



GREEN  
SALON

A GUIDE TO  
*THE GREEN SALON*  
RATING SYSTEM



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# Introduction to *Green Salon*

Green Salon is a sustainability consultancy focused on green living. Whether through our green coaching sessions, online workshops, brand consultancy or our directory, our mission is to hasten and facilitate the transition to green living.

We do this through finding and promoting the greenest brands out there and by supporting brands that are on the sustainability journey.

In order to do this, we analyse brands using their publicly available data to check that if a brand claims to be sustainable it is doing everything it can to live up to its claims and packaging that information so it is clear as possible for consumers. As part of this process, we analyse every brand holistically with all elements of their business in mind.

Our directory acts as a consumer filter. We make it as easy as possible for consumers to support the greenest brands without having to do all the research themselves.





INTRODUCING  
*THE GREEN SALON*  
METHODOLOGY





# Making Sustainability *Transparent*

As a consumer filter, we believe sustainability is inextricable from transparency. Without making information publicly available, consumers are left in the dark.

A brand giving clear information and data about their sustainability policies is the only way to be confident that they're the right choice for increasingly sustainably-minded consumers — it can even encourage their competitors to amp up their planet-friendly choices.

So our methodology is consumer-centric, only considering publicly available sources such as:

- The sustainability pages on brand's websites
- Their impact reports where they have them
- Third party verification
- Any certifications and accreditations they have

We don't just accept claims as they're made, though. We work behind the scenes to fact-check the information brands publicise to ensure it's factually correct. For example, a brand claiming to use sustainable cotton will need to provide evidence in the form of certifications from respected organisations, such as the Soil Association.

Even if a brand does provide certification, if their sustainable cotton is only 2% of their materials profile and the rest is virgin polyester, we'll find out.

We interrogate and collate all publicly available sources to get an accurate image of a brand's sustainability and transparency.

As part of our goal for promoting full consumer transparency, we also include brands on our directory that are owned by a non-sustainable parent company (such as Ecover, which is owned by S.C. Johnson).

This was a difficult decision for us — on the one hand, a seemingly 'green' purchase would result in a portion of the profit going to a 'non-green' company, whilst on the other hand, purchasing products from this brand might incentivise the parent company to adopt sustainability policies for their other subsidiaries.

In the end, we have decided to leave the decision on whether or not to support these companies with the consumer.

In our brand blogs, we state 'Parent Company' to warn consumers of a brand being owned by a company that they might be adverse to supporting & then leave it for them to choose.



Goldfinger - On Their Way



# Our Rating System

From the very beginning of the Green Directory, we've prioritised four themes when analysing brands, each of which is connected to the other, and each of which needs to be addressed by sustainable businesses if we're to turn the tide on the ecological crisis.

## Planet

We check when companies plan to become Net Zero and have a credible plan to get there, that they are focused on creating a green supply chain, and that they prioritise the health of the ecosystem in their business practices, e.g. through water stewardship, use of regenerative/organic agriculture.

## People

We search for companies that focus on maker well being, employee rights, equality in the workplace, giving back to the community and empowering women.

## Animals

We look for companies that put animal wellbeing at the heart of their business and are cruelty-free.

## Business

We champion companies that focus on circular and regenerative business models, that are change makers, and that believe in total transparency.



Within these categories, we consider:

Category	What we look for
Planet Net Zero	<p>We believe that companies need to be gathering data on all 3 scopes of their emissions in line with or ahead of Science Based targets so that they can create robust emissions reductions plans. It's preferable that this data and these plans are independently verified from respectable organisations, and we check this accordingly.</p>
Planet Green Supply Chain	<p>Here we consider a company's entire supply chain and the sourcing of their entire raw materials profile. Companies should have good policies in place to ensure they aren't contaminating natural resources or producing excessive waste.</p>
Planet Eco-System Health	<p>We believe that a brand's operations should not be harmful to the land which they (or their suppliers) are using. They should make use of land responsibly, protecting soil health and regenerating the land where necessary.</p>
People Maker Wellbeing	<p>The protection of employee rights is crucial to a sustainable company. We check for policies that ensure those involved in brand or supplier operations are being given fair pay, reasonable working hours, and are safe from exploitation. We also look for policies on equality in the workplace with measures in place to provide support where needed. We check that brands and suppliers have publicly available codes of conduct which make their labour policies transparent.</p>
People Giving Back	<p>It's not enough for brands to simply ensure their own operations aren't harmful; we want to see a brand's commitment to giving back to the community and helping to heal the planet. This may include charitable donations, investment in local ecological schemes, and collaborations with impacted communities.</p>

# Animals



Category	What we look for
Animal Wellbeing	We check that brands have policies in place so that they are not profiting from exploitative animal agriculture by checking their cruelty free, organic, and/or vegan certification (PETA, Leaping Bunny, etc.). A commitment to the planet must include a commitment to animal welfare and, if using animal agriculture, animals should be free range and not exposed to unnecessary drug usage.

# Business



Circular Business	The end of a product's life cycle is critical in determining how planet-friendly it is. We look for brands with clear waste reduction initiatives, recycled and refillable products, and systems in place to encourage consumers to engage with their products responsibly (e.g. a clothing brand running a repairs scheme to encourage consumers to extend the lifespan of their products).
Change Makers	Brands should not just be following current trends. We want to see companies taking initiative to find new ways to be a sustainable business, whether that is introducing regeneration into legacy systems, designing circularity into their produce development or coming up with other new methods of making an already-sustainable product even better for the environment.
Total Transparency	Crucially, all of the information above must be easily accessible to the consumer. We look for clear information and robust data across brands' websites and impact reports, which not only include their successes but hold themselves responsible for the areas which need improvement. Claims a brand makes should be verified and/or certified by third party sustainability consultancies which ensure their accuracy (and we check who's doing it!). The brand themselves should be conducting in-house audits and making the outcomes publicly available. Consumers need to be included and involved in the journey to sustainability.

# How Our Rating System Works

Alongside sustainability experts at Relativ Impact and Get Enight, we used the 17 Sustainable Development Goals to help determine which areas of sustainability matter most to protecting and regenerating our planet, basing our 70+ questions on these.

The questions we devised are based on Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) reporting standards and the IRIS+ impact measurement system. These are evidence-based, science-backed standards which have identified the areas of sustainability most relevant to businesses and impact investors and assessors, and provide a step towards the standardisation of how companies should report their environmental impact.

By comparing our methodology to these standards, we've ensured that we're asking relevant questions of our brands and are staying on top of developments in the field of sustainability so that we're prioritising what the planet needs most. This also ensures that there are clear guidelines in place for areas where our brands should aim for future improvement without constantly shifting our criteria.

Our ranking system is also weighted to ensure that these priorities are reflected in a brand's scoring. In the process of devising our updated methodology, we determined that certain areas are simply less urgent or less critical to Green Salon's mission of hastening the transition to green living.

For example, whilst we carefully consider maker wellbeing, we weight the parental leave policies a brand has in place at a lower score to than their raw materials sourcing.

Similarly, we assess what brands are doing with their carbon emissions. A brand will be given a higher score for actively seeking to reduce their emissions than they would for simply offsetting them. Speedy emissions reduction is critical to stabilising the planet's temperature and so we weight this at a higher level than off-setting, which can be a useful tool to balance emissions in the short-term but are not ultimately solving the problem.

We also check that offsetting is in line with the Oxford Offsetting Principles of prioritising emission reductions and full disclosure on the offsetting a brand is using. This weighted point system ensures that we are considering every element of a business, including the ethical side, but ultimately tailoring their score to reflect our green priorities.

We also appreciate that our demands for certification and verification might be difficult for smaller, newer companies to accomplish; as we want to support these brands, and thereby encourage further sustainable startups, these pieces of criteria are weighted lower for them.



Who Gives A Crap - On Their Way

We look at brands holistically, tracking their sustainable policies alongside their harmful/misrepresentative ones, to get an accurate view of how closely a company holds the environment to their heart.

The ranking system we settled on differentiates between the broad range of approaches a brand may be taking to sustainability.

A brand's ranking is accessible via the directory (which can be filtered by price or ranking) and on their brand blog, as we hold ourselves to the level of transparency we expect from our brands.

Our directory, with our new methodology, is key for micro and small businesses as a low-cost route into third-party assessment, where full verification isn't yet an option for them. Our work as a green-washing filter helps brands distinguish themselves as having made significant strides towards their sustainability goals, whilst also empowering consumers to make informed choices and spend their money in line with their values.



Tala Lighting - Great Work

# The Rating System



## Top of Class 80% +

These brands are star performers. Their innovation and commitment makes them real change makers and leaders in the sustainability field. And they communicate clearly on their website. They typically publish an impact report which sets out the data and metrics they use to measure their impact. And they regularly audit their sustainability policies, practices and goals and are verified by third parties.

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## Great Work 65-79%

These brands impress us. They've made great strides to prioritise sustainability and circularity in their business model whilst taking care to openly inform consumers about these measures. They typically have a good grasp of their own data but may be missing a few key areas and may not yet have full verification.

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## On Their Way 50-64%

These brands are catching up. They are taking bold steps to embed sustainability into all areas of their business and they have some good information about how they are managing their impact but are still missing some key metrics and data that is easy for the consumer to find.



## Small Steps 35-49%

Brands in this category have taken important steps in some areas of their business to reduce their impact and manage their supply chain. But they are often lacking information on their websites and verification of their sustainability claims from third parties.

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## Needs Improvement <35%

These brands are not there yet. They may give some information about what they are doing to reduce their impact in some areas of their business, but they do not appear to be assessing the business all the way from their headquarters to their supply chain. They need to gather that data and make it publicly available.



Star Seed - Top of Class



# Our Principles

Our Principles	What we rate as important
Telling the truth	<p>The most important thing we look for in a company is that it is wholly transparent about where it is on its sustainability journey. We know that embarking on the path to a sustainable business is a complex one, with the competing needs of balancing profit and purpose. But it is also vital for consumers who choose green brands to know that their money is supporting a business that is committed to minimising its impact on the planet, and this can only be done by being totally transparent about how the company is navigating the process.</p>
Data, data, data	<p>The sustainable business mantra is that you can't manage what you don't measure. When we assess companies, we look for a rigorous approach to understanding their impact through measuring and accounting for their emissions, and those of their supply chain, and quantifying the impact of their production, distribution, use, and end-of-life of their products. Solid data is the only way a consumer can truly trust a brand.</p>
Not marking their own homework	<p>We look at brands' certifications, accreditations, and standards, because third party verification is key to ensuring that policies and practices are being adhered to.</p>
Sustainability is holistic	<p>It is no longer enough for a company to make a baseball cap from sustainable materials and call itself a green brand. These brands now need to be sustainable in all areas of their business, from their packaging to their carbon reduction programmes. Our assessment looks at companies in the round to understand the extent to which their model is holistic.</p>



## Our Principles

## What we rate as important

Space for learning

We believe that properly thought through plans, measurable progress, and awareness are also important metrics when analysing a brand's sustainability. Thus, our assessment accounts for a brand's clearly defined goals, backed by robust plans, as they move towards improving their sustainability. We also believe that brands, like people, learn through their mistakes and that owning up to them enables an honest dialogue with the consumer and space for learning.

Empowering consumers

The point of our ranking system is to make it easier for consumers to find green brands, and learn about how well they are doing in their sustainability missions. We believe that by empowering consumers with this knowledge we can move the dial much faster on the transition to a greener world.



Bamford - On Their Way

# Why we do what we do

Creating our directory was key in our goal of uniting consumers and brands in our vision of a flourishing planet. The climate crisis is worsening, and firm and immediate action needs to be taken to heal the planet. It's not enough anymore for brands alone to do their best, or for us to try our best in our personal lives without the information to guide us. Informed choices need to be made, and brands need to arm consumers with all the information relevant for them to decide which sustainable brands they wish to support with their money.

But for consumers, collating, comparing, and making decisions based on this information is a lengthy and time-consuming process, and not a realistic one for many. Our aim is to simplify this process, by encouraging companies to be transparent and doing the research for consumers.



Zao - Needs Improvement



# Our Data Sources

## Brand Reporting

Here we consider the information a brand self-reports through publicly available information. This includes their website, blogs, and impact reports.

These sources are crucial. If a brand isn't interrogating the success of their own sustainability and reporting the outcomes, consumers are unable to determine which businesses truly have sustainability at their heart. We also check that the information being reported is of a high standard and not misleading. A brand stating that they use recycled plastic is fine, but we want to know how much, from what sources, and what the plan for the product's end of life is.

## Third party verification

We believe that third party verification is crucial. Whilst data gathering is, itself, important, the information should be checked by a third party organisation that can confirm the results and assist in creating science-backed plans moving forward. Without verification we, as a consumer filter, have to be wary of taking brand information at face value.

Self-reporting means that brands are effectively marking their own homework. While that may be all they can afford in the first few years, independent verification means we can trust the information brands are providing is accurate and truthful.

# Certification

Certification also helps with this. If a brand uses recycled plastic, for example, recycled content verification (from an organisation such as Intertek), provides a deeper layer of analysis which helps us better understand the brand's sustainability policies.

However, we understand that for smaller brands, certification (as with verification) can be expensive and, as such, accommodate for that in our weighting system.

Moreover, not all certifications are made equal. For example, GOTS is much more stringent in its requirements than BCI, making it preferable and evidencing the limitations of relying too much on certification.

These are some of the the certification, accreditations and guidelines we look at when rating brands:

- B Corp
- Blue Angel
- bluesign® system
- Business Social Compliance Initiative Code of Conduct (BSCI)
- Canopy Style Initiative
- Carbon Trust Standard
- Clean Clothes Campaign Code of Labour Practice
- Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards - CCB Standard
- Cradle to Cradle Basic, Bronze, Gold, Platinum and Silver
- Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code
- EU Ecolabel
- Fair Trade USA
- Fairtrade Textile Standard
- Fair Wear Foundation Code of Labour Practices
- Fairmined Ecological Gold Standard
- Fairtrade International - Small Producers Organizations
- Forest Stewardship Council
- Fedex Members Ethical Trade Audit - SMETA Best Practice Guidance
- Fair Labour Association Workplace Code of Conduct
- Global Organic Textile Standard
- Global Recycle Standard
- Global Traceable Down Standard
- International Labour Organization Labour Standards
- Living Wage Employers
- ISO 14001:2004

● Leaping Bunny ● Leather Working Group protocols ● Marine Conservation Society ● National Wool Declaration Integrity Programme ● Naturland textile standards ● Naturtextil Best ● OEKO-TEX MADE IN GREEN ● OEKO-TEX STANDARD 100 ● Organic Content Standard ● PETA Approved Vegan ● Positive Luxury Butterfly Mark ● Responsible Jewellery Council Certification ● Responsible Down Standard ● Responsible Wool Standard ● Social Accountability International - SA8000 ● Soil Association Organic Standards ● Sustainable Apparel Coalition ● WFTO Guarantee System ● Workplace Condition Assessment ● Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production ● Fedex Members Ethical Trade Audit - SMETA Best Practice Guidance ● Fair Labour Association Workplace Code of Conduct ● Global Organic Textile Standard ● Global Recycle Standard ● Global Traceable Down Standard ● International Labour Organization Labour Standards ● Living Wage Employers ● International Wool Textile Organisation standards ● ISO 14001:2004 ● Leaping Bunny ● Leather Working Group protocols ● Marine Conservation Society ● National Wool Declaration Integrity Programme ● Naturland textile standards ● Naturtextil Best ● OEKO-TEX MADE IN GREEN ● OEKO-TEX STANDARD 100 ● Organic Content Standard ● PETA Approved Vegan ● Positive Luxury Butterfly Mark ● Responsible Jewellery Council Certification ● Responsible Down Standard ● Responsible Wool Standard ● Social Accountability International - SA8000 ● Soil Association Organic Standards ● Sustainable Apparel Coalition ● WFTO Guarantee System ● Workplace Condition Assessment ● Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP) ● International Wool Textile Organisation standards



# Our Evolution

The first version of Green Salon ran from 2006-2008 as a monthly networking event in central London, bringing together a new breed of eco-entrepreneurs with investors.

Green Salon then went on sabbatical until 2021 when the idea of Green Salon Sustainable Lifestyle Consultancy was born. We moved online and offered coaching to consumers alongside the development of our directory, an accessible resource through which consumers can browse sustainable brands to start making (or improve on) the sustainable choices in their life.

While our scope and focus has shifted in the intervening years, we've always prioritised rewarding eco-innovators.

In 2023, we realised that we as a company had grown, and we could afford to demand more of our brands. Working with sustainability experts around the world, we developed a plan to improve and extend our original methodology, shifting to affirm our role as a consumer greenwashing filter.

Alongside a team of talented Oxford University interns, we spent a summer devising the revised 2023 methodology, in constant contact with the experts, and it grew from 30 questions to 70+. Together, we developed a 'naughty list' to track the harmful actions brands may take, and devised a weighted scoring system to ensure our rankings accurately reflect the priorities of Green Salon.

Our understanding of this methodology is that it's a growing, living organism.

As the needs of the planet, our understanding of the science behind the climate crisis, and the desires and needs of our consumers evolve, so too the methodology evolves with them.

Feedback is, therefore, crucial in our process. Especially considering that we, as a consumer filter relying on transparency in brand reporting and those companies to tell the truth. Detailed though our analysis may be, and though we prioritise verification and certification, information may slip through the cracks. Our engaged audience are as much a part of this continual process as we are.



Ethica Diamonds - Great Work



# What else we offer

If you're a brand who would like to feature on our directory, or who feels that the information in the Green Salon brand blog on your sustainability policies and practices is not up-to-date, please do get in touch with us at **[info@greensalon.co.uk](mailto:info@greensalon.co.uk)**

For brands that score over 50% on our Directory, we offer membership of The Green Salon: a club that offers brands preferential rates on a suite of products to help grow your impact, including support with B-Corp certification, impact reports and distribution. It also includes promotion on the Green Salon Journal and social media and access to Country & Townhouse's new Good Brands Directory.

If you are looking for help to grow your green business and turbo-charge your impact, then take a look at The Greenhouse, our brand consultancy. We offer help with B-Corp certification, carbon accounting and reporting, distribution and impact investment.

Whatever you would like help with, please do get in touch with us to talk about how we can support you.

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