



Interim Update

GS-1 Standard Revision

Withdrawing the Proposal of Rapidly Renewable Fibers (RRF)

Background:

To maintain relevant and accurate Environmental Leadership Standards, Green Seal periodically initiates a Standard Revision. During this phase, we conduct research and outreach to strengthen our understanding of the market and assess our progress in advancing the wider adoption of environmental and human health protections. In 2017, Green Seal noted developments in the paper marketplace that indicated potentially significant environmental benefits associated with the use of rapidly renewable fibers (RRF) for sanitary paper products.

To gauge the need for a revision to the Green Seal Standard for Sanitary Paper Products (GS-1), Green Seal commissioned a review of both the product lifecycle and the market of alternative fibers used for paper products.¹ As a result of this research, Green Seal developed a proposal for the addition of RRF to the list of acceptable sources for the manufacture of sanitary paper products. GS-1 currently requires products to be made only from certain percentages of recovered material, recycled material, or agricultural residue.

A public comment draft of the GS-1 revisions was published on November 15, 2017. The public comment period was open from November 15, 2017 to February 12, 2018, during which time Green Seal received over 40 comments from a diverse range of stakeholders.

Interim Update:

During the Public Comment Period, Green Seal received a wide range of feedback and also examined new information, both of which highlighted uncertainties that remain about the feasibility of certifying sanitary paper products made from RRFs. The new findings demonstrate that more research and review is necessary for Green Seal to make a conclusive determination about the inclusion of RRF into GS-1.

¹ Life Cycle and Market Review of Major Alternative Fiber for Paper Product, Georgia Institute of Technology, April 2017, [PDF Available at GreenSeal.org](http://GreenSeal.org)

The areas of additional research that would be required include:

- A more rigorous review of the supply chain process and the environmental impacts of the production system;
- A deeper assessment around the feasibility of adopting conformance requirements from other third-party certifications;
- A far-reaching stakeholder engagement phase.

Due to the emerging state of the science, Green Seal is not currently able to commit to a timeline for conducting a second phase of research around rapidly renewable fibers for GS-1. Green Seal will therefore continue moving forward on the proposed revisions to the GS-1 criteria sections, leaving out the inclusion of RRF. Green Seal is currently considering implementing the remaining proposed revisions to the following sections of the GS-1 standard:

- Product performance and specifications
- Agricultural residue and other specific fiber sources
- Biodegradability
- Water and energy requirements

An updated public comment draft, along with responses to the submitted comments, will be published in September 2018.

If you have any questions, please contact Green Seal at (202) 872-6400 or email standards@greenseal.org