized Certification Programs and Standards](#). In addition, the [Carbon Offset Guide](#) provides practical guidance for understanding, selecting, and using carbon credits, emphasising the importance of credit quality, additionality, permanence, and transparency, and clearly distinguishes between “lower risk” project types and higher risk types. Annex 1 offers a comparative risk assessment table for different offset project types, helping users identify which projects are more likely to deliver reliable climate benefits.

# Prioritize primary information

Include primary information (directly measured or collected by the company) and when no primary information is available, then include secondary information (based on other sources than primary information, such as literature, engineering studies, and patents).

## Correct Claims:

- ✓ Our bottle is made of 100% post-consumer recycled PET resin made out of bales of post-consumer PET bottles clear and clear blue. Our Product Data Report is available online with all third-party verified circularity achievements.
- ✓ Our paper-based food takeaway packaging is certified home compostable according to TÜV AUSTRIA OK Compost HOME, ensuring it can break down in typical household composting conditions at end of life.

**Good to note that:** The use of approved analytical test methods, C2CPII recognized standards and certifications based on third-party audits and verification provides directly measured and assessed data that can be used to make accurate claims for the specific certified product. Some internal audits or the use of desk research may be acceptable, for example for the environmental risk assessment.

Please refer to the [C2CPII-Recognized Certification Programs and Standards](#) or the most recent list of recognized programs.

# 02.

## How to substantiate your comparative claims

Comparative environmental claims (such as stating that a product or company performs better or has a lower environmental impact than another) are considered high risk under EU consumer protection law and must be handled with particular care.

To avoid misleading consumers, comparative claims should be based on fair, consistent, and verifiable comparisons, ensuring that like for like elements are assessed. In practice, this means comparisons should rely on:

1. The same type of information
2. The same source
3. The same stages along the value chain
4. The same environmental impacts
5. The same assumptions

Comparative claims should be clear, accurate, and verifiable, and must not exaggerate differences or omit relevant information that could mislead consumers.

## The same type of information

The information and data used for the comparison of the two products are equivalent.

### Correct Claims:

- ✓ This packaging contains 30% recycled plastic, while the other one contains 95%.
- ✓ Our newly launched product has a carbon footprint of 1.2 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per unit, while the previous version had a carbon footprint of 2.5 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per unit.

### Incorrect Claims:

- ✗ Our 50% cotton T-shirt is more eco-friendly than our 50% polyester T-shirt because cotton is a natural material.

The claim does not provide equivalent data or information for both products. It only mentions that cotton is a natural material without considering other environmental impacts.

Moreover, the claim ignores the fact that cotton production can involve significant water usage and pesticide application, which can be harmful to the environment. Polyester, while synthetic, can be made from recycled materials and may have a different environmental footprint. Lastly, there is no specific data or metrics provided to substantiate the claim, making it vague and potentially misleading.

# The same source

The data is generated or sourced in an equivalent manner to compare the two.

## Correct Claims:

- ✓ Our new detergent reduces water pollution by 40% compared to our previous formula. Both products were tested under identical conditions, using the same water quality parameters and washing machine settings, ensuring a fair and accurate comparison.

**This claim is correct because they use equivalent testing conditions.**

- ✓ Our aluminium door frames are certified Cradle to Cradle Certified® at the Gold level across all product categories, while a comparable aluminium door frame achieved Bronze certification, indicating more advanced performance in areas such as material health and product circularity.

**It is possible to compare the sustainability achievements of two products if they are evaluated against the same standard. In this case, the comparison covers the full scope of the certification, but specific claims can also be made on individual sections such as Material Health or Product Circularity.**

## Incorrect Claims:

- ✗ Our door frames are more sustainable than our competitor's because they are made from 100% recycled materials, while our competitor's frames are only 50% recycled.

**This claim is incorrect if the data about the recycled content is not sourced or verified using the same standards or methodologies. It also does not specify the certification or standard being used for comparison, which can lead to misleading conclusions.**

# The same stages along the value chain

The coverage of the value chain stages must be equivalent for the comparison.

## Correct Claims:

- ✓ Our organic cotton T-shirt reduces water usage by 50% compared to our conventional cotton T-shirt, considering the entire production process from farming to final product.

**The claim is correct because the comparison covers all relevant stages of the value chain, ensuring that the environmental performance is assessed comprehensively and fairly for both products. Both T-shirts are evaluated from cotton farming, processing, manufacturing, transportation, and retail.**

**Good to note that:** The Cradle to Cradle Certified® assessment has a defined focus on the final manufacturing stage of the certified product, as specified in the final manufacturing stage process definitions. At lower achievement levels, requirements primarily emphasise processes and impacts associated with this final manufacturing stage. With increasing achievement levels, the assessment progressively extends to additional aspects of the product's life cycle, including upstream supply chain considerations, product use, and cycling pathways.

## Incorrect Claims:

- ✗ Our laptops are more environmentally friendly than our competitor's because we use renewable energy in our manufacturing process, while they do not.

**This claim is incorrect if the coverage of the value chain stages is not equivalent. For example, if the competitor also uses renewable energy but in different stages of their value chain, the comparison would be misleading. It also lacks specific data or certification to support the claim, making it potentially misleading.**

# The same environmental impacts

The coverage of environmental impacts, aspects, or performance must be equivalent to compare the two.

## Correct Claims:

- ✓ Our biodegradable packaging reduces overall environmental impact by 40% compared to our traditional plastic packaging. This comparison includes equivalent assessments of raw material extraction, manufacturing processes, transportation emissions, usage, and end-of-life disposal.

**This comparative claim is accurate because all environmental impacts are covered: both packaging types are evaluated for their impacts on resource use, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, and waste generation.**

**The comparison also includes all relevant environmental aspects such as energy consumption, water usage, and recyclability. The assessment ensures that all stages and impacts are considered equally for both types of packaging, providing a fair and comprehensive comparison.**

# The same assumptions

The conclusions drawn from the assessment must be done in a similar way.

## Correct Claims:

- ✓ Our electric vehicle emits 60% less CO<sub>2</sub> over its lifetime compared to our gasoline vehicle. This comparison is based on the same assumptions for both vehicles, including average driving distance, energy source for electricity, and vehicle lifespan.

**This claim is accurate because both vehicles are assessed using identical assumptions for average annual mileage, energy mix for electricity (e.g., percentage of renewable energy), and total lifespan of the vehicles. The comparison includes CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from production, usage, and end-of-life disposal.**

**Therefore, here the conclusions are drawn using the same methodology and assumptions, ensuring a fair and accurate comparison of the environmental performance of both vehicles.**

# 03. How to communicate about your claims

Under EU consumer protection law, how a claim is presented and explained is as important as how it is substantiated. When communicating environmental claims, companies should pay particular attention to the following situations:

1. If the claim is related to the use phase
2. If the claim is related to future environmental performance
3. Information to disclose

## If the claim is related to the use phase

The claim should include information on how the consumer should use the product to achieve the expected environmental performance.

### Correct Claims:

- ✓ Our energy-efficient washing machine reduces water and electricity usage by 30% compared to standard models. To achieve these savings, use the machine with full loads, select the eco-wash setting, and use cold water whenever possible.

**Good to note that:** Under the Cradle to Cradle Certified® Product Standard (Version 5.0), companies are encouraged to complete and publish a Product Data Report on the Product Registry. This report may include information on cleaning, maintenance, repair, and product care, or provide a link to where such information can be found.

Under Version 5.0 of the Cradle to Cradle Certified® Product Standard, companies are encouraged to indicate the functional use period of the product in the Product Data Report. When provided, this information helps inform consumers about how to prolong the product's lifespan and how it is intended to be managed at the end of its use.

# If the claim is related to future environmental performance

The claim should include a time-bound commitment (for own operations and value chains).

## Correct Claims:

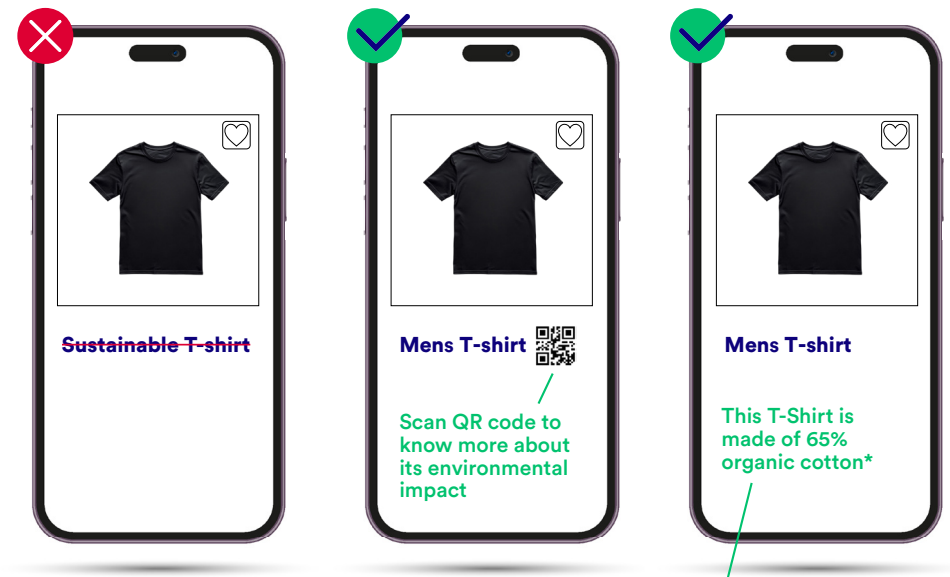
- ✓ To meet our 2030 Climate Challenge, we aim at reducing operational energy demand and carbon by at least 75%, before offsetting and reducing embodied carbon by 50-70% before offsite renewables offsetting.
- ✓ We follow the clear UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard to drive carbon emission reductions and achieve Net Zero carbon by 2050.
- ✓ By 2025, we commit to reducing our water usage across all operations by 40%, and ensuring that 100% of our wastewater is treated and reused within our facilities.
- ✓ Our goal is to achieve zero waste to landfill by 2030. We will accomplish this by implementing comprehensive recycling programs and reducing our overall waste generation by 50% by 2025.
- ✓ To support our 2040 sustainability vision, we pledge to source 100% of our raw materials from certified sustainable sources by 2035, and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2040.

These claims include specific, measurable targets and time frames, ensuring transparency and accountability in the company's future environmental performance.

# Information to disclose

In a physical form or in the form of a weblink or QR code:

- Environmental aspects, impacts, or performance covered by the claim
- Relevant EU or international standards
- Underlying studies or calculations used for the assessment with explanations of their scope, assumptions, and limitations
- Brief explanation on how the improvements are achieved
- Certifications and contact details of the verifier
- Information on % of offsets and if these relate to emission reductions or removals (for climate-related claims)
- A summary of the assessment that is clear and understandable to consumers (with all the above points)



\*This cotton is GOTS-Certified – find out more [here](#).

# Compliance and penalties

Under EU consumer protection law, including the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive, Member States are responsible for enforcement and penalty regimes at national level.

Each EU country must designate one or more competent authorities to monitor compliance with the rules on environmental claims. Individuals or organizations may report traders suspected of making misleading environmental claims to these authorities.

Member States must also establish effective, proportionate, and dissuasive penalties for infringements. While the exact sanctions vary by country, enforcement measures may include:

- **Fines:** financial penalties that take into account the nature, gravity, and duration of the infringement, as well as the size and turnover of the trader. Repeated or serious violations may result in higher fines.
- **Confiscation of economic benefits:** removal of financial gains obtained as a result of misleading environmental claims, including revenue linked to the affected products.
- **Corrective and restrictive measures:** in certain cases, authorities may impose temporary restrictions, such as exclusion from public procurement procedures or orders to cease the misleading practice.

Enforcement and penalties are determined at national level, but are intended to ensure a high level of consumer protection and to discourage greenwashing across the EU.



---

**cradle to cradle**  
products innovation

