



**THE ORIGINAL GREEN  
SEAL OF APPROVAL  
SINCE 1989**

# GS-55

## **Green Seal™ Standard for Restaurants and Food Services**

### ***A Guide for Leadership in Restaurants and Food Services***

Restaurants and foodservice operations represent one of the largest industries in the US with close to 1 million locations open in 2014\*. While they provide an essential service, these operations can have tremendous negative impacts on human and environmental health unless managed responsibly. From natural resource consumption and food sourcing to waste management and training, nearly all processes involved, both front- and back-of-house, can be more sustainable. Regardless of the type of operation, restaurants can still deliver the best quality food and service while protecting guests, staff, and the environment.

Green Seal began its work in the restaurant industry in 2007. Using data from its field studies, Green Seal conducted an original life-cycle evaluation of food service, which was published in the *International Journal of Life-Cycle Assessment*. Green Seal's Standard for Restaurants and Food Services addresses the major life-cycle impacts identified in this study.

The GS-55 standard covers retail restaurants and institutional food service operations and is adapted to the current marketplace and local conditions. A successful pilot of GS-55 was conducted among Chicago restaurants, using criteria developed in cooperation with the Green Restaurant Research Team at the University of Chicago and the Green Chicago Restaurant Coalition.

### ***Scope of GS-55***

GS-55 establishes leadership-level environmental and human health criteria for restaurants and food service providers, both for retail establishments and large-scale operations. Food service operations or restaurant chains with multiple locations may be certified for the entire chain, provided the requirements are met at each location. GS-55 does not address the specific activities of bars, grocery stores, or convenience stores. Food services that are associated with these establishments may apply for certification to this standard.

### ***Key Areas Addressed***

GS-55 conserves natural resources and protects human health and the environment by requiring restaurants and food services to purchase sustainable food, reduce their waste, use environmentally preferable products, and conserve water and energy. These criteria create a comprehensive set of practices that operations can follow to decrease their environmental impacts.

The requirements in the standard cover:

- Purchase of environmentally responsible food, beverages and supplies
- Waste reduction
- Management of resources
- Training and communication
- Continuous improvement

**SUSTAINABILITY  
LEADERSHIP STANDARDS**



**INDEPENDENT  
THIRD-PARTY  
CERTIFICATION**



**SUSTAINABILITY  
RESEARCH &  
LIFE CYCLE ANALYSIS**



**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
FOR INSTITUTIONAL  
GREENING**

\* National Restaurant Association, restaurant.org, News & Research 2014



## ***Purchasing***

Operations must purchase a specified amount of their food from sustainable sources, with requirements for total purchases, seafood, coffee, and tea. Specific requirements are set for beverage offerings.

Operations must purchase environmentally preferable products and services. Specific requirements are set for appliances, electronics, paper products, paint, and linen services.

## ***Waste Reduction***

Operations must recycle waste materials and used cooking oils, compost food waste, and donate leftover food to the extent that is possible.

Operations must avoid the use of non-essential disposable products.

## ***Policies and Procedures***

Operations must establish procedures for cleaning, lighting controls, thermostats, and for the maintenance of vehicles and energy and water systems.

A no-smoking policy must be in place.

Operations must establish an environmental purchasing policy.

## ***Management of Resources***

Operations must conduct a quarterly audit of pre-consumer waste, perform monthly energy and water bill audits, and maintain a list of all energy-consuming devices.

## ***Training and Communication Requirements***

Operations must train employees on the tasks that are required to meet the standard.

Operations must inform customers about environmentally preferable food choices, and other sustainability practices.

## ***Continuous Improvement***

Operations must review their environmental performance on a regular basis and demonstrate that they have made improvements.

**This is only a summary.**

**The full standard is available for download at [GreenSeal.org/GS55](http://GreenSeal.org/GS55)**

For more information call: 202.872.6400 or email: [greenseal@greenseal.org](mailto:green seal@greenseal.org)