

Three Dimensions of Sustainability

Show the complete picture of product sustainability

- **Environmental, social, and economic** dimensions considered
- Burden shifting between the dimensions avoided
- Complementary certification schemes combined



What are common obstacles for the Three Dimensions of Sustainability in an e-commerce setting?

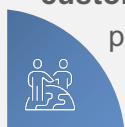
Huge **variety of different products** necessitates to cover diverse aspects of the 3 dimensions of sustainability



E-commerce **hides** the **full story** of a product's impact; **delivery** and **other lifecycle steps** are frequently **missed**



Very **diverse group of customers** with different priorities in terms of sustainability information



As **story telling** is easier with lower complexity, platforms risk leaving out **important information**



Real-life example of a common obstacle



Evita wants to buy a sustainable bathing suit on the internet. She only finds options that declare they use 'recycled materials'. She wonders whether there are also other aspects of sustainability that she should consider?

How to ensure the Three Dimensions of Sustainability in an e-commerce setting?



E-commerce platforms are a great medium to tell stories about products. In this respect, platforms should ensure they tell the whole sustainability story. This includes explaining different sustainability aspects by clarifying the three dimensions of sustainability – **environmental, social, and economic** – as well as the platform's approach to it. Sustainability reports can be a good medium to convey such information.

Further, when presenting “sustainable” products on websites, all three dimensions should be addressed, and a lifecycle approach should be taken to verify claims made by sellers.

E-commerce platforms should raise consumers' awareness about the different aspects of sustainability and clearly indicate which aspects are covered by certain products and which aspects are not addressed. This should also include supply chain stages like transport, delivery, product use and end-of-life, which are not directly linked to product sales. Analyzing user data can provide important insights on information gaps and consumer preferences regarding the provision of sustainability information.

Website: <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/consumer-information-scp>

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The Dos and Don'ts for the Three Dimensions of Sustainability in an E-Commerce Setting



DO

- Apply a **methodology** that shows how products perform on all sustainability dimensions
- Aim to make use of **labels** that use a **lifecycle approach** and cover all stages of the supply chain or **combine different labels**
- **Explain linkages** and **trade-offs** between different sustainability dimensions
- Ask sellers to **provide feedback** on **why** their product is **sustainable** and not only show a label



DON'T

- Do not focus on one **sustainability dimension only** when telling stories in e-commerce
- Do not use 'sustainability' as a claim **without detailing** the underlying **dimensions**

Good Practice Example















26 product requirements

When it comes to the textiles themselves, the Green Button builds on recognised certification labels. In the introductory phase, this applies to cutting and sewing as well as bleaching and dyeing. The social product criteria of the Green Button apply for cutting and sewing while the environmental product criteria apply for the production stages of bleaching and dyeing. Companies submit recognised, credible certification labels for these areas.

The Green Button does not yet cover the entire supply chain. Initially, it will look at cutting and sewing, and bleaching and dyeing. These are the manufacturing stages in which social and environmental challenges are the greatest. As part of the further development, expansion to other supply chain stages is planned (material- and fibre use, spinning and weaving).

Including 20 due diligence requirements and 26 product requirements, the Green Button aims to cover all the various aspects of sustainability.

ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA (AN EXCERPT)		
 Ban on hazardous chemicals	 Biodegradability of chemical substances	 Limits for wastewater
 Less air pollution and CO2	 Use of natural fibres tested for pollutants	 Sustainable procurement of chemical fibres
SOCIAL CRITERIA (AN EXCERPT)		
 Ban on forced labour and child labour	 Ban on discrimination and harassment	 Payment of the minimum wage
 Working hours and paid overtime	 Right to freedom of association and collective bargaining	 Health and safety at work must be guaranteed

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