

The Empowering Consumers Directive (EmpCo)

Applicable from September 2026

Environmental claims and certification labels: what brands should be aware of

Alongside PPWR, brands should also be preparing for wider regulatory changes affecting how sustainability and environmental claims are communicated.

The Empowering Consumers Directive (EmpCo), which applies from September 2026, is designed to improve transparency for consumers and reduce the risk of misleading environmental messaging on products and packaging.

Focus on substantiated environmental claims

Under the new requirements, environmental claims are expected to be:

- Clear and easy for consumers to understand
- Supported by credible evidence and substantiation
- Presented in a way that avoids misleading impressions or exaggerated benefits

This applies not only to written claims but also to how sustainability information is communicated through packaging, labels and product presentation.

Greater scrutiny of labels and certification schemes

Environmental labels and certification marks will face increased attention, with greater emphasis on transparency, governance and verification.

Brands should ensure that any sustainability-related labels they use are supported by recognised frameworks and robust certification processes. The objective is to provide consumers with clearer, more reliable information about environmental performance and product credentials.

Visual communication matters too

The scope extends beyond written statements. Logos, symbols, icons and other visual sustainability cues used on products or packaging may also be assessed in the context of how environmental claims are presented to consumers.

As a result, brands should consider both the claim itself and the wider context in which it appears.

Industry response

Many certification organisations are already reviewing and updating their communication approaches in anticipation of these changes.

For example, certification bodies have been introducing new frameworks, labelling systems and guidance designed to improve transparency, strengthen claim substantiation and help organisations align with evolving regulatory expectations.

What this means for brands

As environmental claim requirements continue to develop, businesses may benefit from reviewing existing packaging, labels and marketing communications to ensure they remain aligned with best practice.

Areas to consider include:

- The use of sustainability claims and supporting evidence
- Certification logos and how they are presented
- Product and packaging artwork
- Digital content and consumer-facing communications
- Internal approval processes for environmental messaging

Taking a proactive approach now can help reduce future compliance risks while supporting clearer, more credible sustainability communications.