



FAQs - The certification label Grüner Knopf (hereafter: Green Button)

What is the Green Button?

It is the government-run certification label designating textiles manufactured in accordance with social *and* environmental criteria. What makes it special is that the whole company is audited to check that it operates in a responsible way. Having a few products 'for show' is not enough.

Where can the Green Button be found on clothes?

The Green Button – in the form of a logo– is highly visible, either on the price tag, on the product itself or on the packaging.

Aren't there already enough certification labels?

That's just the problem. With all the different labels in use, many consumers no longer know what they all stand for. The Green Button brings clarity. The goods that pass the test are textiles that have been manufactured in accordance with high social and environmental criteria.

How important is sustainability in the textile industry?

Three quarters of German consumers consider sustainable fashion to be important. With the Green Button it is now easier for them to find such garments.

It also gets the textile industry moving. Three quarters of manufacturers have now made sustainability a matter for their top management, describing it as "the most urgent project of our times".

How is the Green Button certified?

Independent auditors monitor compliance with the criteria. The certification bodies have undergone trainings and will be accredited by the German Accreditation Body (DAkkS) in the future. This ensures the equivalence of the tests. In addition, the product-related requirements are verified by recognised certification labels. Companies can thus fall back on verifications that have already been carried out. This avoids duplication of work.

Who certifies compliance with the criteria?

Right now, the following technical inspection agencies are responsible for carrying out these compliance checks: CERES, Control Union, DIN CERTCO, Hohenstein, PFI Pirmasens and TÜV Nord.

What checks are done to make sure companies are still compliant and how often are they made?

Every three years a full compliance audit is carried out. In addition, spot checks will be made every year. If any irregularities are flagged, then unannounced checks may be conducted.

Is the Green Button limited to Germany?

No, the Green Button is an international certification label that is registered as a European Union trademark. The Green Button complies with EU and WTO legislation; the audits are done on the basis of harmonised international standards. In addition, there is a registered English-language version – the Green Button.



What is the official basis for the Green Button?

The Green Button is registered with the German Patent and Trademarks Office as a national certification mark – the first certification mark ever in Germany. In addition, the Green Button (as the English-language version) is registered with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) as a European Union trademark.

Is the Green Button creating another level of bureaucracy?

No. Companies can offer any certificates that they already have, for example for recognised product labels, or they can draw on preparatory work done in the German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles. That way no efforts are duplicated. Therefore, the full audit usually only takes one day.

Does the Green Button only certify clothing?

The Green Button is valid for almost all kinds of textiles, such as clothes, backpacks or bedding. Textiles made from synthetic fibres are also included. Protecting people and nature is important regardless of what products are made of. A detailed overview of the types of goods recognised for certification can be found at www.gruener-knopf.de.

How are the companies audited?

The companies are audited on the basis of 20 demanding criteria, which have been drawn up by the owner of the label.

The criteria are based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the recommendations of the OECD for the textiles sector.

How are the products checked?

Proof that product criteria are being met is obtained via recognised, credible labels. These labels must meet minimum requirements with regard to social and environmental criteria and credibility.

What criteria must be met?

A product, such as a T-shirt or a backpack, needs to fulfil 26 social and environmental criteria. These cover everything from upholding labour rights to testing for chemical residues.

Furthermore, the whole company is audited based on 20 due diligence criteria: Does it disclose information about its suppliers? Are there effective grievance mechanisms in place for seamstresses? Does the company eradicate any shortcomings that are found?

Examples for *social* product criteria:

- Ban on child labour and forced labour
- Payment of minimum wages (goal: living wages)
- The right to freedom of association, collective bargaining
- Safety and protection at work

Examples for *environmental* product criteria:

- Pollution limits for wastewater
- No dangerous chemicals used
- Prohibition of softening agents
- Fibres tested for pollutants
- CO2 savings

Examples for *due diligence* criteria:

- Company policy is aligned with human rights and environmental protection
- Risks in the supply chain are identified
- Effective measures are taken
- Complaints are taken into account
- Reporting is transparent and in the public domain

Which labels are recognised?

See the overview table at the end of the document.

This recognition is an acknowledgement of the preparatory work done by the companies and particularly credible certification labels.

The Green Button does not replace any existing certification labels.



Membership of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles is also an important basis for the Green Button in terms of corporate due diligence.

What criteria apply for companies that produce exclusively in the European Union (EU)?

In order to prevent any abuse of the system, the whole company is always audited, even when it only produces goods in the EU.

Every company that produces in the EU must

- provide proof that environmental criteria are being observed,
- know the risks in EU production countries, analyse them and take effective counter-measures.

Only a company that fulfils these prerequisites can receive the Green Button. There is no “free pass” for producing in the EU.

The audits are carried out by independent experts.

Does the Green Button cover the entire supply chain?

Initially, checks for the Green Button will cover the production stages “cutting and sewing”, and “bleaching and dyeing” (wet processing). The social and environmental challenges here are immense:

- 75 million people work in these production stages
- All of the 100 billion garments produced each year go through these production stages.
- Day after day, dye works flush an average of 2.5 tonnes of chemicals, often untreated, into wastewater systems.
- It was during this stage of production that the Rana Plaza textiles factory collapsed.

Over the next few years, the intention is that the Green Button will be extended to also cover “fibre growing / production”.

Is the Green Button developing?

Yes, it is continuously evolving with help from an independent advisory board.

Over the next few years, the Green Button intends to address the topic of living wages. Moreover, it is to be extended to cover further production stages. This is because the aim is to protect people and nature along the entire supply chain.

Who is represented on the expert advisory council?

The expert advisory council consists of the following representatives from the business sector, academia and civil society.

- Michael Windfuhr, Deputy Director German Institute for Human Rights (Chair)
- Achim Lohrie, Consultant (Deputy)
- Prof Stefanie Lorenzen, Berlin School of Economics and Law,
- Philipp von Bremen, Head of Consumer Policy Federal Association,
- Dr Raoul Kirmes, Head of Department German national accreditation body.

Is the Green Button automatically valid for all of a manufacturer's products?

No, only products that have a recognised certification label may bear the Green Button. In addition, the entire company must prove that it meets its responsibility for people and the environment in the textile supply chain (keyword: due diligence audit). Only then can a product of the company be awarded the Green button.

Which companies are entitled to apply for the Green Button label?

The label is open to all companies that manufacture and/or sell textile goods.

This means both manufacturers of such goods, and retailers that sell products manufactured by others under their own label.



Who is behind the Green Button?

The scheme owner is the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The scheme owner lays down the criteria and conditions for the Green Button.

Independent auditors monitor compliance with and observance of the criteria.

Can the Green Button be used for public procurement?

Yes. The Green Button can be used for sustainable public procurement in the EU. Hospitals, police stations or municipal authorities can utilise the criteria of the Green Button label to ensure sustainable procurement of articles such as doctors' coats, shirts and other textiles.

The certification is carried out on the basis of internationally harmonised standards.

Why is there a two-year introductory phase?

That is the usual procedure. All certification labels begin with an introductory phase and are then subject to regular revision. That is why the Green Button is continuously developing, also with input and assistance from an independent advisory board.

Aspects to be further developed in consultation with the German accreditation body (DAkkS) during the introductory phase include the conformity of the evaluation procedure.

The introductory phase will end with the launch of the further developed Green Button criteria.

Are licensing fees charged for the Green Button?

No, there are no licensing fees.

What distinguishes the Green Button from the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles?

The Textiles Partnership is and remains an important foundation. Here the approximately 120 members implement 1,000 concrete measures every year, e.g.:

- 160 toxic chemicals are banned.
- The proportion of sustainable cotton will be increased to 35 % by 2020 and to 70 % by 2025.
- Water consumption will be significantly reduced in many factories.

The Green Button now certifies products from companies that already meet particularly demanding social and environmental criteria and will continue to do so in the future.

How can companies apply for the Green Button?

Every company can contact the label's issuing body RAL (Vergabestelle) to receive advice and information:

RAL gGmbH

Fränkische Straße 7
53229 Bonn, Germany
Phone: +49 228 68895 195
Fax: +49 228 68895 431

E-mail: vergabestelle@gruener-knopf.de
Website: <https://vergabestelle.gruener-knopf.de/kontakt>



Graphic: Which labels are recognised?

	 Social criteria met	 Environmental criteria met
		
		
		
		
		
		 *
		In combination with a certification mark for environmental sustainability standards.
		In combination with a certification mark for environmental sustainability standards.
	In combination with a certification mark for social sustainability standards.***	
	In combination with a certification mark for social sustainability standards.***	

* The Global Recycled Standard meets the criteria of environmental sustainability only in combination with a simultaneous certification of the end product according to the standard 100 by Oeko-Tex.

**Based on a supply chain approach, the importance of human rights due diligence and the requirement of a coherent monitoring and remediation system, Fair Wear assesses the performance of all member brands related to the implementation of the Fair Wear Code of Labour Practices. Fair Wear has no product criteria and does not certify products. Fair Wear Members that have achieved Leader Status have shown that almost all of their tier-1 suppliers are under Fair Wear-Monitoring (>90%). The Green Button recognizes the FWF-Monitoring as one of the most effective and credible monitoring systems for social and labour standards worldwide.

*** If a company produces only within the EU, a recognised label must be produced as evidence of compliance with environmental standards. Evidence of compliance with social standards can be provided by means of a company audit. In this case, the company must demonstrate in which EU member states and by which suppliers the production takes place. It must also demonstrate that any remaining risks regarding compliance with the product-related social criteria are appropriately addressed even within the EU. There is then no further need to produce any social standards label.