



ON-PACKAGE ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS

Understanding the Landscape of Environmental Claims on Packaging in the U.S.



What Are On-Package Environmental Claims?

Packaging often includes a variety of messaging related to the package or the product inside. This may include nutritional information on food packaging, warnings about fragile or hazardous products, and environmental claims related to the packaging itself.

Increasingly, policies and laws are enacted to require or restrict specific environmental claims on packaging. These laws are designed to help consumers understand the environmental benefits of packaging without deceiving them, a practice often called “greenwashing.”

Labeling laws, as they are often called, generally fall into three categories:

- **Truth-in-Labeling / Anti-Deception:** Prohibiting false or misleading environmental claims on packaging and requiring claims such as recyclable, compostable, or reusable to be truthful and not likely to mislead the consumer.
- **Substantiation and Standards-Based:** Requiring that environmental claims on packaging be supported by scientific evidence or compliance with recognized standards.
- **Required or Restricted:** Mandating certain environmental claims appear on packaging, such as material identification, use of specific colorings or marking, or disposal warnings, along with restrictions on certain claims based on a state’s specific determination.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) oversees a voluntary national framework for environmental claims commonly known as the “Green Guides,” though many states have enacted their own enforceable “greenwashing” laws. While some states have adopted laws that defer to the Green Guides, others have enacted additional consumer protection requirements beyond the federal framework.

Why This Matters

Labeling laws are evolving quickly as states respond to growing concerns around consumer confusion about environmental marketing claims.

At the same time:

- Expectations around labeling accuracy are increasing
- Enforcement activity is becoming more visible
- Requirements are being defined differently across states

This creates a more complex landscape for companies operating nationally, particularly when packaging is distributed across multiple states.

How It May Impact Your Business

Environmental labeling laws may influence how companies approach packaging design, labeling, and claims, including:

- Changes to packaging labels, artwork, or embossing
- Increased scrutiny of environmental claims such as “recyclable” or “compostable”
- Potential need for testing, third-party certifications, and enhanced legal review to substantiate claims
- Exposure to penalties or enforcement actions if requirements are not met



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What Organizations Are Evaluating

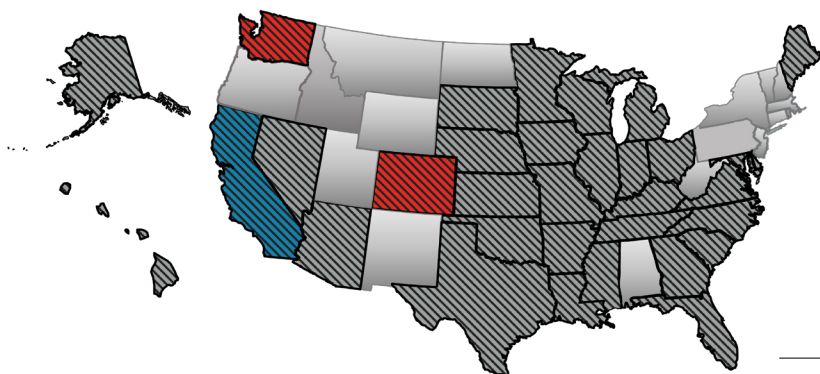
As labeling laws continue to develop, organizations may need to evaluate:

- Where their packaging is subject to labeling requirements or restrictions
- How labeling expectations differ across states
- How environmental claims align with current regulations
- What internal processes may be needed to support compliance across markets

These considerations can vary significantly across states, contributing to a fragmented policy environment for the packaging value chain.

Where Are Environmental Labeling Laws Today?

While many states have laws that reflect the FTC's Green Guides, a few states have requirements or restrictions that go beyond them, creating challenges for the packaging value chain.



The map highlights where labeling laws are currently in effect. Other states are expected in the future, reinforcing the fragmented nature of the policy landscape.

■ Today - Recyclable

■ Today - Compostable

■ Today - Resin Identification Code

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Go Deeper on Environmental Labeling Laws

Learn more about AMERIPEN membership and gain access to more in-depth resources at ameripen.org.

Understanding how environmental labeling laws differ across states—and how they continue to evolve—requires deeper visibility into policy details and implementation timelines.

AMERIPEN members have access to:

- State-by-state tracking of proposed labeling laws
- Ongoing updates as legislation and regulations develop
- Insights into, and potential influence on, policy development