Setting exacting standards...

...for sustainable building

natureplus® certified products meet the highest standards from raw material sourcing/extraction, to low emissions and clean production methods.
The built environment is responsible for around 40% of the worldwide consumption of resources and over 50% of primary energy consumption in Europe. In comparison to operation, the embodied impacts from the construction of buildings is increasing in significance. With ever increasing pressure on resources, the natureplus label is only awarded to those products that demonstrate durability, alongside low impact.

**Recommendation by the German Federal Environment Agency on VOC concentrations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOC-Concentration (in Micrograms per cubic metre of room air)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 300 Harmless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 to 1.000 Still harmless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.000 to 3.000 Noticeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.000 to 10.000 Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 10.000 Unacceptable</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Notification of the ad-hoc working group of the interior air hygiene commission of the German Federal Environment Agency

To assist with the goal of sustainable construction natureplus has developed a European eco-label for construction products, which enables clients, consumers and building professionals to specify sustainable products with confidence. The natureplus® eco-label is a recognized environmental label according to ISO 14024, and is only awarded to building products that:

- are made from raw materials which are renewable, recycled or from sustainable sources,
- have been manufactured in an energy efficient, non-toxic, low waste process
- do not emit substances which are harmful to the environment and our health; in particular products which do not adversely affect the quality of indoor air.

natureplus thereby effectively implements the requirements of the Construction Products Regulations (EU-CPR 305:2011) requiring building product manufacturers’ to provide a performance declaration in respect of the environment, hygiene and the protection of resources, as a basis for the CE-label.

We Europeans spend over 90% of our days working and living in buildings that are increasingly air-tight. Many building products, fixtures and finishes emit harmful substances known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which can become concentrated in indoor spaces. All natureplus products are tested against rigorous indoor air quality standards, so reducing risk and helping to ensure healthy and productive buildings.

Even before a building is occupied, between 30% – 70% of lifetime carbon emissions have already been accounted for. (Guy Battle, 2014. UK Embodied Carbon Taskforce) By 2020, the operational energy consumption of European buildings will be a tenth of 1970s buildings.
natureplus is represented in the UK by The Alliance for Sustainable Building Products, based in London; an active, not-for-profit, member led organisation. Our mission – championing the increased use of building products that meet demonstrably higher standards of sustainability.

Gary Newman, Chair of ASBP, is ably assisted by a 7 strong board, including Jane Anderson. Gary sits on the natureplus Criteria Commission, which meets quarterly.

Providing sustainable buildings with healthy interiors from resource efficient products is essential, as clients and contractors seek to reduce risk and improve responsible sourcing; and the correlation between indoor air quality with, increased productivity and occupant health becomes better understood.

Emissions to internal air from products/ Source control is not currently directly considered within UK building regulations; although background guidance is provided in Approved Document F; however a report DCLG Air Quality in Part F 2006 Homes reported that half the homes tested, exceeded recommended TVOC (total volatile organic compound) levels.

ASBP consider that natureplus displays all the attributes required for an effective product selection tool to assist with healthy, resource efficient buildings; including a broad stakeholder group, governance, rigor, transparency, full disclosure, third party accreditation, robust data and evolving standards; and we actively support, market and promote its activities.

ASBP also has a busy programme of events, research and policy work. Please visit our website www.asbp.org.uk.

What are Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)?
Emissions to internal air from products – Source control
The US Environment Protection Agency state the level of indoor pollutants may be two to five times and occasionally more than a 100 times higher than outdoor air. Environmental Protection Agency (USA). 2001. Healthy buildings, healthy people: a vision for the 21st century.

VOCs are numerous, varied, and ubiquitous organic compounds that off-gas into the air; both human-made and naturally occurring. Most scents or odours are VOCs. Prolonged exposure is unwise and even short exposure can have adverse health impacts. As they are commonly found in building products, natureplus sets limit values for VOCs across their product categories, to help ensure good internal air quality.
natureplus is a not-for-profit, international Association with a unique and diverse, democratic membership. Members from across Europe include: environmental and consumer organizations; scientific institutes and trades unions; construction professionals; building companies; builders’ merchants; planning offices and manufacturers. Our most important tool, to facilitate and enable sustainable construction and promote and demonstrate product sustainability, is the natureplus eco-label.

As our member, you are actively supporting our goal of sustainable consumption and production for this generation and the next. In addition, you benefit from the following:

- Active participation in our rigorous, transparent and democratic Association
- Participation in the development of product criteria
- Extended marketing opportunities
- Regular newsletters, policy updates, interesting events and access to the latest research
- European-wide networking with member companies and organisations

Membership of our Association is between €200 and €2,000 each year, dependent on the number of employees. You can join our Association if you are a manufacturer of a product eligible for certification, a builders’ merchant, a construction or housing industry company or a representative of a building sector federation or non-profit organisation.
Our mission; what we assess and what we guarantee

The exacting criteria that natureplus certified products must meet are formulated by independent expert committees, in consultation with numerous stakeholders. The criteria far exceed standard minimum legal requirements. For maximum transparency, all of the detailed guidelines are freely available on our website. Criteria compliance is monitored by independent, accredited assessment institutes. The decision to award certification is made by yet another independent committee. natureplus’s maxims are independence, objectivity, impartiality, transparency, participation and freedom from discrimination according to the demands of guideline 2014/24/EU for public procurement.

We conduct regular audits, in the form of production site inspections, laboratory testing and Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). These are executed according to recognized standards and codes of practice, compatible with national (European) regulations for emissions testing. We can also provide background data for Environmental Product Declarations (EPD).

The natureplus label guarantees product sustainability, throughout its life cycle:

- Sustainably, sourced and extracted raw materials
- Maximising the use of renewable raw materials, with a minimum content of 85% bio-based, recycled or abundant mineral
- No petrochemicals in the products, unless deemed necessary for technical reasons
- Substances which are harmful to health or the environment prohibited
- Avoiding harmful emissions and enabling good indoor air quality.
- Strict criteria for Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) such as solvents, formaldehyde and phthalates; maximum 300 µg/m³ TVOC
- The avoidance of soluble/dischargeable harmful substances and radioactivity
- Lean and clean production; compliance with social and ILO standards and safety at work
- Low impact and best in class, as evidenced by Life Cycle Assessments
- Durability and extended-life; full functional suitability for the application
- Recyclable, re-usable or suitable for environmentally-friendly disposal
- Hazard-free use and application

Across Europe, there are now over 70 manufacturers and 600 products which have been awarded natureplus® certification. Together they represent a turnover of over € 550 million and therefore an increasingly significant proportion of the building materials market. An overview of the certified products and their properties can be found in our product database at

www.natureplus.org.
The interested manufacturer submits an application for the assessment of his/her product according to one of the natureplus award guidelines, of which 70 currently exist. Upon signing a framework agreement with natureplus, the manufacturer will complete a standardised questionnaire. This includes a comprehensive declaration of the product’s composition and the production process. Based upon this information and the accompanying documents provided by the manufacturer, which will be treated in the strictest confidence, natureplus will conduct a pre-assessment procedure and decide whether the product is suitable for submission to the main assessment procedure. In addition, as part of the pre-assessment procedure an assessment plan will be prepared. This forms the basis of the quotation for the main assessment procedure. Only upon acceptance by the manufacturer of this detailed and binding offer will the actual certification process begin.

Several external, independent assessment institutes and experts are involved in the main assessment procedure. They will assess the conformity of the product with the natureplus requirements, for example through comprehensive laboratory tests and the production of a life-cycle assessment (LCA). The assessment begins with an on-site inspection of the production facility and the taking of samples. Upon completion of the assessment procedure and the presentation of the assessment report, an independent committee will decide upon the award of the natureplus® eco-label. The validity of the label will be verified for a period of three years by means of annual follow-up assessment procedures. After 3 years a repeat assessment must be conducted.
natureplus stimulates the market for sustainable products

Our experience has shown that greater attention is paid to sustainable products bearing the natureplus® eco-label. To this end we have developed a number of tools to show how practical natureplus certified products are. These are directed in particular at building professionals.

Product database
On our website www.natureplus.org we list all of the natureplus certified products with a detailed description of the areas of application for the products, their technical and structural properties and most importantly, the results of the natureplus assessments. At a glance, you can identify the sustainability features fulfilled by a particular product, with detailed test results and LCA data also freely available. In addition, this database can readily be used by architects and planners in other databases and calculation programmes.

Tendering process texts
In order to facilitate sustainable public procurement, natureplus has produced example procurement clauses as aids for the writing of tenders. These are freely available from our website www.natureplus.org. They contain detailed lists of the individual sustainability requirements relevant to a number of product groups for interior products and which have been derived from European environmental labels such as natureplus, the Blue Angel and others. As a modular type system, the individual text blocks can be included in the tendering texts and used, for example, in the preliminary comments section of the list of specifications either as part of the contract or in the technical specifications. The environmental labels are then only referenced as options offering the required product properties.

Advice and training
Please get in touch with your local natureplus representative for further support and/or training. We also support clients, investors and communal organisations/local authorities in the preparation of procurement clauses.

Marketing services
Our website is accessed daily by 1,500 users and over 10,000 building professional have subscribed to our specialist information service. In the German speaking countries we annually reach 30 – 40 million people, via our Press releases. Please don’t hesitate to contact us.

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natureplus is good for everyone!

✓ Consumers: guidance with cutting through the green wash
✓ Clients: reduction in residual risk – providing healthy interiors with full product sustainability
✓ Construction professionals: free access to independently verified data to support product sustainability and specification
✓ Tradesmen can claim a competitive advantage
✓ Merchants benefit from increased sales presence
✓ Manufacturers can steer their product development activities

A widespread alliance