

# Sustainable Products INFO SHEET



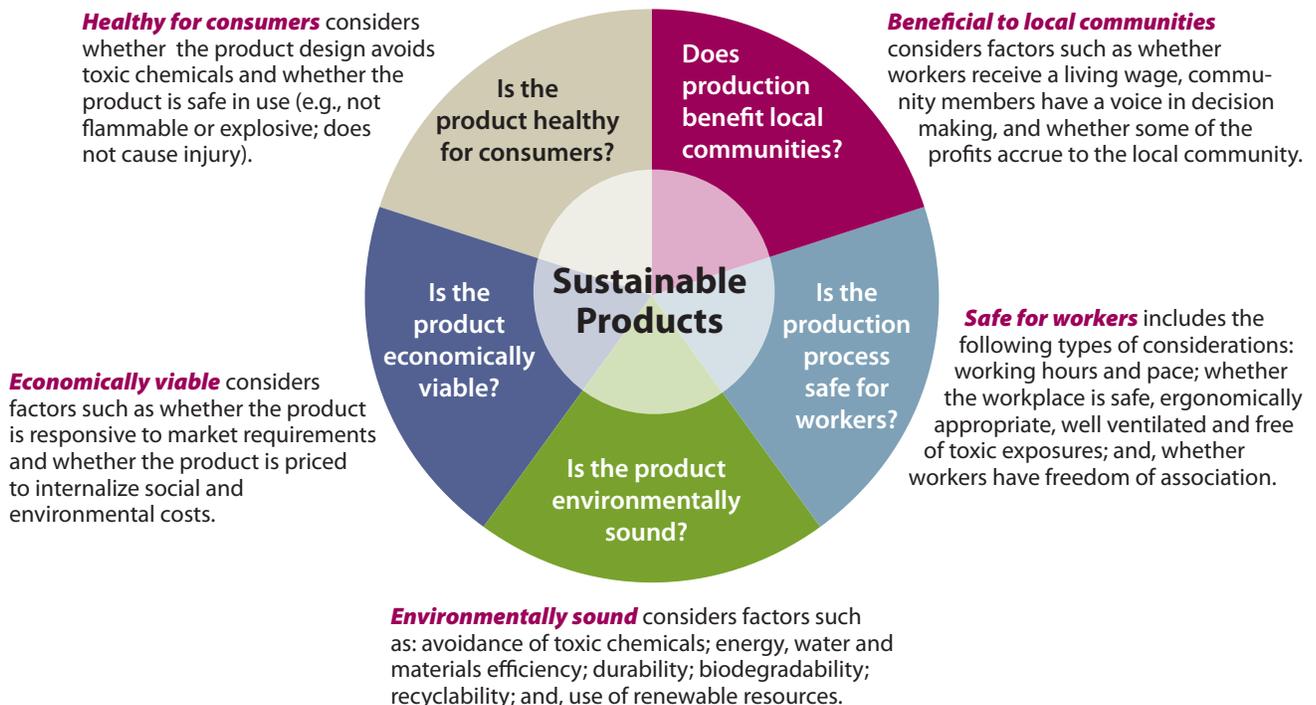
## Develop and Select Sustainable Products by Asking Yourself Five Critical Questions

The Lowell Center for Sustainable Production at University of Massachusetts Lowell developed the **Sustainable Product Framework** tool to help you evaluate the environmental, social, and economic impacts of new and existing products. For a product to be sustainable, it needs to be safe for people, ecosystems and communities that interact with the product (and its production process) throughout its lifecycle.

### Sustainable products

- Minimize environmental and social costs throughout the product lifecycle
- Maximize environmental and social benefits to communities
- Remain economically viable

**From industrial designers to company executives, we encourage you to answer these five questions to help guide your decisions as you purchase or develop new products.**



Lowell Center for Sustainable Production

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## SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT FRAMEWORK—CRITERIA

<p><b>1. Is the product healthy for consumers?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It avoids chemicals that cause cancer or mutations, damage the reproductive, nervous, endocrine or immune systems, are acutely toxic or accumulate or persist in the environment.</li> <li>• It is safe in use—not flammable, explosive or corrosive.</li> <li>• It is safe for children—does not cause lacerations, choking or strangling, burns/shocks, damage hearing or injure eyes. It is developmentally appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Is the production process safe for workers?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workplace is safe: clean, well lit, ventilated, with good air quality, well designed ergonomically, free of exposure to toxins, equipped for fire safety and other emergencies.</li> <li>• Workers receive adequate health and safety training.</li> <li>• Working hours and pace are not excessive.</li> <li>• Workers have some job control and input into the production process.</li> <li>• If workers are housed in dormitories, the living quarters are clean, and workers have sufficient food, access to potable water and sanitation.</li> <li>• Workers are treated fairly and with respect and dignity.</li> <li>• Child or forced labor is not permitted.</li> <li>• Workers have freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Is the product environmentally sound?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chemical and material inputs/outputs are not hazardous (see Healthy for Consumers above).</li> <li>• Product is energy, water and materials efficient in production and use.</li> <li>• Waste is prevented and/or minimized throughout the product lifecycle.</li> <li>• Product and packaging are durable as appropriate, and are reused, repaired, recycled or composted.</li> <li>• Product is designed for disassembly; it can be taken apart and remanufactured.</li> <li>• Renewable resources and energy are utilized in production and use.</li> <li>• Scarce resources are conserved and ecosystems are not damaged in extracting resources for production.</li> <li>• Critical habitats are preserved during extraction, production and use.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Is the product beneficial to local communities?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers receive a living wage and can support their families without additional government assistance.</li> <li>• The work design is supportive to family life—e.g., families are not separated, and good-quality child care is available for workers’ children.</li> <li>• The work design promotes equity and fairness in the community—e.g., there is no age or gender discrimination.</li> <li>• Some of the firm’s profits accrue to the local community to be used for public improvements (such as in education, health care).</li> <li>• The work design promotes community input and participation and the community is informed about production and labor practices.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Is the product economically viable?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product is responsive to market requirements.</li> <li>• Innovation is encouraged to anticipate market needs.</li> <li>• The firm is stable in terms of ownership and philosophy.</li> <li>• The company reinvests in the facility to improve its capacity for further production.</li> <li>• Employees’ skills are well utilized and their ideas and input are valued.</li> <li>• Communication is valued and encouraged among workers, management, community, and consumers.</li> <li>• The product is priced for economic viability and also aims to internalize costs so that its production can be environmentally sound and socially just.</li> </ul>



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