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Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet

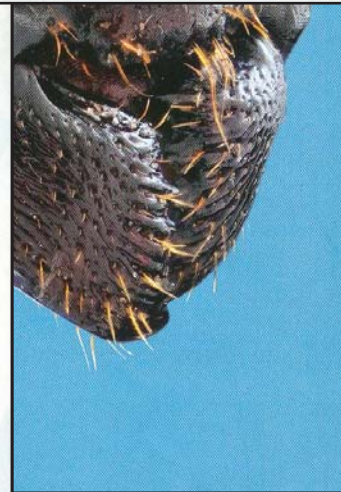
Logo Land

In the struggle to shop responsibly, it's easy to get befuddled by all those eco-certification stamps, which now number in the hundreds. What do they mean? Are they legit? This chart details a few of the most trustworthy. —Avital Binshtock and Natalya Stanko



| LOGO | WHO | WHERE | WHAT IT MEANS | SHADOW OF A DOUBT |
|---|---|--|--|---|
|  | U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE | Food and personal care items | The product is free of hormones, antibiotics, genetic engineering, synthetic fertilizers, and most synthetic pesticides. If a product has multiple ingredients, at least 95 percent of them must be organic. | Farmers can use certain synthetic pesticides and still get the seal. |
|  | RAINFOREST ALLIANCE, a nonprofit that works to conserve and ensure livelihoods | Food and products | Awarded to operations that take measures to protect the environment. | Producers must pay for certification. |
|  | ENERGY STAR program launched in the 1990s to promote energy conservation | Energy-efficient products | Products that meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. | Some products may be certified but not all are energy efficient. |
|  | B CORPORATION, a nonprofit that certifies companies that use the power of business to solve social and environmental problems | and products from many economic sectors | (80 out of 200) after being rated on a range of factors related to its environmental and social practices. | per year to be certified; small businesses pay \$500. |
|  | GREEN ELECTRONICS COUNCIL, a nonprofit that brings "focus to the special issues of electronics and sustainability" | Computers, monitors, and other electronic devices | Products are awarded a gold, silver, or bronze seal based on their efficiency level and the manufacturer's commitment to reducing toxic materials and lengthening the product's life cycle. | EPEAT's board of advisers includes manufacturers whose products have earned the seal and retailers who sell products with the seal. |
|  | MARINE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL, which "develops standards for sustainable fishing and seafood traceability" | Seafood | Certifies that seafood comes from fisheries that don't contribute to overfishing or environmental degradation. | The factors used to define a fishery as "sustainable" have been criticized for being too broad. |
|  | FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL, a nonprofit that advocates for the responsible care of forests | Paper and wood products | Affirms that businesses are sourcing paper and wood from suppliers that use sustainable forestry practices such as erosion control and that preserve habitats and watersheds. | Certification costs money. Also, some of the council's leaders have financial ties to operations certified by the group. |
|  | WATERSENSE, an EPA program that promotes "water-efficient products, programs, and practices" | Water-using fixtures and new homes | The EPA licenses various organizations to certify products' water efficiency. New homes must have a front yard that's on a water budget. | The program partners with KB Home, a housing manufacturer that the EPA fined in 2008 for violating the Clean Water Act. |
|  | GREEN SEAL, a nonprofit that has been "helping organizations be greener in a real and effective way since 1989" | Paper, paint, restaurants, hotels, and many other goods and services | It depends on the product or service. Soap must be free of carcinogens, for instance, and hotels must have water-saving fixtures. | Certification costs money. |

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