

WHAT IS AN ECO-LABEL?

Eco-labels, or certifications, provide information about the environmental, social, or ethical impacts associated with the production or use of a product or service, and verify that a product meets or exceeds a set of standards. Companies certify their products on a voluntary basis to demonstrate corporate responsibility and distinguish the quality of their brand or their product. When purchasing, eco-labels are great specifications to request from suppliers during competitive bids or to look for when making quick decisions on products or suppliers for low value and invitational competitive purchasing.

3 Types of Product Eco-labels (Source: www.globalecolabelling.net)

Description	Characteristics
Type I	
Based on environmental criteria selected by an independent third-party entity. Criteria are typically developed for a specific product type such as personal computers or monitors. Products must be certified to these criteria through the third-party entity in order to be able to display the eco-label. <i>Example: UL ECOLOGO, Green Seal</i>	Criteria are usually designed to allow for only a certain portion of the total market of a given product category to qualify. Usually awarded for a fixed time period with an administrative cost or other expense involved in using the labels on products. Based on a single product attribute (recycled content or energy efficiency) or a full life-cycle assessment (LCA) of a product's environmental impact.
Type II	
Include any kind of sustainable declaration made by manufacturers, importers, distributors, or anyone else who is likely to benefit from the product's environmental claims. <i>Example: A manufacturer's declaration that a product is "biodegradable."</i>	Usually not independently verified by a third-party entity. No pre-determined or universally accepted criteria are used as reference points. These labels must still meet 'truth-in-advertising' or other product claim standards.
Type III	
Include comprehensive data lists that give environmental and social information on a product throughout its life cycle	Independent bodies set the categories of information and verify the data given. Does not indicate which products in a category are better or worse; requires consumers to identify and weigh the different environmental and social risks.

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WHAT ECO-LABELS SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

All three types of eco-labels provide relevant information and are worth considering. However, Type I Eco-labels, in most cases, are widely available, easy to identify and certified by a third-party entity. The table below outlines several Type I Eco-labels that are commonly recognized in Canada and demonstrates which product categories they are applicable to. This is not exhaustive list, as many additional eco-labels are available in the marketplace. Many of the following eco-labels will have product directories available through their websites.





You can also check-out the following resources which provide very large databases of eco-labels, to discover what others may be relevant to your purchases:

- <http://www.ecolabelindex.com/>
- <https://spot.ul.com/>
- <https://www.scsglobalservices.com/>




Example Type I Eco-Labels

Product Category	Look for the Logo	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronics including desktops, laptops, thin clients, workstations and computer monitors 		<p>Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool http://www.epeat.net/ EPEAT is the leading overall Type-1 ecolabel for technology products. It includes gold, silver and bronze levels and is comprehensive of many sustainability criteria at the product and organizational level. The EPEAT product registry is managed by the Global Electronics Council, registered products can be found at epeat.net.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House hold appliances • Electronics 		<p>Energy Star http://www.energystar.gov/ Household and office appliances and electronics that have earned the ENERGY STAR meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the US Environmental Protection Agency and US Department of Energy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household appliances • Computing and communications equipment • Consumer electronics • Lighting • Power tools • Leisure and sports equipment • Monitoring and controls equipment • Automatic dispensers 		<p>RoHS (Restriction of Hazardous Substances) https://rohsguide.com/ Impacts the entire electronics industry and many electrical products. A RoHS certified product confirms that the proportion of hazardous, or difficult to dispose substances is limited to the maximum allowed and requires more environmentally friendly alternatives.</p>





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Product Category	Look for the Logo	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desktops • Notebooks • Tablets • Smartphones • Displays • All-in-one PCs • Projectors • Headsets • Network equipment • Data storage and servers 		<p>TCO Certified https://tcocertified.com/ TCO is a leading, globally recognized certification for IT products that meet comprehensive environmental, human health, and social responsibility criteria across a product’s entire life cycle.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building materials, furniture and furnishings • Electronic equipment • Cleaning and maintenance products • Medical devices for breathing gas pathways 		<p>GREENGUARD Indoor Air Quality Certified https://www.ul.com/resources/ul-greenguard-certification-program Products that have achieved GREENGUARD Certification are scientifically proven to meet some of the world’s most rigorous third-party chemical emissions standards, helping to reduce indoor air pollution and the risk of chemical exposure to VOC’s. There are 2 tiers of certification: GREENGUARD Certification and GREENGUARD Gold Certification. All certified products are subject to a review of the manufacturing process and routine testing to help ensure minimal impact on the indoor environment.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and construction • Cleaning and Housekeeping • Electronics • Office products • Paper and plastic • Personal care products • Renewable electricity • “Other” (see hyperlink) 	 	<p>UL ECOLOGO Certification Program https://www.ul.com/resources/ecologo-certification-program The Environmental Choice Program (ECP), Environment Canada's ecolabelling program, provides a market incentive to manufacturers and suppliers of environmentally preferable products and services, and thereby helps consumers identify products and services that are less harmful to the environment.</p> <p>ECOLOGO, was previously the Canadian EcoLogo Program, also referred to as “Environmental Choice,” based on the International Standards Organization ISO 14024 standard for ecolabelling and was managed by TerraChoice.</p>





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Product Category	Look for the Logo	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most major appliances • Heating and cooling systems 		<p>EnerGuide https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy-efficiency/energuguide/12523 EnerGuide is a Natural Resources Canada initiative that helps consumers purchase the most energy-efficient equipment on the market. It shows how much energy appliances consume in a year of normal service and makes it easy to compare the energy efficiency of each model to others of the same size and class.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and construction • Building interiors • Building retrofits • Neighbourhood development 		<p>LEED: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design www.usgbc.org/leed The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System® is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. Members of the U.S. Green Building Council representing all segments of the building industry developed LEED and continue to contribute to its evolution.</p> <p>Projects pursuing LEED certification earn points for various green building strategies across several categories based on the number of points achieved, a project earns one of four LEED rating levels: Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum</p> <p>Information can also be found on the Canada Green Building Council website.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furniture systems and components • Hard surface flooring • Paint • Wall coverings • Casework • Insulation 		<p>Scientific Certification Systems https://www.scsglobalservices.com/ The Indoor Advantage and Indoor Advantage Gold standard applies to interior furniture and building materials to ensure low VOC emissions and other air quality indicators. The standards align with both ANSI/BIFMA M7.1 and X7.1, and CA 01350 and qualifies for many building rating systems, including LEED v4, BREEAM, WELL Building, and Living Building Challenge.</p> <p>FloorScore® is a related certification for hard surface flooring materials, adhesives, and underlayments.</p>





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Product Category	Look for the Logo	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seating • Tables • Case goods (cabinets/shelves) • Desk systems • Accessories • Architectural products 		<p>LEVEL® by BIFMA https://www.levelcertified.org/</p> <p>An evaluation and certification system for environmentally preferable and socially responsible office furniture. The system considers corporate, facility, and product impacts across categories including materials, energy, health, and social with three performance tiers; LEVEL 1, 2, and 3.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomodation facilities 		<p>Green Key Global http://www.greenkeyglobal.com/</p> <p>A leading international environmental certification body, offered through the Hotel Association of Canada (HAC), that provides standardized programs and resources, designed specifically for the hotel and meetings industries. Find members here.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric chillers • Paints and coatings • Window and doors • Household cleaning products • Food preparation and food service packaging • Floor finishes and strippers • Hand soaps and hand cleaner • Institutional and industrial cleaner • Paper towels, napkins and tissue paper • Printing and writing paper 		<p>Green Seal www.greenseal.org</p> <p>Green Seal is an independent, non-profit organization that strives to achieve a healthier and cleaner environment by identifying and promoting products and services that cause less toxic pollution and waste, conserve resources and habitats, and minimize global warming and ozone depletion.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building materials • Interior design products • Textiles and fabrics • Cosmetics • Home care products • Paper and plastic • Packaging 		<p>Cradle to Cradle® http://www.mbdc.com/</p> <p>This certification is a comprehensive, science-based standard for designing and making products for the Circular Economy. The certification includes five categories: material health, circular economy, renewable energy, water stewardship, and social fairness. The certification program recognizes five levels of product achievement: Basic, Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum.</p> <p>The Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute has issued over 475 certificates covering more than 8,000 certified products in a variety of categories.</p>

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Product Category	Look for the Logo	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper Products Wood products 		<p>Forest Stewardship Council www.fsc.org</p> <p>The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an independent, not for profit, non-government organization that provides standard setting, trademark assurance and accreditation services for companies and organizations interested in responsible forestry products.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textiles and fabrics Apparel Mattresses Towels Linens 		<p>OEKO-TEX https://www.oeko-tex.com/en/</p> <p>OEKO-TEX® provides a set of labels for textile and leather products that address testing for harmful substances as well as ecological and socially responsible manufacturing for products and production facilities.</p> <p>The labels include: STANDARD 100 by OEKO-TEX®; LEATHER STANDARD by OEKO-TEX®; MADE IN GREEN by OEKO-TEX®; STeP by OEKO-TEX®; DETOX TO ZERO; ECO PASSPORT by OEKO-TEX®</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textile products, brands, and manufacturers 		<p>BLUESIGN https://www.bluesign.com/en</p> <p>The BLUE WAY by BLUESIGN is a certification system that traces each textile's path along the manufacturing process, making improvements at every stage to ensure worker health and safety and a cleaner environment through reducing the use of toxic chemicals and other pollution.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaners & Floor care Laundry and dishwasher detergents Graffiti remover Vehicle cleaning products Drain maintenance Holding tank treatment Septic system treatment Inkjet print Pavement treatment 		<p>Design for the Environment Certification (Dfe Formulator) www.epa.gov/dfe</p> <p>The Design for the Environment (Dfe) Formulator was designed with the US Environmental Protection Agency to promote risk reduction through pollution prevention (also known as source reduction). EPA recognized the need to develop a cleaner, safer technologies program to work with industry to design products, processes, and technologies that are competitive but environmentally preferable.</p>

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Product Category	Look for the Logo	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flowers and plants Food and beverage Health and beauty Home and kitchen Printing services Sporting goods 		<p>Rainforest Alliance Certified https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/ This certification indicates that a farm, forest, or tourism enterprise has been audited to meet standards that require environmental, social, and economic sustainability.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bottled water Food equipment Home water treatment systems Home appliances Plumbing and faucets 		<p>NSF International www.nsf.org The NSF Mark can be found on millions of consumer, commercial, and industrial products today. Products are evaluated certified against a set of standards to help ensure health and safety for consumer and the environment.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food and agricultural products 		<p>Canada Organic https://canada-organic.ca/en/organic Organic production is a system of farming that replenishes and maintains soil fertility without the use of toxic and persistent synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. It encourages practices that increase biodiversity and reduce negative environmental impacts, while also supporting animal health and welfare. The Canada Organic Regime (COR) requires mandatory certification to the Canadian Organic Standards for organic products (food for human consumption, feed, and seed).</p> <p>You may also see the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Organic Program (NOP) logo on Canadian shelves.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food and agricultural products (ex. Coffee, tea, sugar, chocolate, bananas, etc.) Artesanal made products (ex. soccer balls, clothing, bags, jewelry, etc.) 		<p>Fairtrade Canada www.fairtrade.ca/ In Canada, you'll find the Fairtrade label on tropical agricultural products and artisanal products. Fairtrade Certification ensures social and environmental standards are met throughout the supply chain. Standards ensure that producers receive a fair wage and work in a safe environment.</p>

ECO-LABELS & CERTIFICATIONS FOR SUPPLIERS

Many eco-labels are attributed to individual products, but there are also standards to look for that are applied at the company or organizational level. The below table provides some examples of certifications to help indicate that a supplier has met high standards in sustainability.

Look for the Logo	Details
	<p>Certified Benefit Corporation https://bcorporation.net/ Known as BCorp, this label is for private companies that meet standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability. All BCorp members complete a B Impact Assessment and share their scores on their public profiles on bcorporation.net. Public companies and their subsidiaries have extra transparency requirements.</p>
	<p>Social Enterprise Certification from Buy Social https://www.buysocialcanada.com/ Provides a third-party certification program to verify social enterprises; which are businesses that sell goods or services, embed a social, cultural or environmental purpose into the business, and reinvest the majority of profits into their social mission. Check the website for a list of businesses.</p>
	<p>CarbonNeutral https://carbonneutral.com/ CarbonNeutral certification means that a company has followed The CarbonNeutral Protocol to verify their claim of carbon neutrality. Carbon neutrality is achieved by calculating a carbon footprint and reducing it to zero through a combination of in-house efficiency measures, renewable energy and external emissions reductions projects.</p>
	<p>Social Purpose Business https://socialpurpose.ca/cohort-community/ While Social Purpose is not technically an eco-label, there are several cohorts of businesses in Canada working become Social Purpose Businesses (SPBs), which means to be a company whose enduring reason for being is to create a better world.</p>
	<p>NSF/ANSI 391.1 https://www.nsf.org/nsf-standards/nsf-ansi-391-1-certification The highest available certification standard for sustainable professional services. This standard includes environmental, social, and ethical criteria.</p>