

Amazon Hit With Greenwashing Lawsuit

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Last week, consumers in four states filed a proposed class action against Amazon, accusing the company of greenwashing by misleading consumers about the sustainability of the company's Amazon Basics line of paper products. The 123-page complaint covers a lot of ground, but here are some of the key allegations:

- Amazon uses a Sustainability Leaf and a Climate Pledge Friendly logo to suggest that Amazon's supply chain for Amazon Basics paper products uses sustainable forestry practices, as compared to the supply chain for similar products without the logos. However, because Amazon sources its Amazon Basics paper products from suppliers who clearcut and burn centuries-old forests, Amazon is exaggerating any environmental benefits.
- Amazon uses both of those logos to suggest that the supply chain for Amazon Basics paper products has a lower carbon footprint than similar products without the logos. However, because Amazon sources its Amazon Basics paper products from suppliers who release over 26 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year, Amazon is exaggerating any environmental benefits.
- The Forest Stewardship Council (or "FSC") requires companies to use different FSC logos to depict different levels of commitment to responsible forest management. Despite this, Amazon uses an unqualified Forest Stewardship Council logo, even in situations where Amazon knows that its supply chains only contain a fraction of FSC-certified forests.
- Amazon uses the term "controlled wood" in a way that may suggest environmental benefits to consumers. However, because the term is used in the trade to refer to wood that is sourced from a forest with very few or no binding environmental protections, Amazon may mislead consumers.

The plaintiffs brought their claims on behalf of several proposed classes, including ones specific to their home states and two multistate classes comprising other states. They are asking the court to grant unspecified restitution, punitive damages, disgorgement and interest, as well as attorney fees and an order permanently blocking Amazon from engaging in the practices described in the complaint.

The complaint echoes themes we've seen in various other suits, including [this one](#) last month that also deals with paper products.

Interestingly, this Complaint challenges an arguably very sustainably-minded company. We learned this week that Amazon announced the launch of a new carbon credit investment service that provides access to high-quality carbon credit investments to companies in its value chain with net

zero climate targets. The service will be part of Amazon's [Sustainability Exchange resource hub](#), which it launched last year.

In addition, Amazon maintains its own guidance for vendors making environmental benefit claims, the "Amazon Ads Guidelines and Acceptance Policies for Restricted Content, Products, and Services," which mirror the FTC's Green Guides. Amazon is vocal about its sustainability efforts, including its efforts to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2040, which is part of its Climate Pledge.

According to the Complaint, "Amazon already has direct access to supply chains that would render its sustainability claims not misleading. Yet, for whatever reason, Amazon is choosing to continue to source its pulp for the Amazon Basics Paper Products from unsustainable supply chains." And the Complaint asserts that environmental advocacy groups have sent letters to Amazon alerting the company to these issues. Whether these allegations are factually accurate remains to be seen, but this is certainly another case when trying to do good goes bad.

This case supports our prediction that companies will continue to be scrutinized over their environmental messaging, not just on product, but also in sustainability reports. Companies should assess those claims carefully and support from their supply chains to help ensure they are not overstating the actions and that they don't convey any claims they can't support.

The case is Ramos et al v. Amazon.com, Inc., and it was filed in the United States District Court for the Western District Of Washington on March 14, 2025.