RECYCLABILITY PRODUCT CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

Last version developed by the Technical Committee on 2019.
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1 Introduction

RecyClass is an initiative aiming to help the plastics value chain find the correct way to approach and evaluate the recyclability of packaging products. Three main pillars guide the activities of RecyClass:

- Recyclability Evaluation Protocols
- Design for Recycling Guidelines
- RecyClass Online Tool (Self-Assessment)

These three pillars are interlinked, allowing for coherent and scientific conclusions to be incorporated throughout the initiative. Information in the online tool and design for recycling guidelines is continuously updated on the basis of lab tests carried out following the standardised testing protocols.

With the rising importance of good design, it is necessary to properly validate and recognise various recyclability claims. For this reason, Recyclability Product Certification has been established. Following the completion of the RecyClass self-assessment, a user can request the certification to help raise consumer awareness and better communicate the importance of recyclability and packaging design. The certification audit is operated by an independent third-party. Subsequently, with the validated recyclability of a certified packaging, the RecyClass recyclability logo is licensed and can be used for marketing purposes.

The certification gives confidence to the consumers that the plastic packaging they purchase is recyclable and can help them make more conscious choices.

2 RecyClass Self-Assessment

Five areas of questions within the RecyClass online tool support the user in assessing the balance of functionality and recyclability of a packaging design. With the completion of the assessment, a user will receive a grade accompanied by the RecyClass report, outlining the contents and results of the self-assessment. The grading system of the tool resembles the energetic efficiency rating, where grade “A” represents fully recyclable packaging and “F” represents packaging which poses severe risks to the recycling processes and where energy recovery is the only efficient end-of-life solution. Increasing contamination of a recylcate is strictly correlated with a reduction of its properties, as well as its potential application in further goods and its market value, which leads to a gradually lowered recyclability grade. Up to three bonus classes, “+”, can be obtained on top of a given grade, based on the percentage of post-consumer recycled material (>15%, >50%, >90%, respectively) that is used in the given packaging.

The report issued at the end of the assessment, guides the user in identifying possible areas of improvement to the packaging’s recyclability and the tool’s rating result. Furthermore, with the report the user can request an official RecyClass certification. Only after an official certification is awarded can the RecyClass recyclability logo be displayed on the packaging as a marketing tool. Completion of the assessment alone cannot be used as a valid recyclability claim.
3 Certification Process

A user can request the official recyclability certification by submitting the Certification Application Form, along with the RecyClass self-assessment report to recycclass@plasticsrecyclers.eu. Once the application is reviewed, the information is shared with an independent third-party auditor, who will subsequently start the certification audit.

The certification focuses on plastic packaging and specifically their recyclability, given the state-of-art recycling technology established in Europe. Namely, packaging which has already been introduced to the European market is eligible for this certification, as well as packaging which has yet to be introduced to the market with no further alterations to be made to its design. Retailers, brands, converters and any other companies involved in manufacturing or designing of the packaging can apply for the certification.

After the application has been reviewed and the auditor selected, to protect the applicant’s rights, a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) will be signed between the applicant, the auditor and RecyClass prior to any further assessment of the packaging.

Detailed information about the material composition of a given package must be provided to the auditor, to ensure sound, scientific recyclability analysis. As packaging often consists of multiple components with specific functionalities, to certify its recyclability the behaviour of each component (e.g. bottle, label/sleeve, cap, closing lid, seal, adhesive, ink, printing, other attachments) in sorting and recycling processes must be considered. The auditor can for instance request information on basic packaging components such as description, weight or density, as well as details on the methodology of connection between components (mechanically, fully glued, laminated, etc.). The auditor will provide a template to be filled-in with the above-mentioned data. Furthermore, for the completion of the audit, the applicant will have to provide 10 samples of the packaging under analysis.

Upon the completion of the audit, the applicant will firstly receive a report issued by the auditor outlining the results and then consequently a certificate, issued by RecyClass, along with the recyclability logo and guidelines on how it can be used for commercial purposes, as a packaging label. Along with the issue of certificates and the logos, further online campaigns can be developed with the help of RecyClass team.

3.1 Additional testing

In case of uncertainties or inconclusive results, additional Technology Approval testing may be requested by the auditor. However, prior to doing any additional test, the applicant will be contacted and informed on the additional cost that these test(s) would incur. Only after the applicant’s approval the auditor will complete the needed tests to release the certification.
3.2 Validity, renewal and cost of certification

Once issued, the certificate will be valid for three years, given that no alterations to the packaging design or composition are made. If alterations are made to a packaging, the applicant must immediately notify RecyClass, upon which the validity of the certificate will have to be reviewed. If the alterations are significant a monitoring audit would be required.

The issued certificate will only be valid for the specific packaging that has been audited, any variations will have to be individually verified.

Upon the expiry of a certificate or in case of alterations to the original packaging, a monitoring audit should be conducted. The validity will subsequently be renewed for additional three years. Monitoring audits will also apply to any variations of the packaging that has previously been certified.

The cost of audits is incurred by the applicant and is set individually by auditors; therefore, the costs may vary.

3.3 Process overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application submission</strong></td>
<td>Signed Application Form, RecyClass Self-Assessment report</td>
<td>Applicant, RecyClass team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The applicant submits a certification request by sending a signed Application Form along with a RecyClass Self-Assessment report to <a href="mailto:info@recyclass.eu">info@recyclass.eu</a></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application approval</strong></td>
<td>NDA</td>
<td>Applicant, auditor, RecyClass representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The application is verified, and an auditor is selected, upon which an NDA is signed to protect the applicant’s rights.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data transfer &amp; testing</strong></td>
<td>Data collection document Additional NDAs if needed for Technology Approval</td>
<td>Applicant, auditor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the scope of the certification process, the auditor will request additional data pertaining to the properties of the packaging in question. The applicant will have to provide 10 packaging samples to be analysed. Technology Approval testing might be requested upon inconclusive analysis results – before this process proceeds the applicant must be duly notified and his/her approval is necessary.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final evaluation</strong></td>
<td>RecyClass Certification Report</td>
<td>Applicant, auditor, RecyClass team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upon the completion of the analysis, the auditor will issue a RecyClass Certification Report to the</td>
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applicant, stating the results and the assigned, certified recyclability grade.

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<tr>
<th><strong>Certificate release</strong></th>
<th>Recyclability Product Certificate, Recyclability logo, Guidelines on the use of Recyclability Logo</th>
<th>Applicant, auditor, RecyClass team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With the applicant’s approval of the RecyClass Certification Report, the RecyClass team will issue the Recyclability Product Certificate. Along with the certificate, the recyclability logo and the guidelines on its use will be provided to the applicant. Information on certified packaging will be published on the RecyClass website. Further communication campaigns can be developed in coordination with the applicant &amp; the RecyClass team. All the campaigns will have to be approved by the applicant.</td>
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4 Certificate of Recyclability
5 Recyclability Logo

The RecyClass recyclability logos correspond to the grading scale of the online tool – from A to F (with “+” variations). The logos are assigned in correspondence with the results of the certification audit, granting the applicant rights to use it for promotional and marketing purposes.

Assigned logos can be used on any communication material referring specifically and exclusively to the certified packaging – for instance on websites, social media platforms or the packaging itself as a valid recyclability claim. The elements of the logo cannot be altered in any way and must be used together as a whole. Where adequate the logo in black or in white can be used.

Applicants should carefully read the provided guidelines on the use of logos before any communication or marketing claims are made.

To protect the integrity of the certification and the validity of the certified packaging claims, it is important that the logos are used correctly and only in relation to the packaging that has been certified. If you think the logo is being misused please report it immediately to recyclass@plasticsrecyclers.eu.