

Sustainable Products INFO SHEET



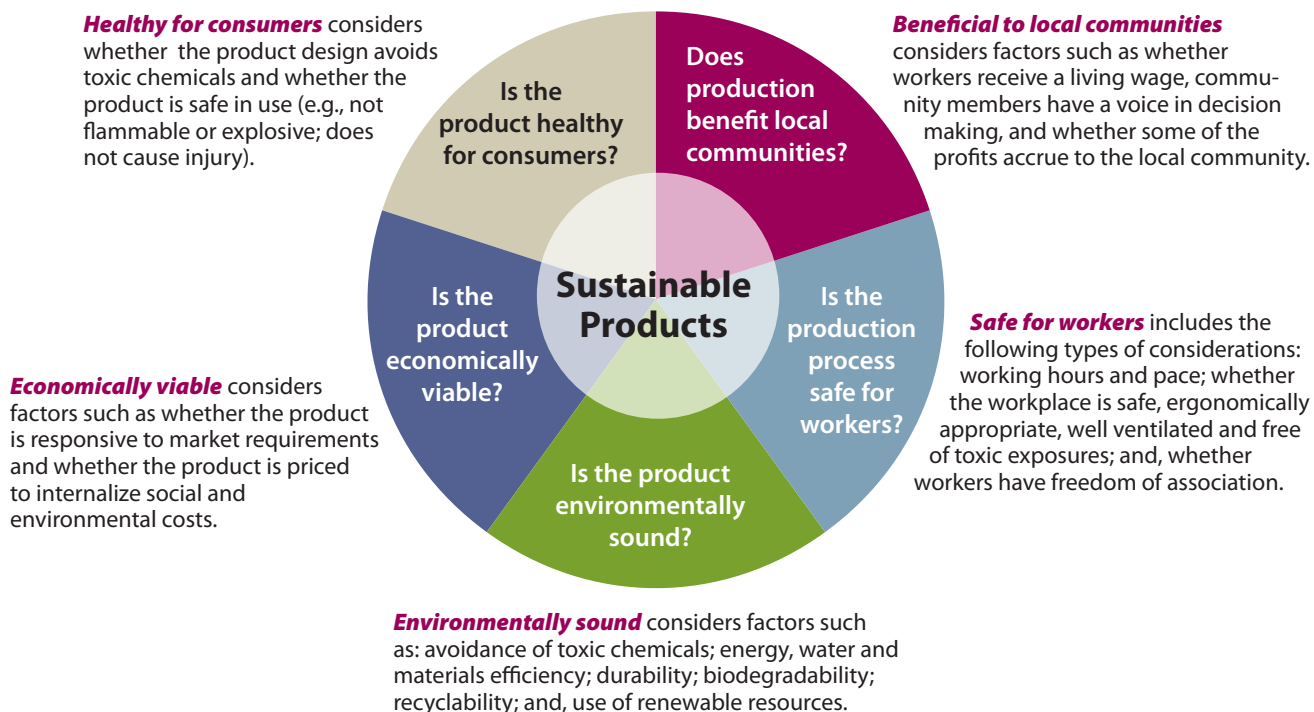
Develop and Select Sustainable Products by Asking Yourself Five Critical Questions

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.



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SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT FRAMEWORK—CRITERIA

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



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