



Freemet Comercial SpA

Sector: Household and Personal Care

Region: Based in Chile, product sold in Chile

[Freemet](#) aims to develop cleaning and personal care products which do not cause harm to the environment, animals and people.

Freemet's sustainability claim analysed here is the statement on the biodegradability of its [laundry detergent](#). The claim states that the product "decomposes naturally without causing harm to the ecosystem". The detergent is made from purified water, 100% biodegradable surfactant, coconut surfactants, Freemet natural microparticles (chelant) and apple scent. To make it biodegradable, the detergent contains natural microparticles that neutralize and eliminate toxic heavy metals. These microparticles were a result of a research and development process led by Freemet, which is currently seeking a patent.

Besides the claim on the biodegradability, the product has other environmental claims, which are: "phosphate free", "extracts heavy metals", "animal tests are not carried out" (based on the Chilean "Te Protejo" certification), "fragrance IFRA", and "100% recyclable packaging". These other claims are not analysed in this case study.



Mindset

Life Cycle Thinking: Freemet did not conduct a comprehensive life cycle analysis (LCA) to its products, but it has applied life cycle thinking in order to identify where they should focus on. The company is frequently evaluating how to improve product sustainability performance through partnerships with environmental certifications.

Hotspots Analysis: Product analysis is constantly carried out, but an analysis of critical hotspots has not been considered. This could be addressed by the company in the future.

Mainstreaming sustainability: Environmental sustainability is a central component in Freemet's corporate strategy and therefore all products claim to have positive environmental attributes. The company frequently seeks to improve its products in this direction.

Principle 1: Reliability



The claim was based on a biodegradability testing (OECD 301B), performed by an accredited laboratory and verified by the Universidad de Playa Ancha, Chile. The biodegradability that is verified is the aerobic biodegradability of the product, whilst the anaerobic biodegradability is not considered. To be classified as biodegradable, a product has to meet the ready biodegradability requirements specified by the method.

The declaration "decomposes naturally without causing harm to the ecosystem" has scientific basis, but the communication could be improved in terms of making it explicit that the claim is certified by the OECD standard 301-B.

Principle 2: Relevance



The claim highlights one element that has an impact on the sustainability performance of the product: decomposition.

The claim is based on a voluntary initiative that exceeds regulatory requirements of the production and the consumption country – in this case Chile. The biodegradability of the product is not required by Chilean law.



Principle 3: Clarity



The limits of the claim (i.e. on the biodegradability) and the connection between the claim and the product are clear. However, additional details to substantiate the claim could be provided (e.g. online) to support a better understanding of the claim. In addition, the term “ecofriendly” should be avoided because it is a broad, general sustainability benefit claim and very difficult to substantiate.

There should be further online information to substantiate the claim and make the difference between aerobic and anaerobic biodegradability more clear to consumers. This could be done using infographics or informative videos.



The picture shows how the sustainability claim is displayed on the laundry detergent pack.

Principle 4: Transparency



There is no further detailed information available to the general public about this product. In the case of biodegradability, only the communication on the existence of the [OECD 301B test](#) is mentioned, but this document or the laboratory that made this test cannot be accessed by the public.

Transparency should be improved by allowing consumers to evaluate the information that underpins the claim, e.g. by providing additional information on a website.

Principle 5: Accessibility



The claim is available on-pack, website and social media, although information behind the claim (methods and data) could be made more easily accessible for consumers.

The claim is visible and accessible at the time when the consumer needs it (on-pack for the purchase) and there is information on the website on [how to recycle](#) the product. The existence of the OECD 301B test method could be mentioned and explained on the website. This principle could be improved by adding further background information on the website, for instance.

Principle 6: Three Dimensions of Sustainability



Environmental: Environmental dimension is covered through the product claim that the detergent is decomposable without causing harm to the ecosystem, as opposed to traditional detergents that have been linked with certain environmental issues such as eutrophication.

The claim focuses on communicating the environmental attribute of the product. Moving forward, the company should provide information to health benefits that could arise from the use of the product.

Principle 7: Behaviour Change and Longer Term Impact



The claim analysed here does not seek to directly change consumer behavior, but on a broader perspective Freemet tries to involve consumers in a more conscious and responsible lifestyle. For instance by including messages such as ‘Let’s take care of the environment together!’ on the website and communication campaigns, as well as using a [blog](#) to encourage sustainable consumption practices.



An example of a post on Facebook where Freemet informs its clients about ways of recycling the product.

Freemet strives to build a long-term communication relationship with consumers. Through the website and social media channels, the company tries to share relevant information on what consumers could do to reduce negative sustainability impacts (through purchase, use, re-use or disposal). One example is the 'Less Plastic' project, in which Freemet gives clear instructions on how to dispose its products after use, including an option for consumers to schedule the removal of the empty plastic bottles from their home. Moving forward, Freemet has an excellent opportunity to engage with consumers on how they launder their clothes, which is one of the most impactful hotspots in the life cycle of clothes and a phase where consumer behavior can have great impact (e.g. information on how much detergent consumers should use or which temperature their laundry should be washed at).

Principle 9: Collaboration



Freemet considered other guides and frameworks, such as the Chilean Consumer Advertising Law, before developing the claim. The company also partners with other organizations such as the non-governmental organization 'Te Protejo', that certifies non-animal testing products.

Freemet already collaborates with partner organizations that are relevant to its mission. Further collaboration could be sought in order to build an integral part of the development and the communication of the claim. The opportunities for stakeholder involvement could be clearly communicated on the website and other communication channels.

Principle 8: Multi-Channel and Innovative Approach



The overall sustainability performance of the product, and the biodegradability more specifically, are communicated on-pack and also via social media, especially [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

The company tries to interact with consumers around the sustainability performance of the product on various communication channels, such as its website, Facebook, Instagram, and points of sale. Furthermore, the sustainability attributes of this product are evaluated in the platform [Mi Código Verde](#), which is a platform that generates and provides information on the environmental and social attributes of consumer goods in order to empower and enable them to make informed decisions.

Principle 10: Comparability



This principle states that product comparisons should be used only where it really helps the consumer to make sustainable choices. In this claim, Freemet opted for not addressing this aspect.