

The EU Ecolabel for lubricants

Commission Decision (2018/1702) Valid until 31/01/2024



EU Ecolabel lubricants are eco-friendly alternatives to conventional lubricants, aiming to decrease the negative impact of these products on our biodiversity, through respecting a wide scope of environmental criteria. The EU Ecolabel takes a holistic approach for its criteria, whose regulations are determined according to 'Life Cycle Analyses'. The aim of those criteria should be to promote products that have a limited impact on the aquatic environment, contain a limited amount of hazardous substances and performance as well as or better than a conventional lubricant available on the market.

In line with the objectives of the European strategy for plastics in a circular economy), the criteria should also seek to facilitate the transition to a more circular economy by encouraging improved design and by further incentivising the demand for recycled materials.

'Lubricants' are understood within the criteria, to be products capable of reducing friction, adhesion, heat, wear or corrosion when applied to a surface or introduced between two surfaces in relative motion, or is capable of transmitting mechanical power. The scope of this product group encapsulates any lubricant that falls under the following three sub-categories: (a) the Total Loss Lubricants (TLL) sub-group, which shall comprise chainsaw oils, wire rope lubricants, concrete release agents, total loss greases and other total loss lubricants; (b) the Partial Loss Lubricants (PLL) sub-group, which shall comprise gear oils intended for the use in open gears, stern tube oils, two-stroke oils, temporary protection against corrosion and partial loss greases; (c) the Accidental Loss Lubricants (ALL) sub-group, which shall comprise hydraulic systems, metalworking fluids, closed gear oils intended for the use in closed gears and accidental loss greases.



Hotspots & Solutions

The EU Ecolabel addresses the four main environmental hotspots that can be caused during the production and use of lubricants.

| Impacts | Issue | EU Ecolabel Solution |
|--|---|---|
| Impact 1: Environmental Hotspot of Hazardous Substances | <i>Some toxic substances present in conventional lubricants have a negative impact on the environment</i> | The final products awarded with the EU Ecolabel shall not contain substances that are both non-biodegradable and (potentially) bioaccumulative. However, the lubricant may contain one or more substances with a certain degree of degradability and potential or actual bioaccumulation up to a defined cumulative mass concentration. Furthermore, EU Ecolabel lubricants strictly limit the presence of hazardous substances in its ingredients, by banning carcinogenic substances (to a certain amount in the final product depending on the hazard)". For example, substances cannot be carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for human reproduction, nor can they represent any acute risks when in direct and indirect contact with any living organism. Finally, the criteria ensure the overall aquatic toxicity is limited introducing cumulative mass percentage limits for substances or ingredients present in the product with respect to their aquatic toxicity. |
| Impact 2: Deforestation and degradation of natural ecosystems | <i>Many ingoing substances used in conventional lubricants are derived from palm oil, often sourced from non-sustainable plantations.</i> | The prevention of deforestation and preserving natural ecosystems are promoted through the compliance of EU Ecolabel lubricants with certification schemes for the sustainable production of palm oil, such as the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) certification, or any equivalent schemes. These schemes address environmental impacts on soil, biodiversity, organic carbon stocks and conservation of natural resources. Furthermore, when the term 'bio-based' or 'bio-lubricant' is claimed, the minimum bio-based carbon content in the final product must be at least 25 %. |
| Impact 3: Raw materials extraction and processing | <i>By introducing recycled content requirement, we decrease the raw material from primary sources</i> | In line with the Circular Economy Action Plans the EU Ecolabel contributes to reduce the amount of waste destined to landfill by encouraging the use of recycled plastic within the packaging of lubricants. In fact, a minimum of 25 % of post-consumer plastic is requested to be used in plastic, EU Ecolabel lubricant containers. Clear indications on how to |

For more information...

The scheme, its feature, the actors involved, the application process: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel>

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| Impact 4: Efficiency during use and waste generation | <i>Lack of dosing instructions and measuring equipment may lead to overuse and unintentional waste of lubricants</i> | <p>The EU Ecolabel limits over-using and unintentional waste of lubricants, by ensuring that instructions on dosing are printed on packaging or accompany products designed to be sold to private end-customers. In the case of lubricants designed to be sold to private end consumers, the packaging and containers must also have an appropriate design to avoid spillage with, for example, a prolongation system or a narrow aperture.</p> <p>Finally, lubricants shall comply with minimum technical performance requirements, to ensure the product will have optimal use, and large quantities are not required for results. For instance, the “Fit for purpose” should be demonstrated by at least one ‘applicant’s clients’ approval’ for wire rope lubricants, concrete release agents, other total loss lubricants, stern tube oils and metalworking fluids.</p> |



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