

StandardMark Certified Compost Scheme

AS 4454 Composts, soil conditioners and mulches



Product Compliance

Consumers can now have confidence in the quality of composted mulches and composted soil conditioners following the launch of the joint StandardsMark and Certified Compost Marking Scheme

Under the joint marking scheme, which is only available to members of the Waste Management Association of Australia (WMAA), individual compost and mulch products will be certified to ensure they meet a set of quality assured criteria guaranteeing the standard of compost products for a wide variety of customers, including landscapers, agriculturists, viticulturists and home gardeners.

“Building upon the existing Australian StandardsMark, the joint Certified Compost Marking Scheme will enable users to identify quality compost products that are specifically designed to meet their requirements,” said Angus Johnston, National Projects Manager, Compost Australia.

Participating products will be independently certified through a process requiring strict and fully documented quality management systems for compost production; registration of application-specific products; independent auditing of composting processes; and laboratory testing of compost products.

Compost is well known to deliver a range of outcomes, including, saving water, improving soil health, reducing fertiliser use, improving plant yield, weed reduction, reducing soil erosion, improving plant appearance and improving nutritional balance.

“Until now the recycled organics industry has been distracted by the important challenge of getting organic materials out of landfill,” said Johnston. “In this new paradigm, product demand will drive recycling and the environmental benefits that go along with it.”

Products certified by SAI Global will be licensed to



use the 5 Ticks StandardsMark and a distinctive Certified Compost leaf logo.

Industry Overview

The Recycled Organics industry converts organic wastes into valuable organic products that add carbon, nutrients and life to depleted soils. The industry is crucial in helping all levels of government across Australia divert organic wastes from landfill. Nationally 140 businesses processes over five million tonnes of organic wastes (and growing fast), producing a variety of mulches, soil conditioners, manufactured soils and even some fuel and energy products. Conservative estimates of organic waste to be recovered nationally put the figure at 10 million tonnes per annum. It is crucial that the Recycled Organics Industry match that supply with demand by developing beneficial uses for compost products and educating end users on those benefits.

Environmental Benefit

The Recycled Organics industry also delivers environmental benefits associated with the diversion of waste from landfill and the application of recycled organic products to land. An independent study has conservatively estimated the environmental value of compost derived from garden organics at \$114 per tonne. This includes both avoided landfill emissions (\$82.53) and application benefits (\$40.50). A separate life cycle inventory and assessment for windrow composting systems undertaken in 2003 found significant environmental benefits arising from commercial composting of organics and application of compost to agriculture, even where composts are transported up to 600 kilometres.

Australia has relatively poor soils and low rainfall, both key limiting factors for our agriculture enterprises. By improving the structure and chemistry of the soil (soil health), recycled organic products improve urban landscapes and increase the viability and ecological sustainability of agriculture. Improving soils also increases the quality

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of downstream surface and ground waters because both erosion and chemical fertilisers application is reduced.

Certifying Application Specific Products

The Compost Supply Chain Roadmap, a Recycled Organics Industry development strategy, has identified the need to address end-user needs and promote the idea of different quality products. It is essential that end users understand that compost is a product designed with their specific application in mind rather than a treated waste needing disposal. The new certification scheme and Leaf Brand will effectively link certified products with defined market requirements and allow customers to find the Recycled Organic product specifically designed to meet their needs.

Product Branding

The SAI Global Five-Ticks Brand used under the existing StandardMark product certification scheme is widely recognised and accepted in Australia, with many certified manufacturers using it extensively, particularly on bagged product and promotional literature. In order to distinguish between broad product categories (for each market segment) Compost Australia has developed a separate Industry owned brand and labelling guidelines. Since many of the potential new market segments are bulk markets (no bags) there will also be an alternative branding method introduced to expose the brands and associated product information to the customer. The branding will link industry wide market education to the act of purchasing the product, thereby increasing brand recognition and sales of certified product over time.

Relationship to Australian Standards

The new compost certification scheme will continue to use the Australian Standard for Composts, Soil Conditioners and Mulches (AS 4454), developed through Standards Australia, as the benchmark for product quality. In order to create products that meet end user needs, AS 4454 is being revised in parallel with the development of the new certification scheme. Compost products will be audited to the revised AS 4454, independently certified by SAI Global and sold under the Five-Ticks and Compost Certified Leaf branding as quality, application specific products. The unique advantage of this program is the flexibility to certify products that meet identified customer requirements and take into consideration how and where a product is applied. Manufacturers may certify a product that varies from the AS4454 where it has been designed for a specific application.

Product and Manufacturer Differentiation

Both the compost manufacturers and compost users benefit from increased levels of product certification. Poor quality compost products that are not designed for specific applications can cause damage a customer's business and more broadly reduce customer confidence, undermining attempts to expand into new market segments. Quality manufacturers and their products must be separated from inferior, poorly designed composts in the eyes of the consumer. The Recycled Organics Industry intends to bring as many compost manufacturers up to standard as possible and, at the same time, differentiate themselves from those manufactures that dump poor quality product into the market. The new Certification and associated Leaf Brand provide a mechanism for the Industry to achieve this goal.

To find out how to obtain certification of your compost products please email product@saiglobal.com or call 02 8206 6322

