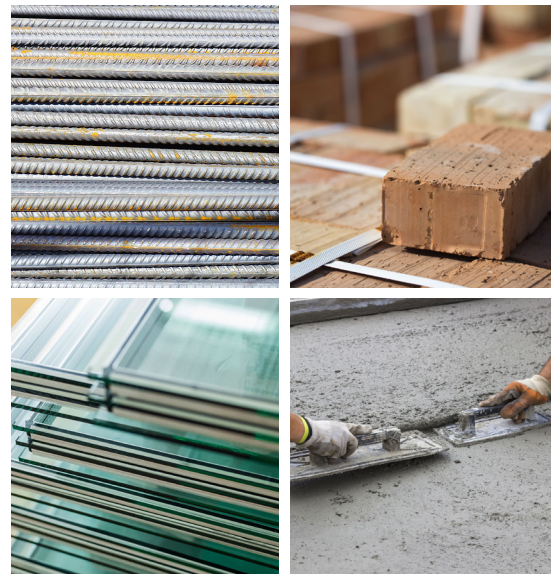




Agrément South Africa

has launched eco-labelling system for building materials and products



The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) launched its *Green Building Policy* in October 2018. This policy sets out principles for government-owned, operated or occupied buildings. These principles will be used by the department to develop, maintain and operate its portfolio of buildings to reduce their environmental impact. The *Green Building Policy* is implemented through the Department's Green Building Programme which addresses; energy efficiency and renewable energy; water efficiency; integrated solid waste management; eco-labelling of building materials and products; and the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), such as biodiversity and building materials.

One of the objectives of *The Green Building Policy*, is to facilitate the establishment of an eco-labelling system for building materials and products. This government-endorsed eco-labelling system aims to encourage the principles of indoor environmental quality and comfort, and material resource conservation and efficiency. The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure will develop requirements for the use of environmentally sensitive eco-labelled materials and products to be incorporated into the South African National Standard – Part X, which deals with environmental sustainability. The Department, through its entity Agrément South Africa, will develop guidelines and minimum standards, referred to as *Specifications*, for the use of environmentally sensitive eco-labelled materials. These guidelines and specifications will be adopted by the Department and incorporated into the Department's relevant *Standard Specifications for Construction Works*.

Agrément South Africa, an entity of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, was appointed as the Competent Body (or the licensor) to oversee the establishment and operationalising of the government's eco-labelling system for building materials and products, provisionally known as ecoASA Label. The entity was established in 1969 and operates under a delegation of authority from the Minister of Public

Works. In December 2015, Agrément South Africa was recognised as an independent agency to bring impartial judgment to the evaluation of innovative construction products and systems in the interest of the consumer, and the construction industry at large.

At inception, a Working Group established at the Department's level evaluated existing international and local eco-labelling systems in order to determine if any of the systems could be adopted. The group concluded that none of the evaluated systems could be adopted for use in South Africa and that there would be a need to establish a government-endorsed eco-labelling system, drawing on international standards but modified for South African conditions. The eco-labelling system will be established based on existing international standards and adapted for suitability in South Africa. In particular, the system will so far as possible conform to ISO 14024 Environmental Labels and Declarations: Environmental Labelling Type I, Guiding Principles and Procedures. The principles of this standard state that:

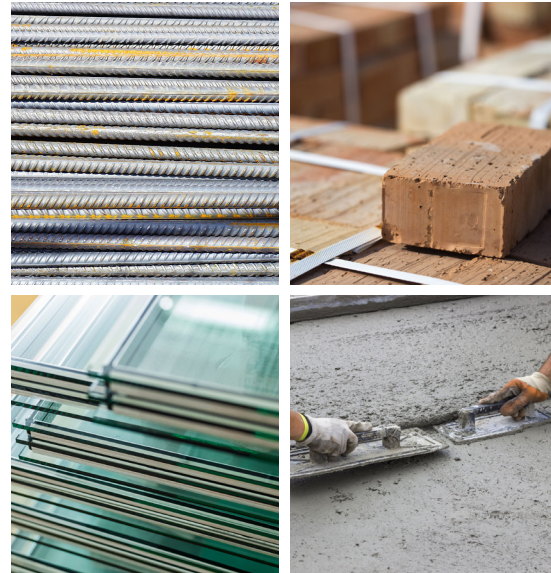
- Type I environmental labelling programmes must be voluntary in nature;
- The labelling programme must conform to ISO 14020 Environmental labels and declarations – General principles, in addition to ISO 14024;
- Environmental labels may only be granted where the material or products complies with South African environmental and other applicable legislation;
- Eco-labelling criteria referenced in the various Specifications must consider the whole product life cycle;
- Eco-labelling criteria shall differentiate environmentally preferable products from others based on a measurable difference in environmental impact;
- Attainable levels must be set for eco-labelling criteria, considering relative environmental impacts, measurement capability and accuracy;

- Eco-labelling criteria shall consider the fitness-for-purpose of the materials and products, as well as their level of performance;
- Eco-labelling criteria must be established for a set period and reviewed within a predefined period, considering factors such as emerging technologies, new products, environmental information and market changes;
- The criteria development process of establishing eco-labelling criteria must comprise formal open participation among interested parties;
- The eco-labelling criteria requirements must be verifiable by a Competent Body;
- Transparency must be demonstrated in all stages of the development and operation of the eco-labelling system;
- The eco-label must not inhibit trading practices;
- The eco-labelling system must be open to all qualifying potential applicants;
- The development of eco-labelling criteria must be based on comprehensive scientific and engineering principles, and must be the result of data in support of the claim 'environmental preferability';
- The eco-labelling programme must be free from undue influence and source(s) of funding must not create a conflict of interest;
- The costs and fees for participation in the eco-labelling system must be kept relatively low and applied fairly to all participants;
- Confidentiality must be maintained for all information considered confidential; and
- Mutual recognition and based confidence should be encouraged and pursued as appropriate.

The system will also include a rating mechanism based on a quantifiable degree of conformance with relevant eco-labelling Specifications. Although a government-endorsed initiative, the eco-labelling system will be promoted as a national system for the private and public sectors. Unlike eco-labelling systems from other countries, ecoASA Label will be limited to building industry materials and products, and will not undertake to issue licences for materials and products existing outside of this sector.

As the Competent Body managing ecoASA Label, Agrément South Africa has been tasked with developing a set of Scheme Rules that document the necessary procedures to be followed in the establishment of eco-labelling Specifications, as well as the requirements and procedures for materials and products to be certified by the Competent Body against applicable specifications.

The Specifications to be developed will reflect South Africa's socio-economic development objectives, whilst maintaining consistency with international environmental standards and South Africa's environmental commitments. The criteria contained within a specification will not



include a full life cycle assessment (LCA), but instead include simplified LCA criteria such as environmental impacts during manufacture, including CO₂ emissions, water demand, waste minimisation etc. and the recyclability and reuse of the material or product.

Looking at the number of certificates per product category, awarded by various international eco-labelling organisations, a task team comprising members from the Construction Industry Development Board (cidb), Agrément South Africa and the Department of Public Works, determined the priority specifications to be considered for development. These are:

- paints and surface coatings;
- adhesives and sealants;
- flooring and carpets;
- wall and ceiling panels and products;
- building insulation products;
- concrete and concrete products;
- masonry products;
- ceramics;
- long steel products; and
- cleaning materials and products used in Public Works buildings.

Agrément South Africa aspires to develop and implement two Specifications by June 2020, thereafter, officially launch ecoASA Label and award its first eco-labelling certificate. "As the only government-endorsed South African environmental claims verification body for building materials and products, we're proud to have been given the opportunity to lead this initiative and raise the environmental performance benchmark. We look forward to welcoming our first clients next year." – Zama Thusi, R&D Specialist, Agrément South Africa. +