LEELINEGROUP
Your Trusted Sourcing Partner In China

Sustainable Packaging Claim Checklist

A printable field pack for sourcing recycled, FSC-certified and compostable packaging from China with a defensible claim: the seven checks, the claim-to-proof table, the component-level BOM, the FSC and compostability registry match, the four transit tests, a landed-cost worksheet, the golden-sample lock and a red-flag screen.

www.leelinegroup.com

Version 1.0 | Last updated: November 26, 2026

DISCLAIMER

This checklist is a field tool drawn from LeelineGroup packaging RFQs and production records. It is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for licensed legal review, lab testing or customs advice. Sustainability claims are regulated: confirm the exact wording against the FTC Green Guides (16 CFR Part 260), EU Directive (EU) 2024/825 and your target-market rules before any pack goes to print. LeelineGroup charges a transparent 5%-10% service fee and takes no factory kickbacks and no paid placements. Every certificate, percentage and number you enter here is your own; verify each one against the issuing body before you print or order.

1. The Seven Checks

Run the seven checks in order. Each answers a different question; a check that cannot be evidenced is a stop, not a deduction. The order never changes.

Check	Question it answers	Pass signal
1. One claim	Is there exactly one specific public claim, with a disposal route confirmed?	One claim (FSC, recycled, recyclable or compostable) printed in fixed wording; local disposal route checked.
2. Component BOM	Is every component specified and priced separately?	Board, ink, glue, lamination, window and tape each named and quoted; no lump sum.
3. Shortlist	Do 5 to 8 validated factories remain, each able to prove the claim?	Every survivor is a factory (not a trader) in a paper/printing cluster (Guangdong, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Shandong) with matching certificate history and MOQ ranges.
4. Certificate match	Does the public record match the pack, site and scope?	Legal entity, site, scope, product group, status and expiry all line up on the official database.
5. Transit test	Does the printed article pass all four transit tests?	Drop, compression, humidity and seal checks pass on the printed production sample.
6. Landed cost	Is total landed cost per 1,000 units lower, not just unit price?	Tooling, cube, duty and scrap included; lead time mapped backward from launch.
7. Production lock	Is a signed golden sample holding the spec through the run?	Dated golden sample, frozen artwork, and a matched inspection and certificate file at shipment.

A defensible claim rests on five controls: the claim, the component spec, the certificate scope, the sample test and the production file.

2. The Claim-to-Proof Table

Pick one claim and lock its wording to the certificate scope before any design work. Vague words like eco-friendly fail FTC, EU and UK CMA review. Write the specific claim or write nothing.

Claim	Proof required	Common failure
Recycled content	Supplier declaration with percentage calculation; FSC Recycled or mill statement plus purchase records.	Printed percentage exceeds the documented input.
Recyclable	Recovery access for at least 60 percent of buyers (FTC 16 CFR 260.12); test report of the finished article.	Adhesive, window or lamination blocks paper recovery.
Compostable	EN 13432, ASTM D6400 (plastics) or ASTM D6868 (paper); finished printed article in scope.	An industrial claim shown to home users with no access.
FSC-certified	Chain of custody at the printing site; correct FSC claim and certificate code on invoice.	Certificate names a mill or trader, not the converter.
Plastic-reduced	Baseline weight and a material comparison on file.	No baseline, so the reduction cannot be shown.

Disposal-route check

- Name where the customer discards the pack in the destination market.
- Call the local hauler or check the municipal guide before you print.

3. Documents to Collect Before Any RFQ

Send one identical pack to every candidate so differences reflect the supplier, not your brief. A missing document is an open item, not a nuance. Vague briefs invite vague quotes.

Document to request	Why it matters
Certificate PDF with legal name and site address	The record must name the converter site in scope, not a mill or a trader.
SDS / TDS for inks and adhesives	Backs any water-based or low-impact ink claim at the batch level.
Transit and migration test reports	Food-contact, cosmetic and childrens packs need migration or chemical testing.
Dieline plus component-level BOM	Board, film, ink, glue, lamination, window, coating, tape, insert, void fill.
Factory legal name and plant address	The entity on the certificate must equal the entity that ships your pack.
Unprinted and printed sample photos	Compare construction against the spec and the certificate scope.

4. Match the Certificate to the Pack

Type the official database URL yourself and match every field. A PDF screenshot is not proof; only the live record is. Search the certificate code on search.fsc.org for FSC.

Field	Certificate	Your pack	Match?
Legal entity name			
Site / plant address			
Activity scope			
Product group			
Certificate status			
Issue and expiry date			
Certificate code			
Claim wording on pack			

Registry and standard by claim

Claim	What to check	Code note
FSC	Search the certificate code on search.fsc.org. Confirm the paper-packaging converting site and scope. Use the correct FSC claim (e.g. FSC Mix Credit) and the converter certificate code on the invoice.	Ledger code (FSC-C######) sits on the label; certificate code ties to the invoice. Brand advertising needs a separate promotional licence.
Compostable	Confirm industrial or home compostable. EN 13432 or ASTM D6400 for plastics; ASTM D6868 for paper with compostable coating.	Verify the certificate covers the finished printed article, not only base resin or raw film.
Recycled content	For paper, ask for FSC Recycled or the mill recycled-fiber statement with purchase records. GRS mainly covers textiles and plastics.	If not fully recycled, print the percentage by weight on the pack.
Recyclable	Confirm local recovery access reaches at least 60 percent of buyers. Test the finished article; adhesive and windows can block paper recovery.	A true substrate claim still fails if construction blocks the real disposal path.

5. Validate the Printed Pack

A compliant sample is not a shipping pack. Run all four tests on the printed production sample and record pass/fail on the sheet. Log each defect in words next to its photo, with split length, edge and sample number.

Test	Scope	Protocol	Pass / Fail
Drop check	parcel	ISTA 3A: 17 drops, heights by weight. Quick screen ISTA 1A: one corner, three edges, six faces. 30-inch only under 21 lb.	
Compression check	master carton	Stack to warehouse load height, 72 hours, then inspect for wall buckle or product damage.	
Humidity check	in-house	40C at 85% RH for five days (stricter than ASTM D4332 tropical 40C / 90% RH). Label as in-house, not a freight match.	
Seal check	flexible mailer	Peel or burst every closure. Certified film plus uncertified glue split at the bottom seam after days at sea (8 mm measured).	

Printed-sample test log - one row per sample

Sample number	Test	Pass / Fail	Defect notes (length, edge, number)

Certification is not shelf life. ASTM D6400, ASTM D6868 and EN 13432 describe industrial composting, not durability. Keep the disposal certificate and your storage spec in separate file sections.

6. Total Landed Cost, Not Unit Price

The cheapest unit price rarely wins. Fill one value per line, then compare landed cost per 1,000 units. A cube penalty or a hidden plate fee can flip the winner.

Cost line	What to request	Watch for	Your value
Unit price	Piece price at full MOQ	Setup excluded	
MOQ	Range by size and material	Not universal	
Sample cost	Prototype, printed sample, courier	2-3x unit cost	
Plate / tool / mold	One-time cost and ownership	Fiber tooling	
Export carton	Pieces per carton, size, weight	Low fill raises freight	
Freight cube	CBM per 1,000 units	Bulky designs hurt	
Duty / customs	HS code, origin, duty rate	Classification risk	
Scrap / rework	Defect rate and rework cost	Printed claims add risk	

Worked examples from our RFQs

• Cube penalty: a $0.38 molded-fiber tray beat a $0.44 flat-pack insert by $60 per 1,000 pieces, then used 18% more carton cube. At $0.40 freight per unit the penalty added about $0.072 per piece ($72 per 1,000), so the tray finished about $12 per 1,000 more expensive.

• Hidden tooling: a $1,200 plate fee on a 20,000-piece order at $0.42 a piece adds $0.06 per piece and lifts the true total about 14% above the page, before freight and a 3% scrap allowance.

Lead time to map backward from launch

• Sampling 10-14 days; production 20-30 days; ocean 30-40 days = 60-84 days before validation.

• Add about two weeks for transit validation, then document review and revisions: 75-99 days. Plan the upper bound plus buffer, not a round 60.

7. Lock Production and Hold the Claim

Lock the handoff before the line starts. The artwork text and the BOM must match the certificate scope through shipment.

- [ ] 1. Incoming gate

  Evidence: Verify board, film, ink, glue and certificate records against the approved BOM before the run starts.

- [ ] 2. In-line gate

  Evidence: Check print, adhesion, seals, coating and molded-pulp fit every 500 pieces.

- [ ] 3. Pre-shipment gate

  Evidence: Pull AQL samples under ISO 2859-1 level II. Treat a printed claim that does not match certificate scope as a critical defect, zero acceptance.

- [ ] 4. Golden sample lock

  Evidence: Sign and date one golden sample tied to the final BOM; freeze artwork so the printed claim equals the certificate scope line for line.

- [ ] 5. Subcontracting stop

  Evidence: If production moves to an unapproved site, the claim may not be defensible. One run shifted to a building the FSC certificate did not list; stopping it cost nine days and kept the claim honest.

8. Red-Flag Screen - Pause the Order

Any single flag below pauses the order until it is resolved in writing. One hidden layer costs more than a page of clean quotes.

- [ ] 1. Certificate names a trading company or mill, not the converter
  Evidence: Search the code. If the printing site is not listed, the claim does not travel with your pack.
- [ ] 2. Quote hides a plastic lamination or BOPP layer
  Evidence: A recyclability claim dies at the finished article even when the board is clean.
- [ ] 3. Compostable certificate covers the film only
  Evidence: The finished printed article plus adhesive must be in scope, or the printed seam fails.
- [ ] 4. Printed recycled percentage exceeds documented input
  Evidence: The percentage must be supportable by the mill or FSC Recycled record, by weight.
- [ ] 5. "Widely recyclable" with no local access check
  Evidence: Unqualified recyclable needs recovery access for at least 60 percent of buyers.
- [ ] 6. Water-based ink claimed with no TDS or SDS
  Evidence: Sales copied a marketing line; the printer never documented the ink. Cut the claim.
- [ ] 7. Factory cannot name its own legal entity and plant address
  Evidence: A trader answer, not a factory. Drop it from the shortlist.

9. Sources & Official Programs

Verify every certificate, percentage and standard claim against the issuing body - never against a forwarded PDF or a cover page.

• FSC public certificate search

The official FSC database. Search the certificate code and confirm the legal entity, site address, activity scope, product group and expiry all cover the converter that prints your pack. (https://search.fsc.org/)

• FSC label and promotional licence

A converter applies the FSC label with its own licence under a chain-of-custody certificate. Your brand needs a separate promotional licence to use FSC marks in advertising or on your website. (https://fsc.org/en/promotional-licence)

• ASTM D6400 - compostable plastics

Specification for plastics designed to be aerobically composted in municipal or industrial facilities. A disposal claim, not a shelf-life claim. (https://store.astm.org/d6400-23.html)

• ASTM D6868 - paper with compostable coatings

The correct specification for paper packaging with compostable film or coating. A bare D6400 reference usually misses a coated paper mailer. (https://store.astm.org/d6868-21.html)

• ISTA - transit test protocols

ISTA 3A drops a standard parcel pack 17 times at heights set by weight. ISTA 1A is a quick screen: one corner, three edges, six faces. (https://ista.org/)

• FTC Green Guides - 16 CFR Part 260

The US rules behind words like recycled and recyclable. Recyclable needs recovery access for a substantial majority of buyers - at least 60 percent. (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-16/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-260)

• EU Directive (EU) 2024/825 - green claims

Bans unproven generic environmental claims from 27 September 2026. Write the specific, substantiated claim or write nothing. (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/825/oj)

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Want Someone On The Ground Running These Checks?

Run this checklist yourself, or have it run for you: certificate-scope verification, component-level BOM review, printed-sample transit testing and an AQL pre-shipment inspection on your own PO. We charge a transparent 5%-10% service fee and take no factory kickbacks. Free quote, no obligation.

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