

Ice Cream and Frozen Desserts

Sustainability Insights



Product Description

Ice Cream and Frozen Desserts includes frozen dessert products composed primarily of milkfat, milk solids, and sweeteners and that may contain other ingredients, including chocolate or cocoa, eggs, fruit or fruit juices, and nuts. Product types include ice cream, custard, gelato, sherbet, sorbet, frozen yogurt, ice cream sandwiches, fruit bars, ices, popsicles, and mellorine.

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.



Animals

Animal Welfare

Final product manufacturers should source from suppliers with comprehensive management plans, including certification programs, that ensure animal welfare for farm animals. Plans or programs should include practices that avoid painful procedures, ensure access to adequate housing and proper nutrition, require proper handling, and promote good health in ways that are appropriate for dairy cattle.



Managing the Supply Chain

Supply Chain Transparency

Addressing many of the environmental and social challenges within an agricultural supply chain requires cooperation among companies at different stages of the supply chain. Manufacturers should determine the locations of farms that produce their ingredient supply and engage in initiatives that improve transparency, communication, and data sharing. Suppliers can work together to address common issues, such as energy use, water availability and quality, chemical use, worker health and safety, and labor rights.

Water

Ingredient production can use a significant amount of water and contribute to freshwater depletion, which is problematic in water-stressed regions. Growers can measure and track water use and use methods such as precision agriculture, which applies only the amount of water needed, or irrigation water management to improve water efficiency.



Use of Resources

Climate and Energy

Ingredient processing can consume significant amounts of electricity and energy, which results in greenhouse gas emissions. Fertilizers can also emit these gases. Growers can reduce these impacts by measuring and tracking energy use, performing preventative maintenance on equipment, and replacing inefficient equipment. Additionally, growers can minimize impacts by implementing a nutrient management plan, using precision agriculture, which applies only the amount of fertilizer needed, or low-energy irrigation, and optimizing the size and efficiency of farm vehicles.

Packaging

Packaging design should be optimized to ensure that packaging performs its essential functions of containment and protection while minimizing use of materials, energy resources, and environmental impacts across the life cycle of the packaged product. Under-packaging and over-packaging can both lead to increased impacts. These impacts may be mitigated by using more energy-efficient manufacturing, creating packaging materials from renewable resources, designing packaging to be recyclable, and encouraging consumer recycling.



Workers and Communities

Workers

Workers, especially women and migrants, may face unfair pay, discrimination, and limited freedoms. They may also be exposed to dust, chemicals, or other industrial hazards. To help ensure worker health and safety, manufacturers should have a documented health and safety management plan, as well as a chemical management plan where needed, and provide safety training and personal protective equipment to workers in their facilities. Manufacturers should also procure ingredients from suppliers that transparently address worker health and safety and labor rights and perform audits when needed.