

## Key Terms

### BIODEGRADABLE

describes the ability of a material to be broken down into simpler compounds by microorganisms or other decomposers. Many different definitions and tests for biodegradability exist. Definitions of the different tests are available from the U.S. EPA, such as "Reliable scientific evidence that the entire product or package will completely break down and return to nature, i.e., decompose into elements found in nature within a reasonably short period of time after customary disposal" (16 C.F.R. § 260.7 (b)).

### ECOLABEL

is the term for a seal or logo indicating that a product has met a set of environmental and/or social standards as determined by an unbiased accrediting authority.

### EFFICIENT

describes a product or service that has the least environmental impact on resources:

**ENERGY EFFICIENT** means a product that is in the upper 25% of energy efficiency for all similar products, or that is at least 10% more efficient than the minimum level that meets federal standards. The term generally applies to electrical energy consumption

**WATER EFFICIENT** means low-flow use that is the least water-consumptive.

**FUEL EFFICIENT** means the highest rating in miles per gallon or lowest consumption of a convertible energy resource such as LPG, CNG, Natural Gas, or Oil, etc.

### ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PRODUCTS

or sustainable products/sustainable commodities are generally defined as products and services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment, when compared to competing products or services that serve the same purpose. Beyond health and environment, it can also include social and economic factors.



## ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING

or Green Purchasing is generally defined as purchasing a product that has a lesser or reduced negative effect or increased positive effect on human health and the environment, when compared with competing products that serve the same purpose. Incorporating EPP in the procurement process considers raw materials acquisition, production, fabrication, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance, and disposal of the product. This term includes sourcing recyclable products, recycled products, reusable products, and products that conserve energy or natural resources



## ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING PROGRAM OR POLICY (EPP)

An authorized formal effort by a government entity to prioritize sustainability or environmental impact in the purchasing of commodities or services, or to include such considerations as part of evaluation criteria; an attempt to address environmental challenges by taking advantage of government's vast procurement power to create strong markets for environmentally friendly products and services. (Martin & Miller, 2006)



## ESG

stands for Environmental, Social, Governance and represents a sustainability metric or metrics that take into consideration an organization's environmental impact, social responsibility (diversity, human rights, consumer protections, etc.), and governance practices (business ethics, accounting, transparency, etc.). Beginning as a U.N. initiative, it is similar to the concepts "corporate responsibility" and "triple-bottom-line" and is most commonly used in the area of capital investment.



## GREENWASHING

is the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service through the use of buzzwords, jargon, and other marketing tools.



## SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

describes the production, use, and disposal of commodities and services in a manner that considers the equity and justice for the people impacted in the lifecycle. Socially sustainable commodities and services are generally free of forced labor, human rights violations, and economic and social exploitation.



### SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

includes environmentally- friendly procurement along with social and economic factors that protect human health and minimize environmental impact throughout the lifecycle of the product or service, ranging from extraction of raw materials to end-of-life disposal. The minimal harmful impacts of these products and services suggest that they can be created, used, and safely disposed in perpetuity.



### 3RD-PARTY CERTIFICATION

refers to the scientific process by which a product, process, or service is reviewed by a reputable and unbiased auditor (third party) to verify that a set of criteria, claims or standards are being met. For sustainable purchasing, commodities and services that meet the standards are typically identified with an ecolabel.



### TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP (TCO)

is the comprehensive accounting of the total cost of ownership, including initial costs, energy and operational costs, longevity and efficacy of service, and disposal costs. TCO may also include Life-cycle Assessment or Life-cycle Analysis for environmental impact.



### TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

refers to the three primary elements of sustainability:

**Equity-** providing equal access to the natural resources that are needed to sustain societies around the globe. These resources include water, energy, and food, all of which come from the environment. Social disruptions divert resources from areas of greatest human need, reduce the capacity of societies to plan for the future, and generally threaten human well-being and the environment. The concept also includes inter-generational equity, providing future generations with the same resource potential as currently exists.

**Economy-** integrating social, cultural, environmental, health-related and monetary/financial aspects into our money supply chain. It must be ensured that more resources are not being used than can be replenished so that there will be resources and financial stability in the future. The challenge for sustainability is to curb and manage Western consumption and raise the standard of living of the developing world without greatly increasing its resource use and environmental impact.

**Ecology-** managing resources today so they will continue to thrive and feed into biological cycles. Healthy ecosystems provide vital goods and services to humans and other organisms. By ensuring environmental adaptability and resilience, the adaptive capacity of the environmental system depended upon can be maintained and enhanced.

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