

Feminine and Nursing Hygiene Products

Sustainability Insights



Product Description

Feminine and Nursing Hygiene Products include products that are composed of an absorbent pad or napkin with an adhesive strip, or as a short tube of compressed absorbent material with an attached string. Product types include panty liners, tampons, towels, pads, feminine napkins, and nursing pads.

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.

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Managing the Supply Chain

Land and Soil

Sourcing of virgin pulp fiber may lead to deforestation and water depletion, which can impact the surrounding land, soil, and biodiversity, and contribute to climate change. Improper cotton cultivation may deplete natural resources and contribute to pollution. Manufacturers of feminine and nursing hygiene products should source wood fiber from forests that have been certified by transparent, multi-stakeholder systems and are sustainable. Cotton should be sourced from suppliers that implement sustainable agricultural practices.

Pollution

Manufacturers should source wood pulp or fiber from suppliers that do not use elemental chlorine bleaching processes, which can contribute to air and water pollution.

Sustainable Forestry

Unsustainable paper pulp sourcing can result in deforestation, decreased biodiversity, land and water degradation, and climate change impacts. Manufacturers should source paper pulp from suppliers that have been verified by a credible certification program for sustainable forestry practices.



Use of Resources

Climate and Energy

Component processing can consume significant amounts of electricity and energy, leading to greenhouse gas emissions. Manufacturers should procure from suppliers that help abate these impacts by measuring, tracking, and reporting energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, with a focus on reduction. They should

also perform preventative maintenance on equipment, replace inefficient equipment, and encourage efficient energy behaviors throughout their operations.

Disposal and End-of-Life

Unmanaged landfills or landfills without methane capture systems release greenhouse gas emissions, which are linked to climate change. Also, littered products can foul land and waterways and may harbor disease. Manufacturers should design feminine and nursing hygiene products to minimize material use while maintaining uncompromised performance. Manufacturers should account for end-of-life options in order to impact the environment in acceptable ways.

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, selecting recyclable and sustainably managed renewable materials, and encouraging consumer recycling.