

What requirements must home decoration and home textile products comply with to be allowed on the European market?

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To enter the European market, you must comply with both mandatory (legal) requirements and additional or niche requirements your buyers may have. For home decoration and home textiles (HDHT), legal requirements mainly focus on consumer health and safety. Products should function well, with minimal risks. Social and environmental sustainability is becoming increasingly important. This is further stimulated by the rollout of European Green Deal legislation. Certification can give you a competitive edge.

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1. What are mandatory requirements?

The European Union (EU) has various directives and regulations that apply to HDHT products. A single product often has to comply with several of them.

European Green Deal - circular economy action plan

In 2020, the European Commission published the [European Green Deal](#), a roadmap for Europe becoming a climate-neutral continent by 2050. A main building block is the [Circular Economy Action Plan](#). The plan announced initiatives along the entire life cycle of products. It targets how products are designed, promotes circular economy processes and encourages sustainable consumption. The plan also aims to prevent waste and keep the resources used in the EU economy for as long as possible.

In this context, many European laws are under revision and new legislation is being developed. Some of this legislation will apply to you directly, and some indirectly via your buyers.

You can stay up to date via the [timeline of the circular economy action plan](#).

Tips:

For more information, see our [webinar on European market access requirements for HDHT](#).

Visit [Access2Markets](#) for more information on import rules and taxes in the EU.

Contact Open Trade Gate Sweden if you have [specific questions regarding rules and requirements in](#)

Sweden and the EU.

Ask your country's Ministry of Trade and/or your local Business Support Organisation(s) for help.

Contact internationally recognised testing institutes about what needs testing and what the norms are. Examples are [SGS](#), [Bureau Veritas](#) and [TÜV](#).

From the General Product Safety Directive to the General Product Safety Regulation

According to the [General Product Safety Directive](#) (GPSD, 2001/95/EC), all non-food products marketed in the EU must be safe to use. The GPSD will be replaced by the [General Product Safety Regulation](#) (GPSR, EU 2023/988), which requires products on the EU market to be safe, whether sold online or in traditional shops. It came into force in June 2023 and will apply from December 2024 onwards.

Article 6 of the GPSR provides a list of aspects to consider when assessing the safety of products. This includes assessing if a product is likely to be confused with foodstuff. Some decorative items look so much like food, that consumers could mistake them for real food products: for example, candles that look like fruit. Because people (especially children) could be tempted to eat them, these food-imitating products pose a choking hazard. Such products are banned from the market, replacing Directive 89/357/EEC on [dangerous products resembling foodstuffs](#).

Unsafe products are rejected at the European border or withdrawn from the market. The EU uses the [Safety Gate](#) system to list and share information about such products. It provides information on the types of products, the risks posed, and measures taken at the national level to restrict or prevent their marketing.

European Standards

Standardisation organisations such as [CEN](#) and [CENELEC](#) create European Standards (EN). These technical documents clarify what is deemed 'safe' for specific product types. Adhering to such standards can help you comply with EU product safety legislation.

Under the GPSR, non-EU products can only be placed on the market if there is an 'economic operator' in the EU that is responsible for their safety. The [Market Surveillance Regulation](#) (EU 2019/1020) already requires this for selected products (see Annex I). In business-to-business (B2B) trade, the economic operator is often the importer. For business-to-consumer (B2C) trade, you need to make specific arrangements because there is no importer. However, it is unlikely that you will be using direct online or offline sales to EU consumers. Selling directly to European consumers via your own website can be complicated and costly. You are responsible for factors like aftersales obligations and payment systems for consumer use. For most exporters from developing countries, this is not feasible.

Tips:

Read more about the [General Product Safety Directive](#) and the new [General Product Safety Regulation](#).

Search the [CEN/CENELEC standards database](#) for relevant standards for your product.

Use your common sense to ensure that normal use of your product does not cause any danger.

Search your product type in the [Safety Gate alerts](#) for an overview of what products have been withdrawn from the market and why.

For more information on Article 4 of the Market Surveillance Regulation, see the European Commission's [guidance document](#).

Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation, and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)

The [REACH](#) regulation (EC 1907/2006) lists which chemicals are restricted in products that are marketed in Europe. It aims to protect human health and the environment from the risks that chemicals can pose. This is done through 4 processes: the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and restriction of CHemicals. It applies to all products that contain chemical substances, such as furniture and textiles. What chemicals are relevant for you depends on your specific products and materials.

For example, REACH restricts the use of:

- Several azo dyes used particularly for textile products.
- Lead in paints and ceramics glazes.
- Cadmium compounds in various applications.
- Arsenic and creosotes as wood preservatives.
- Flame retardants, including TRIS, TEPA and PBB.
- Organostannic compounds and phthalates in PVC.

The list of restricted chemicals is regularly updated. The European Commission plans to revise and update REACH as a whole in the 4th quarter of 2023, potentially changing registration requirements and simplifying communication in the supply chains.

Tips:

Read more about [REACH](#) and its [revision](#).

Make sure you comply with the restrictions for the use of chemicals. This includes checking your own suppliers. For example, if you make textile products, you should ask for certified azo-free dyes.

Familiarise yourself with the full list of restricted substances in products marketed in Europe via the [Access2Markets](#) platform.

For information and tips from the European Chemical Agency (ECHA), see for instance [REACH Annex XVII](#) (a list of all restricted chemicals), [information for non-EU companies](#) and [questions & answers](#).

Stay up to date on developments and new alternatives in the field of flame retardants, for instance through [pinfa](#), a group of global flame retardant manufacturers and users.

Food Contact Materials Regulation

Food safety is a major concern in Europe. Safety measures also cover materials that come into (in)direct contact with food. These so-called food contact materials (FCMs) include HDHT products like dinnerware and cutlery. These have to comply with the European [Food Contact Materials Regulation](#) (EC 1935/2004).

The regulation requires that FCMs:

- Do not release any substances they are composed of into food at levels harmful to human health.
- Do not change food composition, taste and odour in an unacceptable way.

FCMs must come with the words 'for food contact' or the 'food safe' symbol if their intended use as an FCM is not clear. Other information to ensure their safe use must also be provided where relevant. In addition, all FCMs must be manufactured in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 2023/2006 on [Good Manufacturing Practices](#).

FCM legislation also contains specific directives for items made of:

- [ceramics](#) (84/500/EEC)
- [plastic](#) (EU 10/2011)
- [recycled plastic](#) (EU 2022/1616)

These directives set out rules for the composition of these FCMs, permitted substances and Specific Migration Limits (SMLs). Additional FCM legislation regulates the use of [bisphenol A in varnishes and coatings](#) (EU 2018/213) and [certain epoxy derivatives](#) (1895/2005/EC). FCMs that pose health hazards are listed in the [rapid alert system for food and feed](#) (RASFF).

Various aspects of the FCM legislation are being revised and/or amended. For example, the European Commission plans to [lower lead and cadmium limits for ceramic FCMs](#) following increasing concerns about their health effects. This initiative may also introduce limits for aluminium, arsenic, barium, cobalt, chromium and nickel, and expand the scope to include glass, crystal and enamelled metals. The Commission also plans to [revise the FCM regulation as a whole](#), after a 2022 evaluation supported the need to do so.

Tips:

Read more about [FCM legislation](#). You can also download a [brochure in your language](#).

Stay up to date on the latest [revisions and amendments of the FCM legislation](#).

See the [European Food Safety Authority](#) (EFSA) for more information on [FCMs and applications](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions on the Food Contact Materials legislation](#).

Search your product type in the [RASFF portal](#) for an overview of what products have been withdrawn from the market and why.

From Timber Regulation to Deforestation Regulation

The [EU Timber Regulation](#) (EUTR – EU 995/2010) aims to counter illegal logging by banning illegally harvested timber products from the EU market. This includes wooden furniture, frames and packing materials. European buyers have to exercise 'due diligence' to prove that any timber used in their products was harvested legally. You must be able to provide them with information like the tree species, the origin of the wood and proof of compliance with national laws and regulations. Products with a [FLEGT](#) license are exempt from the due diligence obligation.

In May 2023, the [European Council adopted a new regulation](#) to replace the EUTR. This [Deforestation Regulation](#) (EUDR) will ensure that wooden products like furniture do not contribute to deforestation and forest degradation. Operators who place these products on the EU market will be required to trace them back to the plot of land where they were produced.

In this context, 'deforestation' means the conversion of forest to agricultural use. 'Forest degradation' means structural changes to forest cover – the conversion of primary forests or naturally regenerating forests into plantation forests or into other wooded land, or of primary forests into planted forests.

To be allowed onto the European market, covered products must be:

- deforestation-free (from land that has not been subject to deforestation or forest degradation after 31 December 2020)
- produced in accordance with the law of the country of production
- covered by a due diligence statement

The new regulation came into force in June 2023 and will apply from December 2024 onwards. It will also recognise FLEGT-licensed products.

Wildlife Trade Regulations

The EU's [Wildlife Trade Regulations](#) ensure that wildlife products only enter the EU market if they are of legal and sustainable origin. This includes products like timber and leather goods. These regulations enforce the rules of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#) (CITES). They also go beyond the CITES requirements. For example, they include more species than the standard CITES list and set stricter import conditions.

Under the EUTR, products with a CITES licence are exempt from the due diligence obligation. The Deforestation Regulation currently does not contain an exception for CITES-licensed products.

Tips:

Read more about the [EUTR](#).

Stay up to date on the proposed [rollout of the new EUDR](#). Also study the EU's [factsheet](#) on the proposal.

For more information on FLEGT, see the [FLEGT Licence Information Point](#).

See the [Reference Guide to the Wildlife Trade Regulations](#) for a user-friendly version. Check the [list of species](#) in Annexes A, B, C and D of the Wildlife Trade Regulations to make sure you do not use prohibited materials.

Textile Regulation

The European [Textile Regulation](#) (EU 1007/2011) states that textile products must be labelled or marked, to ensure that consumers know what they are buying. It applies to all products that contain at least 80% (by weight) of textile fibres. Their label should indicate the full fibre composition of the product and, if applicable, the presence of non-textile parts of animal origin. It has to be durable, easily legible, visible, accessible, and printed in all the official national languages of the European countries the product is sold in.

There is no EU legislation on the use of symbols for washing instructions and other care aspects of textile articles. Because consumers do value care information on a product label, you should follow the [ISO 3758:2012](#) standards on the care labelling code using symbols for textiles.

In March 2022, the European Commission presented a proposal for a [Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles](#) as part of the Green Deal.

The goal of this strategy is to ensure that by 2030 textile products placed on the European market are:

- durable, repairable and recyclable
- to a great extent made of recycled fibres
- free of hazardous substances
- produced respecting social rights

Tips:

For more information, see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about the [Textile Regulation](#).

Know your product and how it should be labelled in Europe. For example, if you use a cotton name, trademark, or another term that implies the presence of a type of cotton, you must use the generic fibre name "cotton". Find out more about [textile labelling rules](#) from Access2Markets.

For details on the Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, check out the [questions and answers](#) and the [factsheet](#).

CE marking for toys and energy-related products

The [European Conformity \(CE\) mark](#) signals that a product meets high safety, health, and environmental protection requirements. However, it does not indicate that a product has been approved as safe. CE marking is compulsory for products covered by the [New Approach Directives](#), including toys and energy-related products. Affixing CE marking to other products is forbidden.

When importing from non-EU countries, importers must ensure that products fully comply with all EU safety, health and environmental protection requirements. This includes providing the necessary [technical documentation](#) and a [Declaration of Conformity](#) to communicate that you comply.

In March 2022, the European Commission adopted an [Ecodesign and Energy Labelling Working Plan 2022-2024](#). This plan covers new energy-related products, and updates and increases the ambition for products that are already regulated. It functions as a transitional measure until the proposed new [Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation](#) (ESPR) enters into force.

Tips:

To affix CE marking to your products, follow the steps outlined at [CE Marking for Manufacturers](#). It provides instructions per product group.

If you produce toys or energy-related products, study how to meet the requirements of the [Toy Safety Directive](#) (2009/48/EC), [Restriction of Hazardous Substances Directive](#) (2011/65/EU), [Low Voltage Directive](#) (2014/35/EU), [Electromagnetic Compatibility \(EMC\) Directive](#) (2014/30/EU), [Ecodesign of](#)

[energy-related products](#) (2009/125/EC) and [Energy Labelling Regulation](#).

Stay up to date on the proposed [rollout of the new ESPR](#).

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment

The [Waste of Electrical and Electronic Equipment \(WEEE\) Directive](#) (2012/19/EU) promotes the collection, treatment and recycling of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) at the end of their life. The [WEEE label](#) must be affixed to these products, including lamps and electrical toys. Your importer must register the product that they put on the market and mark it accordingly. The marking should be accessible, durable, legible and indelible.

The [Restriction of Hazardous Substances \(RoHS\) Directive](#) (2011/65/EU) also promotes the recyclability of EEE. It restricts the use of hazardous substances such as heavy metals and flame retardants that have safer alternatives. This directive is included in the CE marking requirements.

Tips:

Study the [WEEE](#) and [RoHS](#) Directives if you produce electric products.

Stay up to date on the current [evaluation of the WEEE](#) and [review of the RoHS](#).

Dangerous products resembling foodstuffs

Directive 87/357/EEC on [dangerous products resembling foodstuffs](#) bans decorative items that look so much like food that consumers could mistake them for real food products. This could be due to characteristics such as shape, colour, smell, appearance and size. Because children could be tempted to eat them, these food-imitating products pose a choking hazard. A variety of products fall within this category, such as food-shaped candles and soaps.

Tip:

Search the [Safety Gate alerts](#) for products that pose a choking hazard. This gives you an idea of the designs to avoid.

Product Liability Directive

The [Product Liability Directive](#) (85/374/EEC) entitles consumers to compensation if a defective product causes damage to them or their property. The importer is liable, but they may pass a claim on to you. The Directive applies to all products used for private consumption that are marketed in the EU, with a minimum price of €500.

In September 2022, the [European Commission proposed a revision of the Product Liability Directive](#). This proposal includes products emerging from new digital technologies, like smart products and artificial intelligence (AI).

Tips:

Read more about the [EU legislation on liability for defective products](#).

Stay up to date on the proposed [rollout of the new Product Liability Directive](#).

Single-Use Plastics Directive

The EU's new [plastics strategy](#) will transform the way plastic products are designed, used, produced and recycled. The [Single-Use Plastics Directive](#) (EU 2019/204) bans selected single-use plastic products for which alternatives exist on the market. It includes products like single-use plastic cutlery, plates, straws, stirrers, and expanded polystyrene cups. Replacements must be made from biologically sourced materials that can be composted. This offers new opportunities for suppliers of bio-degradable alternatives for single-use plastics.

The plastics strategy also includes the [Plastic Bags Directive](#) (EU 2015/720), which aims to significantly reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags. This offers opportunities for producers of reusable bags.

Tip:

Stay up to date on the [European policies on plastics](#), including the Single-Use Plastics Directive and the Plastic Bags Directive.

Intellectual property rights

When you develop HDHT products for the European market, you have to make sure you do not copy an existing design. So-called [intellectual property \(IP\) is protected in Europe](#), and products that violate IP rights are banned from the market. In November 2020, the European Commission adopted a new [IP action plan](#), which should give European companies easier access to fast, effective and affordable protection tools.

Tips:

For more information, see the [European Union Intellectual Property Office](#) (EUIPO) and the [World Intellectual Property Office](#) (WIPO).

Keep track of developments via the [state-of-play of the implementation of the key actions](#) in the IP action plan.

Packaging

The EU's [Packaging Directive](#) (94/62/EC) aims to prevent or reduce the impact of packaging and packaging waste on the environment. Buyers may therefore ask you to minimise the use of packaging and/or to use sustainable (recycled) materials.

The [Plant Health Law](#) (EU 2016/2031) also sets requirements for wood packaging materials used for transport,

such as packing cases, boxes and pallets. The objective is to prevent materials that are harmful to plants or plant products from being introduced into and spreading within the EU. The law also regulates imports from third countries in line with international plant health standards. Keep this in mind when you decide on the packaging of your product.

In November 2022, the [European Commission proposed a new regulation on packaging and packaging waste](#). This revision aims to prevent the generation of packaging waste and ensure that all packaging on the EU market will be recyclable in an economically viable way by 2030. It also strives to increase the use of recycled plastics in packaging.

Tips:

Read more about the [packaging and packaging waste legislation](#) and the [requirements for wood packaging materials](#).

Stay up to date on the [refit of the Packaging Directive](#).

Other upcoming Green Deal legislation

In addition to the other updates and replacements already included here, other new Green Deal legislation is in the works.

Particularly relevant for the HDHT sector are the:

- Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (and Forced Labour Regulation)
- Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation
- Green Claims Directive

Before these proposed laws can enter into force, they must be formally endorsed by the European Council. They will apply 18 months after that.

Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and Forced Labour Regulation

In February 2022, the [European Commission adopted a proposal for a Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#) (CSDDD). It aims to foster sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour and to anchor human rights and environmental considerations in companies' operations and corporate governance. This proposed directive requires larger companies to identify and – where necessary – prevent, end or reduce negative impacts of their activities on human rights and the environment. Both in the company's own operations and in its value chains.

The proposal applies to:

- EU companies with 500+ employees and a net €150+ million turnover worldwide
- EU companies in high-impact sectors (including textiles!) with 250+ employees and a net €40+ million turnover worldwide

- non-EU companies with 500+ employees and a net €150+ million turnover generated in the EU
- non-EU companies in high-impact sectors (including textiles!) with 250+ employees and a net €40+ million turnover generated in the EU

While your company may not be within the scope of the proposed directive, your European buyers may be. This means that the new rules may not directly apply to you, but they may apply to you indirectly via your buyers. Larger buyers will have to exercise the required due diligence throughout their value chain, which includes you as a supplier. As the directive has yet to be finalised and approved, the exact implications are not yet clear.

In September 2022, the [European Commission proposed a new Forced Labour Regulation](#). This proposed regulation bans products made with forced labour from the EU market. The Commission will issue forced labour due diligence guidance and information on risk indicators of forced labour. Though different, the 2 proposals are linked. If a company has carried out effective forced labour due diligence on its supply chains to comply with the CSDDD, this will be considered in the assessment of compliance with the Forced Labour Regulation.

Complying with [voluntary sustainability initiatives](#) may help you to facilitate buyers' due diligence processes.

Tips:

Read more about the [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#).

For details on the Forced Labour Regulation, check out the [questions and answers](#) and [factsheet](#).

Stay up to date on the proposed [rollout of the new Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#) and the [Forced Labour Regulation](#).

Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation

The new Circular Economy Action Plan of the European Green Deal aims to make sustainable products the norm. An impressive [83% of citizens agree that European legislation is necessary to protect the environment](#).

In March 2022, the [European Commission proposed an Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation](#). This proposal aims to ensure that products are designed to last longer, are easier to reuse, repair and recycle, and incorporate recycled raw materials wherever possible. It also restricts single use, tackles the (too) early failure of products and bans the destruction of unsold durable goods.

Tips:

Stay up to date on the proposed [rollout of the new Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation](#).

For details, check out the [questions and answers](#) and the [factsheet](#) about the Sustainable Products Initiative.

Green Claims Directive

According to a recent screening of websites, [half of green claims lack evidence](#). Via this so-called 'greenwashing', companies pretend to be doing more for the environment than they really are. In 42% of cases,

the claims were believed to be exaggerated, false or deceptive and could qualify as unfair commercial practices. Unsurprisingly, many consumers (and importers) do not trust generic sustainability claims. In a 2021 study, [just 20% of Western European respondents had a great deal / a lot of trust in claims about sustainable business practices](#).

In March 2023, the [European Commission proposed a new Green Claims Directive](#). The proposal aims to:

- make green claims reliable, comparable and verifiable across the EU
- protect consumers from greenwashing
- contribute to creating a circular and green EU economy by enabling consumers to make informed purchasing decisions
- help establish a level playing field when it comes to the environmental performance of products

Figure 1: EU measures to tackle greenwashing

Source: [European Commission @ YouTube](#)

Tips:

For details on the proposal, check out the [questions and answers](#) and [factsheet](#).

Stay up to date on the proposed [rollout of the Green Claims Directive](#).

Use the [guidelines regarding sustainability claims](#) by the Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets for help with communicating your sustainable performance. The British Competition and Markets Authority's [guidance for businesses on making environmental claims](#) also lists 6 principles to follow.

2. What additional requirements and certifications do HDHT buyers often ask for?

Voluntary sustainable initiatives

The increasing importance of sustainability is reflected in a recent Maison et Objet Barometer, where [62% of HDHT retailers have noticed growing interest from their customers in ethical products](#). They indicate that 92% of their customers think natural materials are (very) important, 77% of the customers value socially responsible production methods, and 71% care about recyclable/recycled materials.

You can highlight your sustainability efforts in the “story” behind your product and company – in line with the proposed [Green Claims Directive](#), of course. Think of sustainable raw materials and production processes, as well as the impact your company has on the environment, the wellbeing of your workers, and the community. Buyers appreciate good storytelling to create an emotional connection with their customers.

To back up your story, a growing number of European buyers would like you to comply with the following schemes:

- [Business Social Compliance Initiative \(BSCI\)](#): an initiative of European retailers to improve social conditions in sourcing countries. They expect their suppliers to comply with the [BSCI Code of Conduct](#).
- [Ethical Trading Initiative \(ETI\)](#): an alliance of companies, trade unions and voluntary organisations. ETI aims to improve the working conditions in global supply chains via their [ETI Base Code of labour practice](#).
- [Sedex](#): a membership organisation striving to improve working conditions in global sourcing chains. The [platform](#) lets you share your sustainable performance, based on a self-assessment. Sedex’s [SMETA audit](#) can help you to understand standards of labour, health and safety, environmental performance, and ethics within your own operations.

You can also learn about sustainable options from standards such as [ISO 14001](#) and [SA8000](#). ISO 14001 sets out a framework for setting up an effective environmental management system. SA8000 focuses on the fair treatment of workers, measuring social performance in 8 areas. However, only niche market buyers demand compliance with such standards.

If you adhere to voluntary sustainability initiatives and standards, this may help your buyers to comply with the proposed CSDDD and Forced Labour Regulation.

Tips:

Optimise your sustainability performance. Study the issues included in initiatives such as [BSCI](#) and [ETI](#) to learn what to focus on.

To show your sustainability performance, use self-assessments like the [BSCI Producer Self-Assessment](#) or a code of conduct like the [ETI Base Code of labour practice](#). This may give you a competitive advantage.

For more information, see our special study on [sustainability in HDHT](#), our [tips to go green](#) and our [tips to become more socially responsible](#).

See the ITC Standards Map for more information on [BSCI](#), [ETI](#), [Sedex](#) and [SA8000](#).

Crystalline Silica

[Respirable Crystalline Silica](#) (RCS) can cause lung cancer through inhalation. The ceramics industry mostly uses crystalline silica in the form of quartz and cristobalite. European buyers care about worker safety and may

demand good handling of crystalline silica during the production of ceramics.

Tip:

See the [European Network on Silica](#) for materials such as a [Good Practice Guide](#).

Labelling and packaging requirements

The information on the outer packaging of your product should match the packing list sent to the importer.

Outer packaging labels should include:

- producer name
- consignee name
- quantity
- size
- volume
- caution signs

Your buyer will specify what information they need on the product labels or on the item itself, such as logos or 'made in...' information. This is part of the order specifications. In Europe, [EAN or barcodes](#) are commonly used on the product label. Labelling should be in English unless your buyer indicates otherwise. For more information on labelling textile products, please refer to the chapter on the Textile Regulation.

When packaging your products for transport, you should comply with the importer's order specifications. You also have to consider:

- how you can best prevent damage
- what the optimal packaging dimensions and weight are
- how you can minimise costs
- what packaging material you should use
- whether you have to provide consumer packaging

Tips:

Ask your buyer for their specific labelling and packaging requirements.

See [Packaging Europe](#) for the latest packaging developments, including updates about biodegradable packaging.

For more information on packaging your products, see our [tips to organise your export](#). This study also discusses topics such as delivery and payment terms. Also see our study on [terms & conditions](#) for more information on (customised) packaging terms.

3. What are the requirements and certifications for HDHT niche markets?

Niche markets in the HDHT sector are characterised by social and environmental sustainability, verified via

internationally recognised systems. Table 1 lists the most commonly requested certifications and labels.

Table 1: Most important certifications and labels requested by European HDHT buyers

Name	Type	Cost for companies	Tips
WFTO	Fair trade	Use the fee calculator to determine your annual fee, which depends on your turnover and location. You also have to pay for a monitoring audit upon application, and every 2-6 years after becoming guaranteed.	Comply with the WFTO's fair trade principles to show your commitment, even if you cannot afford to become officially guaranteed.
Fair for Life	Fair trade	Certification costs vary depending on factors including company size and location. You have to apply to get an exact offer.	Familiarise yourself with the Fair for Life standard .
FSC	Sustainable wood	Since July 2022, the annual administration fee is based on your actual forest products turnover. Contact an FSC-accredited certification body for a quote.	Follow the 5 steps towards FSC certification .
PEFC	Sustainable wood	PEFC-recognised certification bodies set the cost of certification. Fees are usually based on the time needed for the audit, which depends on variables like company size. Small companies can apply for group certification to reduce costs.	Follow the 6 steps towards becoming PEFC Certified .

GOTS	Sustainable textiles	Companies with 1 facility can expect annual certification costs of €1,200-€3,000, plus an annual licence fee of €150.	Use GOTS-certified organic yarn or fabric instead of applying for your own certification. Just make sure to communicate clearly that the certification applies to the yarn or fabric, and not to the rest of the product's components and related production processes.
OEKO-TEX	Sustainable textiles	The cost of STANDARD 100 certification includes the costs for the licence, company audit, and laboratory and administrative tests. You can obtain a cost estimate from your appointed OEKO-TEX institute .	Use OEKO-TEX-certified yarn or fabric instead of applying for your own certification. This can significantly reduce the costs for laboratory tests by avoiding duplicated tests.
GRS	Recycled textile, metal, plastic and paper products	Because this certification includes additional audits for social, chemical, and environmental requirements, the price is usually around USD 7,000-9,000.	Use GRS-certified recycled materials instead of applying for your own certification. Just make sure to communicate clearly that the certification applies to the recycled raw materials only, and not to the rest of the product's components and related production processes.

Source: Globally Cool

Fair trade

The concept of fair trade supports fair pricing and improved social conditions for producers and their communities. Fair-trade certification can give you a competitive advantage, especially if the production of your items is labour-intensive. Common fair-trade certifications are issued by the [World Fair Trade Organisation](#) (WFTO) and [Fair For Life](#). For most fair-trade-oriented buyers in Europe however, simply complying with WFTO's

10 principles of fair trade is enough.

Figure 2: WFTO's 10 principles of fair trade



Source: [WFTO](#)

Tips:

Ask buyers what they are looking for. Especially in the fair-trade sector, you can use the story behind your product for marketing purposes.

Determine which certification programme would be the best fit for you and apply for it if you can.

If certification is not feasible, work according to WFTO's [principles](#) without being officially guaranteed or certified. Carefully document your company processes so you can support your story.

Read more about the [WFTO Guarantee System](#) and [Fair for Life](#) in the ITC Standards Map.

Sustainable wood

[FSC](#) (Forest Stewardship Council) certification is the most common label for sustainable wooden products, including paper. [FSC chain of custody certification](#) guarantees that a product's source material comes from responsibly managed forests. These forests should be managed in a way that preserves biological diversity and benefits the lives of local workers and people. These products are especially popular in Western European markets. Non-timber forest products like rattan and bamboo can also be certified.

[PEFC](#) (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) is another option. Like with FSC, the [PEFC chain of custody certification](#) verifies that the forest-based material in a product comes from sustainably managed forests.

Because these certification programmes are aligned with the EUTR, they can help you to show compliance. Both are committed to ensuring alignment with the new EUDR as well.

Tips:

For more information on the application process, see the [five steps towards FSC certification](#) and/or [how to become PEFC Certified](#).

If you use recycled wood or paper, apply for the [FSC Recycled label](#).

If you produce furniture, see the FSC's brochure on [the value of FSC for furniture](#).

Read more about [FSC](#) and [PEFC](#) in the ITC Standards Map.

Sustainable textiles

While sustainability is becoming more and more of a requirement, the actual use of certification is lagging

behind. However, buyers are increasingly interested in certification to “prove” their sustainability – especially organic certification.

Some of the most popular certifications for home textiles are:

- [Global Organic Textile Standard \(GOTS\)](#) – a textile-processing standard for organic fibres that ensures environmental and social responsibility throughout the production chain of textile products.
- [OEKO-TEX Standard 100](#) certification – guarantees that textile articles are free from harmful substances.

OEKO-TEX [Made in Green](#) combines Standard 100 and [STeP](#). The goal of STeP is to implement environmentally friendly production processes in the long term, to improve health and safety and to promote socially responsible working conditions at production sites. Other options include the [Nordic Swan eco-label](#) (used in the Nordic countries) and the [EU Ecolabel](#). The Ecolabel is awarded only to products with the lowest environmental impact in a product range.

Tips:

Check the possibility of sourcing organic cotton. The easiest way is to use certified organic cotton yarn if you weave fabrics, or certified organic cotton fabric if you are in cut, make and trim (CMT) only. Textile products that contain a minimum of 70% organic fibres can be GOTS-certified.

Read more about [GOTS](#), OEKO-TEX [Standard 100](#) and [Made in Green](#), and the [EU Ecolabel](#) in the ITC Standards Map.

Determine which certification programme would be the best fit for you and apply if you can.

Recycled materials

The [Global Recycle Standard](#) (GRS) is a worldwide standard for products containing recycled material. The standard has criteria for both environmentally friendly production and good working conditions. Its main aim is to reduce the harmful impact of production on people and the environment, and to provide assurance that materials in the final product have been actually recycled and sustainably processed. Products can be GRS-certified if they contain 20% or more recycled material.

An end product can only be certified if the entire production process is certified. A supplier (for example of fabric or yarn) can be GRS-certified, but if the end product is not produced in a GRS-certified factory then it may not carry a GRS quality mark. As a producer using GRS-certified material, you can of course mention that your supplier for this material is GRS-certified.

Tips:

Check if the materials you use in production are available as GRS-certified materials in your country or region. If so, you can consider these as an alternative or additional material.

Carefully check the specifications of the GRS-certified materials available. Sometimes the composition has changed due to the recycling process.

When using GRS-certified materials, make sure to properly use this information in your marketing and communication.

Read more about [GRS](#) in the ITC Standards Map.

Ethical carpets

Several ethical initiatives focus specifically on the carpet industry:

- [GoodWeave](#) works to end child labour in global supply chains, including the South Asian carpet industry.
- [Care & Fair](#) aims to combat illegal child labour and improve the situation of carpet knotting families in India, Nepal and Pakistan.
- [Label STEP](#) focuses on working and living conditions of carpet weavers and the fight against child labour.

Tips:

To target the ethical niche market, you need to find business partners in this niche.

Study the initiatives and how they work to determine if your company would be a good match. If so, determine which certification programme would be the best fit for you and apply.

Consult the [ITC Standards Map](#) for a full overview of certification schemes in the sector, including [GoodWeave](#).

[Globally Cool B.V.](#) in collaboration with GO! GoodOpportunity and Remco Kemper carried out this study on behalf of CBI.

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).