

# Quick guide to sustainable procurement



Growth that doesn't cost the earth

Sustainable procurement can help you make informed purchasing decisions by knowing more about the products and services you buy, so that their **environmental impact is minimised.**



## Why bother?

The rising costs of resources, transport, energy and waste disposal have a negative impact on your profitability. In contrast, reducing costs by being more resource efficient has a positive impact on the bottom line and reduces the risks to your business, customers and supply chain.

## What is sustainable procurement?

As a rule of thumb, sustainable products and services are those that:

- minimise resource use;
- optimise energy and water efficiency;
- prevent waste arising in the first place;
- use renewable materials;
- use materials with a high recycled content;
- have a low impact on the wider environment;
- are not hazardous or toxic;
- minimise transport and fuel use; and
- minimise packaging waste.

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**GREAT IDEA**

**The Bay Fish & Chips, Stonehaven, serves food in 100% biodegradable cartons.**



**GREAT IDEA**

**Deli Ecosse, Callander, sources products from local suppliers and uses returnable crates to eliminate packaging waste and keep costs down.**

## In practice

By effectively monitoring your waste and being aware of your waste composition (i.e. what different materials are in your bins, for example, paper, plastic, metal) and what you are paying to dispose of, can support your purchasing decisions.

### **Establish an accurate stock inventory and ordering system.**

Too much stock and/or stocking the wrong products can lead to waste, particularly for products with a short shelf life. However, too little stock and availability can affect sales. An inventory can easily be created using a spreadsheet or bespoke software.

**Buy in bulk.** This can be more economical, but only when you use all of the product. By monitoring your waste, you can determine if this is the best option for certain goods.

**Buy local.** Where possible, try to buy produce from local suppliers. This will reduce transport and possibly packaging as it is more likely that local suppliers will consider re-usable packaging.

**Buying consortium.** Consider establishing a group of local businesses to engage with major suppliers as a collective. This may reduce costs, packaging and transport.

**Review your choice of suppliers.** Regularly review the suppliers you use and favour those that are committed to environmental improvement. For example, those that actively reduce packaging or use returnable or recyclable packaging.

**Consider the waste that you pass to your customers.** Can the packaging (i.e. food containers or plastic bags) be composted, re-used or recycled? If so, communicate this information to your customers and encourage them to do so. For example, can the plastic containers used for hot food be washed and re-used by customers? Encourage staff to ask customers if they really need a plastic bag, thereby reducing the waste passed on and providing cost savings in the reduced replenishment of plastic bags.

### **Replacing or buying new equipment.**

Consider 'whole-life' costs when choosing new equipment and invest in energy and/or water efficient models. Refer to the Energy Technology List (ETL) and Water Technology List (WTL) for products that qualify for the Enhanced Capital Allowance (ECA) Scheme, which offers a tax allowance for investments in some types of energy and water saving technologies. Alternatively, consider renting or leasing new equipment. This will reduce capital outlay, provide a maintenance service and eliminate end-of-use costs.

### **Using green labels to buy sustainably.**

A 'green label' – also known as an 'ecolabel' or 'environmental label' – demonstrates that the product, service or organisation bearing the label has reputable 'green credentials'. For example, Freedom Food label or Fairtrade mark.

**Green Energy.** Choose a 'green' electricity tariff which seeks to support renewable energy. See the Green Energy Scheme website for more details.



[www.resourceefficientscotland.com](http://www.resourceefficientscotland.com) | 0808 808 2268 | @ResourceScot

Resource Efficient Scotland, Ground Floor, Moray House, Forthside Way, Stirling, FK8 1QZ

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