Process and requirements of the GREEN BRANDS procedure

September 2026

GREEN BRANDS is an international, independent and autonomous brand evaluation organisation that certifies and awards ecologically sustainable brands and awards the **GREEN BRANDS** Quality Seal.
The **GREEN BRAND** Quality Seal is a registered and protected **EU certification mark** for ecologically sustainable brands (companies / products / service providers / initiatives / food products) with a neutral, transparent and independent verification process.

EmpCo-compliant

The **GREEN BRANDS** procedure meets all the basic requirements applicable to a non-governmental certification scheme under Article 2(1), points (q) to (s), of Directive 2005/29/EC, as amended by Directive (EU) 2024/825 (EmpCo).

Contents

Process GREEN BRANDS validation 2
Validation by ALLPLAN 3
Review / confirmation by SystemCERT 3
Criteria for assessing certificates (products, food products) 4
SystemCERT requirements: 6
Requirements for the ALLPLAN validation body 7

Process GREEN BRANDS validation

Phase 1: Application

Company (CO): Registration/nomination of the interested brands by email.

GREEN BRANDS Organisation (GB): Sends the participation confirmation, including the fees for validation and review and the Quality Seal licence/marketing/PR fees.
Once signed: sends the relevant validation questionnaire (company / service provider / product / food products) to the company for completion.

CO: Completes the validation file and sends the requested supporting evidence to GB by email and/or WeTransfer; confirms that none of the exclusion criteria apply.

GB: Forwards all documents and supporting evidence to ALLPLAN.

Phase 2: Evaluation

ALLPLAN (ALL): Evaluates/assesses the validation documents and, where necessary, raises follow-up questions with **CO** and, where appropriate, on-site spot checks in the event of unclear information

ALL: Optional: Consults members of the expert panel.

ALL: Prepares the evaluation and documents the results, sends the evaluation result to GB and then submits it to **SystemCERT** for review.

Phase 3: Review

SystemCERT (SYS): Reviews compliance with the requirements of the certification scheme under the EmpCo Directive on the basis of the submitted documents.
Final decision communicated to ALL and GB

Phase 4: Result

GB: Informs **CO** of the result and sends the detailed validation result.

Phase 5: Award

If the procedure is passed (the required benchmark of 51% is achieved or exceeded) and positive review by SYS
GB: Sends the Quality Seal with ID number and usage instructions to CO and arranges for the certificate signed by SystemCERT to be sent to CO.
At the same time, the brand (logo) is activated on the GB website with an active link to the overview of results at **GB-ID.org**.

Validation by ALLPLAN

1. **Verification that the absence of exclusion criteria has been confirmed**

2. **Analysis and assessment** of the validation
   a) The questionnaire responses are transferred automatically to the evaluation sheet (read-only)
   b) The responses are scored in accordance with the scoring scheme defined in the evaluation sheet; questions assessing certificates are scored in accordance with the certificate-assessment criteria
   c) Plausibility of the statements is checked
   d) The availability and currency of supporting evidence are checked
   e) Where necessary, follow-up questions are sent to the company to clarify unclear points or obtain missing documents (deadline: 2 weeks)
   f) The validation evaluation is prepared and sent to SystemCERT together with the supporting evidence

Review / confirmation by SystemCERT

1. **Review of the submitted evaluation and supporting documents**
   - Verification of compliance with the framework conditions in the case concerned (correct validation body, correct auditor, current criteria catalogue, etc.)
   - Verification that the validation forms/criteria catalogues completed by the companies are complete
   - Verification that the validation forms/criteria catalogues completed by the auditors are complete
   - Verification that the auditors' assessments and resulting conclusions are complete and traceable

2. **Follow-up query/correction where necessary (SYS–ALL, involving CO if required)**

3. **Communication of the final result: "confirmed/not confirmed"**

Criteria for assessing certificates (products, food products)

Objective: Consistent, traceable and reproducible assessment of different certifications, quality marks and labels as part of the GREEN BRANDS validation.

Basic requirements:

- **Validity and evidence:** The certificate is current, valid and verifiable and can be clearly attributed to the assessed product, company, site or process

- **Traceability:** The certification body, standard/methodology, criteria, scope and assessment procedure can be identified and traced

Exclusion criteria:

In accordance with the **GREEN BRANDS** exclusion criteria, any
- unlawful or impermissible labelling,
- use of a legally protected or regulated designation without the required evidence,
- false or misleading presentation of a certification

does not only result in 0 points for the question on existing certifications, but in immediate exclusion from the **GREEN BRANDS** procedure.

Example: *If a food product is marketed as "organic" but the required recognised organic certification is not available, this is not only a matter of missing additional evidence. It is a knock-out criterion. In this case, the product cannot become a GREEN BRAND, even if, for example, it were to achieve 99% in the remainder of the assessment.*

Certificate assessment scheme

The following assessment scheme defines the number of points that may be awarded for submitted certificates

- Distinction between product and packaging: points are awarded in proportion to the product and packaging weights

- If several relevant certificates are submitted for ingredients or packaging, only the points for the *highest-rated* certificate are considered

Example: maximum 10 points available; packaging 15% and product 85% by weight; certificate A for ingredients rated at 50% under the matrix; another certificate B for ingredients rated at 25%; certificate C for packaging rated at 100% under the matrix.
Product: 10 × 85% × 50% = 4.25 points; packaging: 10 × 15% × 100% = 1.5 points; i.e. 7.75 points in total. (Certificate B for ingredients is disregarded.)

Score	Classification	Criteria	Examples for reference
100%	**Comprehensive / very strong evidence**	A legally or institutionally recognised or particularly robust certification scheme; clear and demanding criteria; competent and independent control; **direct relevance to the assessed product**; and very high evidential value for the relevant environmental, social or sustainability performance.	**EU Ecolabel**; officially recognised **EN ISO 14024 Type I environmental labels**; suitable government or public-authority certification schemes; comparably robust EmpCo-compliant market-based sustainability labels; **valid organic certification for a food product that is actually assessed as organic**.
75%	**Strong evidence**	A recognised, methodologically sound and independently externally audited scheme with **direct product relevance**. High evidential value, but narrower in subject matter or scope than a 100% rating.	e.g. **Fairtrade** for a duly certified product; strong sector-specific product certification covering a material sustainability area; high-quality raw material/product labels with direct product relevance.
50%	**Relevant partial evidence**	Traceable and externally audited certification covering **a relevant part of the product or its value chain**, but not the product or its material sustainability impacts as a whole; also certificates with limited requirements (e.g. ASC, FSC).	e.g. certification of an **essential raw material**, a relevant section of the supply chain, or an individual production or sustainability aspect.
25%	**Indirect / limited evidence**	Credible and externally audited certification, but with **no or only limited direct product relevance**. It supports sustainability performance but demonstrates it only indirectly for the specific product.	e.g. **ISO 14001** at company or site level; relevant management system, site or process certification without direct product evidence.
0%	**No eligible evidence**	Mandatory criteria are not met or not relevant, robust evidence is available.	Self-declared claim; non-verifiable label; sustainability label that is not EmpCo-compliant; award/prize/ranking without the characteristics of a certification scheme.

SystemCERT requirements:

Compliance with the requirements of the certification scheme under the EmpCo Directive is reviewed on the basis of the submitted documents.

a. **GREEN BRANDS criteria/validation forms**, completed in full by the applicant company and reviewed and assessed by ALLPLAN. The current version of these criteria must always be provided.

   Validation forms including guidance/assessment criteria directly in the Excel file, together with the criteria for assessing certificates.

b. For each company response, the completed and assessed validation form/criteria catalogue must reference the underlying supporting records and evidence/documents. These must be available.

c. The validation forms must clearly show the **decision of the validation body** (ALLPLAN) = evidenced by the points awarded directly in the Excel file.

d. The requirements to be met by the **validation body** and the requirements applicable to auditors must also be defined
   - See “Requirements for the ALLPLAN validation body”.

e. SystemCERT must be provided with a list of the **validation bodies and auditors** approved by **GREEN BRANDS.**

f. SystemCERT must receive the company’s signed confirmation that none of the exclusion criteria apply = precondition for admission to and commencement of the validation procedure.

Requirements for the ALLPLAN validation body

1. Purpose

ALLPLAN GmbH performs validations of companies and products against the **GREEN BRANDS** Standard on behalf of the **GREEN BRANDS Organisation**. The purpose of the validation is to provide an independent and traceable assessment of whether, and to what extent, the criteria defined by **GREEN BRANDS** meet the **GREEN BRANDS** Standard.

2. Principles of the validation body

The validation body commits to:

- impartiality and independence
- objective and traceable decisions
- confidentiality of all information received
- consistent application of the **GREEN BRANDS** criteria
- documentation of all assessment steps
- avoidance of conflicts of interest
- continuous quality assurance (e.g. in line with the process requirements of the quality management system) and qualification of auditors (also internally)

3. Organisational requirements

ALLPLAN must ensure that:

- the validation procedures are documented and submitted to the reviewing certification body,
- responsibilities are clearly defined,
- validation records are retained,
- complaints, appeals and objections are documented and handled,
- quality controls of completed validations are conducted regularly.

4. Confidentiality

All information received in connection with a validation must be treated as confidential. It may be disclosed to third parties only with the consent of the company concerned or where disclosure is legally required. The **GREEN BRANDS Organisation** must inform the company in advance that information will be shared with the reviewing certification body and members of the expert panel.

5. Management of conflicts of interest

The validation body must not perform validations where:

- it has a financial interest in the company being assessed,
- consulting services have been provided that could impair independence,
- personal relationships could compromise objectivity.

Any potential conflict of interest must be disclosed in writing prior to the commencement of the validation.

Requirements for validation personnel:

1. **Professional qualifications**
   Auditors must:
   - have completed technical, scientific, business or comparable training,
   - have knowledge of sustainability, environmental management or ESG,
   - are familiar with the **GREEN BRANDS** criteria and validation procedure,
   - regularly participate in training and professional development (also internal, at least once a year).

2. **Professional experience**
   Auditors should have at least one of the following qualifications:
   - practical experience in environmental or sustainability management
   - experience as an auditor or assessor

3. **Personal requirements**
   Auditors must:
   - act independently and impartially,
   - exercise objective judgement,
   - treat information as confidential,
   - produce traceable assessments,
   - act professionally and respectfully.

4. **Duties during validation**
   Auditors must:
   - apply the **GREEN BRANDS** criteria in full,
   - assess only based on verifiable information,
   - document deviations and findings in writing,
   - provide objective and traceable reasons for recommendations,
   - archive all validation documents in full.

5. **Validation decision**
   Auditors provide a specific validation result. The final award of the **GREEN BRANDS Quality Seal** is made exclusively based on the established decision-making process of the **GREEN BRANDS Organisation** – see above.

Prepared in September 2026 by **ALLPLAN GmbH** and **GREEN BRANDS Organisation GmbH**

ALLPLAN Gesellschaft m.b.H.
Schwindgasse 10 * 1040 Wien
Austria
T: +43 1 505 37 07 – 0
www.allplan.at

GREEN BRANDS Organisation GmbH
Wacholderbergstr. 29 * 90587 Veitsbronn
Germany
Tel: +49 911 97 99 599
www.GREEN-BRANDS.org