

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel and the UN Sustainable Development Goals



The UN sustainable development goals are a universal call to action to fight poverty and inequalities, protect the planet and tackle climate change by 2030. To achieve the goals, all of us must make an effort: governments, the private sector, the public sector, civil society and every individual.

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is the official ecolabel in the Nordic region. Our goal is to reduce the environmental impact of consumption and production. When setting requirements, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel therefore assesses the entire life cycle of the products, from raw materials to production, use, disposal and recycling.

The requirements promote sustainable use of resources, recycling and reuse and reduce waste in all parts of the life cycle of ecolabelled products and services.

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a powerful tool for securing a sustainable future – and actively contributes to accomplishing 11 of the 17 sustainable development goals. On an overall level the Nordic Swan Ecolabel

contributes to goal 12, “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”. In addition, it contributes to achieving several of the other goals. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel places most importance on environmental aspects, but also puts emphasis on health and social conditions where relevant.

The Nordic countries are generally well-positioned to reach most of the sustainable development goals but may improve in terms of goal 12, as we are only halfway there.

See the description of all UN sustainable development goals and targets here:
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



The Nordic Swan Ecolabel strives to reduce the environmental impact of production and consumption. This ensures sustainable production as well as control of the value chain – and provides the end user with sustainable products.

Nordic Swan ecolabelled products are manufactured all over the world. Wherever products are made, our strict environmental requirements go beyond legislation. In that way we propagate more environmentally friendly production methods – also in developing countries.

Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production has several targets. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel contributes as follows:

Target 12.2 Achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel sets requirements for the sustainable use of natural resources, increased use of renewable resources and efficient use of raw materials, energy and water in manufacturing processes.

Target 12.3 Reduce food losses among consumers, in retail and along production and supply chains

All Nordic Swan ecolabelled grocery stores measure their amount of food waste, and grocery stores, hotels, restaurants and canteens are rewarded if they take measures to waste less food.

Target 12.4 Achieve environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes and reduce their release to air, water and soil

The strict chemical requirements ensure that chemicals at all stages of the life cycle are handled in a way that makes the least possible impact on the environment.

In that way, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a strong instrument for phasing out substances that are hazardous to health and the environment in products and manufacturing. This helps to prevent both users and factory workers from being exposed to harmful chemicals – and to reduce contamination of air, water and soil.

Target 12.5 Reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel strives to reduce waste, for example by promoting reuse of materials and setting strict chemical requirements that allow the materials to be recycled.

At the same time, ecolabelled products consisting of different materials that can be reused should be easy to dismantle, so that the materials may be used again. Strict quality standards ensure that the product works as desired and has a long lifetime.

Target 12.6 Encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a third-party certification scheme with absolute and transparent requirements. This makes it easier for companies to document their sustainability work.

The requirements for ecolabelled investment funds stimulate both the funds and the companies they invest in to report on sustainability.

Hotels, restaurants and grocery stores must also report the progress of their sustainability work.

Target 12.7 Promote sustainable public procurement practices

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a strong tool for ensuring sustainable public procurement. The EU public procurement directive has allowed public procurers to request ecolabels, which allows them to more efficiently prepare and review tender documents.

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel makes it easy for procurers and consumers to make sustainable choices.

Target 12.8 Ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel's vision is to be a Nordic guiding star for a sustainable lifestyle. The communication of the certified companies as well as the Nordic Swan Ecolabel itself contribute to this.

Other UN global goals that the Nordic Swan Ecolabel supports

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel contributes to accomplishing several of the sustainable development goals – always putting most emphasis on environmental aspects. Requirements are set where it is possible to achieve real environmental improvements. Here are the goals that the Nordic Swan Ecolabel contributes to in selected product groups.



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages – target 3.9

Through strict requirements for chemicals in all products the Nordic Swan Ecolabel helps reducing the amount of hazardous substances and promoting healthy lives for all. This applies to substances that come into direct contact with humans as well as substances that pollute air, soil and water.

For example, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel sets requirements for cosmetics and personal care products, prohibiting among other things, substances classified as carcinogenic, mutagenic or allergenic, as well as reproductive toxicants and substances listed by the EU as possible endocrine disruptors.



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – targets 6.3, 6.4, 6.6

In selected product groups the Nordic Swan Ecolabel sets requirements for sustainable water consumption and demands that measures be taken to reduce the amount of unwanted chemicals and to treat wastewater.

For example, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel has strict requirements for the use of pesticides in cultivation of cotton and other raw materials. Other requirements

limit the use of unwanted dyes and other chemical substances in the manufacturing of, for example, textiles and paper.

Carwash installations may use very little water per washed vehicle, and the wastewater must be treated before it is discharged. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel also requires efficient water consumption in laundries.



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy – targets 7.2, 7.3

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a tool for reduced total energy consumption and less use of fossil fuels and promotes locally produced energy in products and services.

In production systems with high energy consumption the Nordic Swan Ecolabel ensures energy efficiency in both the production and use stages. For example, ecolabelled buildings must be energy efficient, and the use of locally produced energy is rewarded, such as

solar cells and solar heating. In ecolabelled liquid and gaseous fuels for transport a large part of the raw materials must be renewable, and they must be produced in a sustainable manner.

Nordic Swan ecolabelled investment funds exclude investments in extraction of fossil fuels and promote investments in renewable energy based on sustainable raw materials.



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all – targets 8.4, 8.7, 8.8

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel contributes to sustainable economic growth by providing market benefits to products and services that are environmentally sustainable. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a tool for promoting circular economy – thus enhancing business competitiveness, promoting resource efficiency and helping to create new business models and innovative solutions. As well as complying with strict environmental requirements, companies that make ecolabelled products must always adhere to working environment

legislation.

Some ecolabelled products are often produced in low-cost countries outside the EU. For these product groups the Nordic Swan Ecolabel requires that the factory comply with ILO core conventions. That means, for example, that there is no child labour, no forced labour and freedom of association. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel also sets ethical and social requirements for other industries, such as cleaning services.



Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation – target 9.4

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel contributes to making industries more sustainable – with increased resource efficiency and use of cleaner and more environmentally friendly technology and processes.

This includes setting energy requirements especially for the production and use stages, where there is a lot to be gained. For example, ecolabelled textile laundries must use technology that ensures low energy and water consumption.



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – targets 11.3, 11.6

In both new and renovated buildings the Nordic Swan Ecolabel strives to create sustainable buildings with focus on low energy consumption, building materials without unwanted chemical substances, and renewable raw materials. Resource efficiency, such as reuse of materials and best possible use of building waste, is also promoted.

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel puts emphasis on quality and thus longevity, as well as design for reuse. The requirements build upon the existing Nordic waste management systems, with

the possibility of reuse and recycling of different product and material types.

In housing, schools and kindergartens the Nordic Swan Ecolabel facilitates environmentally friendly transport such as cycling and electric cars. The criteria also reward measures to promote biodiversity in urban environments and good water management. Regarding particle pollution, emissions from ecolabelled combustion and pellet furnaces must meet strict requirements, and wood pellets must have good combustion properties.



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts – target 13.2

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a strong tool for national and common Nordic strategies for climate change action and strives to limit the use of fossil fuels and promote renewable energy.

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel promotes resource efficiency, for example by demanding that new and renovated buildings be energy effective. Limits have been set for emissions of chemical substances and particles that contribute to climate change, for example in furnaces and paper mills. In ecolabelled biogas

hundred percent renewable raw materials is demanded, and there are strict requirements for total greenhouse gas emissions.

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel supports the conservation of natural areas that counteract climate change by requiring that a high proportion of virgin wood in for example buildings and furniture be sourced from certified forestry, where protecting nature is important.



Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development – targets 14.1, 14.4, 14.7

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel has strict requirements for chemicals, thereby reducing discharge of toxic substances to the sea.

Personal care products must be free of microplastics and

UV-filters that harm coral reefs. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel also sets requirements for treatment of wastewater from for example dyeing plants and paper mills. In addition, ecolabelled restaurants and grocery stores must offer sustainable fish.



Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss – targets 15.1, 15.2, 15.5

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel strives to counteract the deterioration of natural habitats, halt biodiversity loss and protect endangered species.

To support sustainable management of the world's natural resources the Nordic Swan Ecolabel sets requirements based on recognized sustainable certification schemes, for example for sustainable forestry. These requirements also encourage

conservation of areas that are particularly important for biodiversity. The criteria require traceability of raw materials and promote organic cotton in textiles as well as organic food and sustainable fish in restaurants and grocery stores. In ecolabelled houses the criteria promote ecosystem services by rewarding gardens and recreational areas with increased biodiversity.



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development – target 17.16

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a member of the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN). GEN is a global partnership of third-party organisations working to achieve sustainable development through certification by ecolabels. The organisations promote and develop ecolabelling of

products and services all over the world.

Only environmentally friendly products and services proven to have lower environmental impact may carry a GEN member ecolabel.