



Product Description

Solid fuel products produced by carbonization of hardwood or by wood by-products that may be combined with additives and compressed into a typical briquette shape. Does not include lumber, firewood, or liquid fuel.

Mission

The mission of The Sustainability Consortium (TSC) is to improve the sustainability of products when they are made, purchased, and used, with a focus on manufacturers and the retail buyers who decide what products to carry in stores. The information in this document is drawn from our detailed research on known and potential social and environmental impacts across product life cycles. TSC acknowledges that other issues exist, but we have included here those that are most relevant to the decision making of retail buying teams and manufacturers. The topics are listed alphabetically for ease of reading; the order does not represent prioritization or other criteria.



Consumers

Consumer Health and Safety

Manufacturers should select materials in accordance with applicable safety standards and perform any necessary assessments on chemicals and materials. Manufacturers can use alternative chemicals or eliminate the use of harmful chemicals, such as formaldehyde among others, during production to reduce any potential human health risks to consumers. Manufacturers should procure wood-based components from certified sources to ensure that pesticides and other chemicals used in forestry operations are applied optimally and potential exposures are controlled. In cases where appropriate controls are not in place, chemicals may migrate into the environment, potentially leading to harm of workers. Charcoal should be handled with care. Manufacturers should communicate safe usage and disposal instructions to consumers in a clear and accessible fashion, and, where appropriate, design products that pose the least possible risk to people and animals.



Managing the Supply Chain

Deforestation

Unsustainable forest management for wood-based product production can lead to biodiversity loss, reduced ecosystem quality, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. When sourcing wood and wood fiber, look for manufacturers that use sourcing policies that monitor progress on zero deforestation commitments. Sourcing policies should also promote protection of high conservation value forest habitats, which have unique plants and animals. Requiring third-party audits or certifications based on site-specific observations can also reduce the risk of deforestation.

Pollution

Manufacturers should use institutionalized sustainable forestry best management practices and procure wood-based products from certified sources to ensure that pesticides and other chemicals used in forestry operations are applied optimally and potential exposures are controlled. Without these controls, chemicals may migrate into the environment, potentially harming workers and the local environment. Harmful gases may be emitted during the production of some petroleum-based ingredients used in charcoal. Manufacturers should work with their supply chains to implement best available practices and technology to minimize or eliminate these emissions.



Use of Resources

Climate and energy

Timber production and final manufacturing of charcoal consume significant amounts of energy. Manufacturers can help abate these impacts by measuring, tracking, and reporting energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, with a focus on reduction. They can also perform preventative maintenance on equipment, replace inefficient equipment, use renewable energy, and encourage efficient energy behaviors throughout their operations. Burning fuel to produce the petroleum-based ingredients of charcoal can generate pollutants that contribute to climate change, smog, acid rain, and other impacts. Manufacturers should procure new ingredients from petroleum refineries that implement best practices and technology to improve energy efficiency and capture emissions. Manufacturers should also use recycled ingredients.

Disposal and End-of-Life

Charcoal contains chemicals that, if leaked, spilled, or disposed of improperly, can pose a health threat to humans and other life. Manufacturers should maximize the safety of their charcoal, participate in programs that collect and handle charcoal responsibly after final use, and educate consumers about proper disposal.

Land and Soil

The quality of soil in forests may be degraded through physical disruptions associated with harvesting activities that do not use sustainable forest management techniques. To reduce soil and land impacts during timber harvesting, charcoal product manufacturers and suppliers should use institutionalized sustainable forestry best management practices or procure wood-based products from certified sources.



Workers and Communities

Community Rights

Timber production can impact the rights of indigenous people and local communities through loss of land and timber rights and reduction of access to resources, especially in places where government controls are insufficient. Manufacturers should have third-party verification embedded in their sourcing policies for wood to protect indigenous and community rights within forestry operations, where applicable. Audits should be performed where needed and audit results made available to the public.

Workers

Workers may be exposed to dust, noise, chemicals, or other industrial hazards. To help ensure worker health and safety and labor rights, final product and ingredient manufacturers should have a documented health and safety management plan, including a chemical management plan where needed, and provide safety training and personal protective equipment to workers. Manufacturers should procure materials from suppliers that address worker health and safety and labor rights transparently and should perform audits when needed.