

## ENHANCED GREEN LABEL FOR PULP AND PAPER PRODUCTS SETS HIGHER STANDARDS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

### *Consumers asked to support companies doing the right thing*

**Singapore, January 10, 2017:** Pulp and paper companies will need to meet some of the world's toughest environmental standards if they want to be awarded the enhanced green label for their products.

The stricter standards are part of the enhanced Singapore Green Label Scheme (SGLS) for pulp and paper products, launched today by the Singapore Environment Council (SEC).

The centrepiece of the enhanced scheme is a requirement that companies improve their peatland management and commit to the early detection and suppression of fires when they do occur. Companies must also comply with the existing requirement of zero-burning on their plantations.

The SEC's green label for pulp and paper products has become a rallying point for consumer action against companies contributing to the haze, with successful boycotts resulting in non-certified products being pulled from supermarket shelves.

The Chairman of SEC, Ms Isabella Loh said green consumers will welcome the enhanced assessment criteria for pulp and paper products which focuses on prevention, preparation, suppression, and recovery.

“The enhanced SGLS gives consumers the ability to make reliable choices and take action against companies that cause the haze. The green label also gives consumers the ability to reward companies that do the right thing and have a supply chain that has been audited to be sustainable.”

“The revised scheme is benchmarked against international eco-labelling schemes in the EU, Australia, New Zealand and Japan to ensure it is amongst the most stringent anywhere in the world.”

“With proper management, the harvesting of pulpwood from forests or plantations can be carried out sustainably. However, companies that do not follow sustainable practices can cause great environmental damage through deforestation, uncontrolled fires and the discharge of hazardous chemicals into water systems,” Ms Loh said.

Mr Lim Biow Chuan, President of CASE said: “There is a wide choice of goods and services in the market. We encourage consumers to exercise their right to choose and buy paper products with the Green Label. Together, the collective voice will help to send a strong signal to pulp and paper companies to put in place environmentally-friendly and sustainable business practices to help resolve the recurring haze issue in Singapore.”

Anuj Lal, Group General Manager, Asia-Pacific, of Kimberly-Clark Professional, the B2B unit of Kimberly-Clark Corporation, said he welcomed the revised SGLS labelling system for pulp and paper products.

“Kimberly-Clark has a long-standing commitment to environmental sustainability. That is why we only purchase and use paper and pulp materials from sustainable sources. We will immediately be applying for the new eco-label for our Scott® and Kleenex® hand towel and bath tissue products as it strengthens our company’s profile as a responsible corporate citizen. We want our customers to know we produce quality products manufactured to the highest environmental standards.”

“Sustainability is an integral part of Kimberly-Clark Professional’s business. We understand that consumers today are better educated and more discerning and will support companies that have good environmental business practices,” Mr Lal said.

## **THE ENHANCED CRITERIA**

Key features of the enhanced SGLS criteria include:

- **Full disclosure of supply chain** - the entire supply chain of a manufacturer will now be assessed and audited. This includes forests and plantations, pulp and paper mills, converting plants as well as distributors and retail companies.
- **Fibre source** - all fibre is required to be sourced from legal sources and the use of wood and fibre from protected or high conservation value areas is banned. The use of recycled fibre is required to be maximised.
- **Zero-Burning Policy** - the company, owner or concessionaire in charge of the plantation is required to have a zero-burning policy.
- **Fire Management** - companies are now required to undertake a comprehensive range of fire prevention and preparation activities so they can quickly detect and suppress fires before they get out of control. This includes the identification and mapping of fire risks, a fire prevention budget, engaging the community to promote alternatives to fire as a land preparation tool, daily hotspot monitoring, and putting in place firefighting training and equipment.
- **Peatland Management** - proper peatland management is crucial to the prevention of haze. Peatland is a naturally water-saturated landscape and an efficient carbon sink. Uncontrolled draining of peat to plant pulpwood timber makes it susceptible to fire and releases the stored carbon. Companies are now required to protect the biodiversity of peatlands through proper assessment and water management.
- **Annual Audits** - SEC will undertake annual surveillance audits of companies awarded the enhanced SGLS certification to ensure the criteria is continually met.

## **RISK-BASED EVALUATION**

A new risk-based evaluation system has been introduced to complement the more extensive qualification criteria for the enhanced SGLS.

Companies will still need to demonstrate they comply with each of the 25 audit criteria, however those deemed to be higher risks will be subjected to a more extensive audit.

The risk-based evaluation starts with a review of the applicant's supporting documentation. A score of between one and three is then assigned against each criterion (where one is the lowest level of risk, and three is the highest).

Applications deemed to be high-risk will be further investigated by SEC or third party auditors. The audit will be an in-depth enquiry into the company's supply chain, manufacturing processes, as well as its management practices of forests, fire and peatlands.

The risk-based evaluation system is a safeguard against companies that may have the required paperwork but are not achieving sustainability in practice.

The key risks the new system will look for include:

- The type of pulp used
- The location of the pulp source (Southeast Asia carries a higher risk due to the past occurrence of haze)
- The complexity of the supply chain and the number of entities engaged in the manufacturing process
- The quality of the company's peatland management plans and practices
- The quality of the company's fire management plans and practices
- The company's energy, water and water management practices

## **TRANSITION AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT**

SEC also announced a new green logo specifically for pulp and paper products that meet the enhanced criteria. This new logo will be gradually introduced as companies become certified under the enhanced standard. Companies who are currently certified can continue to use the existing logo until their certification expires. The old logo for pulp and paper products will be obsolete by 1 July 2018.

The existing SGLS logo will continue to be used by all other categories of products certified under the eco-labelling scheme.

SEC will launch a campaign to raise awareness of the enhanced eco-label and to encourage consumers to consciously choose to buy pulp and paper products that display the new logo when there's a sufficient number of products certified under the enhanced SGLS.

Applications are now open for companies wanting to obtain the enhanced SGLS certification. The certification process can take up to six months depending on the complexity of the applicant's supply chain and is subjected to renewal every three years.

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#### **ABOUT THE SINGAPORE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL**

Established in 1995, the Singapore Environment Council (SEC) is an independently managed, non-profit and non-government organisation (NGO). We influence thinking on sustainability issues and coordinate environmental efforts in Singapore.

We are also an approved charity and offer tax exemption to donors. SEC continuously engages all sectors of the community by formulating and executing a range of holistic programmes, such as the Singapore Environmental Achievement Awards, Asian Environmental Journalism Awards, School Green Awards, Singapore Green Labelling Scheme, Project: Eco-Office, Project: Eco-Shop and Project: F&B. In addition, we build a pool of committed volunteers under our Earth Helpers programme. Our Training and Education arm provides the people, public and private sectors with the opportunity to develop awareness, knowledge, skills and tools in order to protect and improve our environment for a sustainable future.

Strong partnerships with corporations, government agencies and other NGOs are valued by us. These partnerships are vital for sustaining our programmes, leading to positive action and change. Over the years, SEC has given strength and direction to the environmental movement in Singapore.

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