

Making the Most of Sustainability Certification

- 1. Use certification to boost brand value.**

Customers buy products because of their brand value (e.g., quality, cost, customer service). Certification adds value to your brand by verifying your marketing claims. For some customers, it is precisely an added environmental or social benefit that will stimulate preference for your product.
- 2. Know your talking points.**

Your sustainability claim comes with a set of attributes and benefits. Refer to the Food Alliance Claims Guidance for help with communicating what your claims mean, how they benefit your customers, and how they differ from other claims in your product area.
- 3. Train your sales and marketing staff.**

Your sales team is undoubtedly well versed in your product's benefits. Be sure they also know how to promote your product using its environmental and social claims.
- 4. Peel back the eco-label for your customers.**

Not all eco-labels are created equal. If you are certified by an independent third-party against scientifically rigorous and publicly available standards, you are a leader among your competitors. Protect and enhance your leadership position by educating your customers on how to critically evaluate eco-labels.
- 5. Use labeling guidelines.**

Ensure the certification seal is used with integrity. Refer to your certifier's guidelines on using your certification seal. Used in conjunction with the Federal Trade Commission's Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims, you can be sure you stay beyond reproach by accurately representing the extent and parameters of your claim. Be specific, avoid ambiguity, and never overstate the scope of the claim.
- 6. Use the certification seal on products.**

On-product labeling helps your customers recognize the environmental and social attributes of your product. Certification seals cultivate trust with sustainably-driven consumers, ensuring transparency and traceability.
- 7. Use the certification seal elsewhere, too.**

Every customer interaction is an opportunity to build brand recognition and customer loyalty. To communicate your commitment to sustainability and remind customers what you stand for, include the certification seal—and information about the seal—on your web site, brochures, proposals, email signature line, press releases, advertisements, e-newsletters, etc.
- 8. Compose your story.**

Develop a concise yet emotionally appealing narrative that tells the unique story about your environmental and social responsibility. Complement it with photos and video.
- 9. Build relationships.**

The sustainably-driven consumer wants a relationship with you! Connect customers with the people, places, and processes behind the production of your product.
- 10. Know the sustainably-driven customer.**

Inform your communication activities with sound research on the sustainably-driven customer. Create an internal process for continually monitoring the needs and desires of these customers.
- 11. Provide adequate information.**

The sustainably-driven customer has a robust appetite for information. Complement point-of-purchase materials with more detailed web-based content so customers can access the amount of information that's right for them.
- 12. Increase transparency.**

Demonstrate authenticity by backing up your claim. Show results, acknowledge shortcomings, and engage customers in the process.



Food Alliance is a nonprofit organization that certifies farms, ranches, and food processors and distributors for sustainable agricultural and facility management. By choosing Food Alliance Certified products, consumers and commercial food buyers support safe and fair working conditions, humane treatment of animals, and good environmental stewardship. For more information visit: www.FoodAlliance.org

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