



Product Description

Wooden Furniture includes furniture composed primarily of lumber and engineered wood products. Product types include beds, chairs, tables, bookcases, and desks.

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

Wooden furniture 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 or the local environment.



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.

Supply Chain Transparency

Addressing many of the environmental and social challenges within a wooden furniture supply chain requires cooperation among companies at different stages of the supply chain. Chain-of-custody and other data-sharing systems and initiatives can help improve transparency about where wooden furniture materials are being sourced, and manufacturers and suppliers can work together to address common issues, such as energy, water use, chemical use, worker health and safety, and labor rights.



Use of Resources

Climate and Energy

Wood sawing and drying for components used in wooden furniture 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.

Land and Soil

The quality of soil in forests may be degraded through physical disruptions associated with harvesting activities for wood components that do not use sustainable forest management techniques. To reduce soil and land impacts during timber harvesting, wooden furniture 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, paper, and pulp-based products, to protect indigenous and community rights within forestry operations, where applicable. Audits should be performed where needed and audit results should be made available to the public.

Forced or Child Labor

In some areas, there is a risk of forced or child labor, characterized by actions such as trafficking, withholding wages or documents, and restricting workers to the work site. Manufacturers should determine if and where forced or child labor occurs and work with supply chain partners and experts to address these issues to ensure all workers have fair working conditions.

Workers

Workers may be exposed to dust, noise, chemicals, or other industrial hazards. To help ensure worker health and safety and labor rights, 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.