Defra's Quick Guide to Making a Good Environmental Claim

An environmental or 'green' claim is the communication of the environmental attributes of a product, service or organisation. Environmental claims are important for enabling consumers to make informed choices and drive business to improve the environmental performance of their products or organisation. But the true value of environmental claims and marketing rests on the assurance that claims are both **credible** to consumers, and reflect a **genuine benefit** to the environment.

Defra's Green Claims Guidance on environmental claims promotes the use of **clear**, **accurate**, **relevant** and **substantiated** environmental claims and labels on products, services or in marketing and advertising. This quick guide provides a brief overview of the key aspects of a good environmental claim and links to the pages of the full Green Claims Guidance for more detailed principles and examples.

STEP 1
(Guidance pages 10-16)

Ensure the content of the claim is relevant and reflects a genuine benefit to the environment

Fundamentally, ensure the claim reflects a real environmental benefit or improvement which it's relevant to communicate to your customers.

- ☐ First consider the full **environmental impact** of your product (and supply chain), service or organisation (pages 10-11).
- ☐ Check the claim is **relevant** to those environmental impacts, and/or your business and consumer interests. Ensure the claim does not focus on environmental issues of low significance or importance (pages 11-12).
- ☐ Check the claim reflects an **additional benefit** to the environment beyond what is already happening in the current market, and goes over and above what is required by legislation (pages 13-15).
- ☐ When making claims of superior performance to others on the market ensure the **comparison** is fair/relevant (i.e. against products/organisations serving the same function and using the same methods/assumptions for comparison). The basis of comparison should be clearly stated in the claim (pages 15-16).

STEP 2
(Guidance pages 17-24)

Present the claim clearly and accurately

Once you have established the content of your claim, ensure you present it in a way that is accurate, clear, specific and unambiguous to ensure consumers understand the intended meaning.

- ☐ Ensure the whole claim (including imagery) is a **truthful and accurate** representation of the scale of the environmental benefit or what is likely to happen in practice and does not overstate the benefit achieved. Even if literally true, a claim shouldn't be easily misinterpreted or omit significant information (pages 17-18).
- ☐ Ensure the **scope** and boundaries of the claim are **clear**. A claim should make clear whether it refers to the whole product or organisation or just one aspect. The specific environmental impact or process it addresses should also be clear (pages 19-20).
- ☐ Use **plain language** that is clear and easy for consumers to understand. Check that the claim does not use vague, ambiguous words (e.g. "environmentally friendly") or jargon that may be easily misinterpreted or confuse consumers (pages 20-22).
- ☐ Where necessary use clear, prominent and complementary **supplementary information** to qualify the main claim. But before adding further detail, check whether the main claim could be made clearer so that further explanation is not needed (pages 22-23).
- ☐ Is all **imagery** (i.e. symbols, pictures or labels) relevant to the claim and not likely to be misinterpreted? (pages 23-24).

STEP 3
(Guidance pages 25-29)

Ensure the claim can be substantiated

Legally, any claim or information in advertising and marketing (whether it's environmental or not) must be fair and not misleading. So you need to be confident that you have robust and/or scientifically accepted evidence to support your claim.

- ☐ Make sure the **evidence** is **clear** and **robust**. Measure claims using the most appropriate standard methods. Consider seeking independent assurance by a third party. Ensure claims are reviewed and updated over time to ensure they remain relevant (pages 25-27).
- ☐ Ensure claims about **aspirations** of future environmental performance are also supported by evidence and action (e.g. publicly available plans or strategy) (pages 27-28).
- ☐ **Information** to substantiate a claim should be retained by the person making the claim, be transparent about the assumptions and approach taken, and be made available to those seeking reasonable justification of it (pages 28-29).

How does this guide align with other standards, codes or guidance?

In developing this guide we have sought to align with international standards, guidance and codes that have a bearing on environmental claims. Relevant provisions of the international standard on self-declared environmental claims (ISO14021) and the UK codes for Non-Broadcast Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing (CAP) and Broadcast Advertising (BCAP) are mentioned in the full guidance for ease of reference. Defra's *Green Claims Guidance* is not intended to replace these, but provide helpful interpretative guidance about how they may be applied. By using this guidance, businesses should have greater confidence that their claims are meaningful and consistent with existing standards and codes.