The Nordic Swan Ecolabel – an effective tool to reduce climate impact



The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is an effective tool for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. When setting requirements, the Nordic Swan assesses the entire product life cycle – from raw materials to production, use, disposal and recycling. The holistic approach is crucial to reducing the overall impact on the environment and climate.

Products certified with the Nordic Swan Ecolabel contribute to a reduced climate impact in several ways.
The focus of the requirements is on:

ENERGY Reduced energy consumption, energy efficiency, transition from fossil to sustainable, renewable energy - and subsequently, reduced emissions of greenhouse gases

MATERIALS Transition to sustainable materials with less climate impact

QUALITY Increased product lifespan through quality and design requirements

WASTE Reuse, recycling and waste minimization

Circular economy and climate are related – thus the efforts to promote circular economy also help to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. Almost half of these emissions originate from the manufacturing of products we use every day[1].

[1] https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/completing-the-picture-climate-change



Ensuring reduced climate impact without compromising other aspects

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel uses a holistic approach to ensure that reducing one negative environmental impact does not sacrifice aspects in other stages of the life cycle.

This means that the Nordic Swan sets requirements that have a substantial effect on the climate impact connected with the particular product – without compromising biodiversity, health or responsible use of the Earth's limited resources.

In this way, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel works to accelerate a transition towards more sustainable technologies and production processes by helping businesses reduce emissions of greenhouse gases throughout the value chain – without creating other environmental problems.

The requirements applying to products and services certified with the Nordic Swan Ecolabel are evaluated regularly and tightened according to the latest research and market development. This ensures continuous sustainable development through ambitious, yet realistic requirements. Reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are also achieved when Nordic Swan Ecolabel products and services replace conventional alternatives that have a greater environmental impact.

A tool to reduce climate impact – for businesses, consumers and purchasers

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a simple and effective tool for businesses to communicate commitment and actions that reduce their impact on the environment and the climate. It is a well-known and reliable trademark in the Nordic region, where 9 out of 10 Nordic citizens know the label. Consumers and public purchasers can use the label to identify products that are among the best for the environment and the climate.

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel actively contributes to reaching several of several of UN's Sustainable Development Goals especially goal no. 12: Responsible consumption and production as well as goals 7, 9 and 13 that include measures to mitigate climate change. In this way, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel makes it easy and possible for companies to reduce climate impact.

ENERGY

Reduced energy consumption, energy efficiency, transition from fossil to sustainable, renewable energy – and subsequently, reduced emissions of greenhouse gases

Reducing the amount of energy we consume reduces emissions of greenhouse gases. Energy requirements are typically set on materials used in production, but also on end-user products where they have a significant impact.

Examples of Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements:

- Strict limitations on energy consumption can be found across many Nordic Swan Ecolabel product groups. Particular focus on industries with high energy consumption: e.g. manufacturing of paper and printed matters but also services such as textile services, hotels, and grocery stores must comply with strict energy requirements.
- Buildings: must be designed to ensure low energy consumption.
- Furniture: must have low energy consumption in manufacturing of the building boards and of paper for laminates – and a low standby energy consumption from eg. a height adjustable work desk. An analysis has determined that the CO_2 emissions connected to a Nordic Swan Ecolabel electrically height adjustable work desk were reduced by more than 20% compared to a similar average height adjustable desk on the market[2].

Energy efficiency

Energy efficiency is important in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. Requirements are set to promote optimised and sustainable energy use.

Examples of Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements:

- Printing companies are rewarded for energy screening and having a plan for energy-efficiency measures.
- Hotels are rewarded for using heat pumps and other energy efficient measures such as optimised ventilation and automated light control.
- Textile- and cleaning services live up to several transportation requirements that promote energy efficiency. E.g. drivers are trained in eco-driving and the services must use vehicles that comply with applicable emissions standards.

Transition from fossil to sustainable, renewable energy

Energy sources play an important role in determining the climate impact of a product or service. Where relevant and steerable, requirements are set to promote the shift from fossil fuels to sustainable renewable energy. Where relevant, locally produced energy (e.g. solar cells and solar heat) is favoured.

Examples of Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements:

- Fuels for transport contain a high share of renewable resources derived from sustainably produced and controlled sources.
- Investment funds' holdings in the extraction and refining of fossil fuels are restricted.
- Hotels and buildings are rewarded for using photovoltaic solar power and solar thermal panels.

Reduced emissions of greenhouse gases

To reduce the impact on climate change The Nordic Swan Ecolabel also sets requirements for emissions of greenhouse gases. E.g. for calculation in order to identify hotspots of greenhouse gases with either a threshold or a greenhouse gas reduction plan. Limit value can be set for a specific process, a single life cycle stage or several stages depending on where the climate impact is considered particularly significant.

Examples of Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements:

- In fuel, there is a limit for emissions of greenhouse gases in the entire production chain, from the production of raw material to the filling station.
- In manufacturing of LCD displays for TVs and projectors, an abatement system that collects and destroys gases has to be installed in order to reduce emissions of gases with very high global warming potential (GWP).
- At textile services, reduced climate impact is attained by setting a limit value for greenhouse gas emissions from both the fuel and electricity consumed.
- Printing houses are rewarded for screening their greenhouse gas emissions.

[2] CO_2-Besparelser ved et svanemærket skrivebord, Implement Consulting Group 2020. https://www.ecolabel.dk/~/media/Ecolabel/Files/Svanen-og-Blomsten/Cases/Afrapportering_CO_2-svanemaerket-skrivebord_revideret_151220.ashx?la=da

MATERIALS

Transition to sustainable materials with less climate impact
Materials used in production are often of high relevance when it comes to emissions of greenhouse gases. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel promotes transition to materials with less climate impact by setting requirements on the use of recycled and renewable materials, often supplemented by requirements for sustainably produced and controlled sources. Most often, the requirements are set in relation to the choice of raw materials, but when relevant, they can also be set on the use of resources in the production- and use stage. Like energy efficiency, material efficiency also plays an important role in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.

Examples of Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements:
- Paper products must contain recycled and/or certified wood fibres.
- Candles must be made of stearin, a renewable raw material, not fossil-based paraffin.
- Toner cartridges must be remanufactured.
- Furniture must live up to requirements for use of recycled metal and plastics.
- Hotels and restaurants must live up to requirements for automatic dosage of dishwashing chemicals and have a dosage system for cleaning chemicals to avoid excess consumption.



QUALITY

Increased product lifespan, through quality and design requirements
Emissions of greenhouse gases can be reduced by ensuring products of good quality with a long lifespan. This helps decrease overall consumption and production and subsequently reduces the use of limited resources and generates less waste. Products of good quality are often more suitable for reuse.

Examples of Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements:
- Furniture lives up to strength- and durability requirements and has an extended warranty and availability of spare parts.
- Textiles live up to requirements concerning colour fastness and shrinkage.
- For office machines spare parts are available for a period of five years after the time of purchase.
- Laundry detergents live up to requirements concerning washing efficiency at low temperatures and include guidance to consumers on optimal washing temperatures.



WASTE

Reuse, recycling and waste minimization

Recycling and less waste reduces the need for new raw materials and production. Where there is steerability and a potential for improvement, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel requires that waste must be limited and sorted. Where relevant, there are requirements for the design and production stages to ensure that the product is made from materials that are suitable for reuse and recycling and designed in a way, that makes it possible to recycle materials. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel also sets strict chemical requirements that enable reuse and recycling without harmful chemicals, thus promoting circular economy and reducing the climate impact.

Examples of Nordic Swan Ecolabel requirements:

- Grocery stores, hotels, and restaurants must minimize the amount of unsorted waste.
- Hotels and restaurants must measure the amount of food waste regularly. Actions reducing food waste are rewarded.
- Buildings must sort waste in several fractions.
- In furniture, metal parts must be easy to dismantle for reuse or recycling.
- For cleaning products, there is a requirement for recyclable design of packaging that enables effective material recovery. It must also be possible to recycle the main materials of the packaging in today's existing material recirculation systems in the Nordic countries.
- For cosmetics, a requirement regarding the emptying level of packaging reduces waste.

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