

# Application & Certification Process

This document describes how to apply for an OK compost®, Seedling®, REAL, OK biodegradable® and/or OK biobased® certification and gives insight in the overall certification process within the TÜV AUSTRIA Green Marks department.

The evaluation is carried out by our team of experts in Belgium, but we have a large network of local representatives in different countries who are able to help customers locally. [[local representatives](#)]

Applications are always treated confidentially and in their chronological order. This means delays may apply. Kindly note that applying for certification should only be done for fully developed products for which prototypes can be delivered either immediately or in short delay. As a certification body, TÜV AUSTRIA Belgium's Green Marks department is not allowed to offer consulting services on the design of the product.



## 1 | Application

Applying for certification can be done through the online application form on our website [[apply online](#)].

TÜV AUSTRIA requires upfront the **material composition** and as much detail as possible about the product(s). This information may include drawings, pictures, Technical and Material **Safety Data Sheets (SDS)** and certificates of all components. If requested TÜV AUSTRIA can engage in a Non-Disclosure Agreement with the client. TÜV AUSTRIA can provide a template NDA.

The application form does not impose any obligation towards TÜV AUSTRIA but serves only as a basis to create a tailored certification quotation for the applicant.

When the product for which you request certification is already certified by your supplier, and you wish only to trade the certified product without modifying its composition, form or shape there is no formal need for a new assessment under your name. However, a **sublicense** can be of interest to you. A sublicense can be requested by providing the certificate number of the original certificate in the application form. With a sublicense you can obtain your own certification and show your clients the certificates without disclosing a link to your supplier. Since there is no testing involved, this procedure is generally more time and cost efficient compared to a full certification.



## 2 | Contract

Based on the application, TÜV AUSTRIA will first check if the product is eligible for certification. If applicable a **certification contract** holding the pricing for our services is drafted. The contract consists of 4 steps: the pre-analysis, the evaluation of conformity, the formal certification and the monitoring.

The formal certification holds digital delivery of the certificate(s), an assessment report including the infrared spectroscopy report and the logo(s) with the licensee specific "S-Code" or Seedling® or REAL certificate reference. Moreover, the certified product will be entered into our database of [certified products](#).

OK compost®, Seedling®, REAL and OK biodegradable® **contracts do not include the laboratory testing fees** as this testing should be organized by the applicant.

OK biobased® contracts on the other hand can hold the fee for laboratory test coordination as well as the cost for testing itself.



## 3 | Pre-Analysis

After receiving the certification assignment by means of a signed contract, a Conformity Assessment Officer is assigned to the certification of the product.

**The Conformity Assessment Officer studies the product's composition will ask for additional information where needed and determines if and what laboratory testing is needed to assess the product's compliance to the OK compost®, Seedling®, REAL or OK biodegradable® certification program.**

In case of OK biobased® certification, the pre-analysis covers the set-up of test program necessary for certification.

If laboratory testing is needed for OK compost®, Seedling®, REAL or OK biodegradable®, a pre-assessment report containing a description of the necessary testing is issued to allow for an easy communication for the applicant towards the laboratory.

In case of OK biobased, requested samples for certification will be listed in the pre-analysis report and should be sent to TÜV AUSTRIA. The assigned Conformity Assessment Officer prepares and sends the samples for testing to registered and trusted laboratories when payment for the testing fees is confirmed.

However also in case of OK compost®, Seedling®, REAL or

OK biodegradable® certification samples can already be necessary at this early stage to allow for an in-depth study of the product.

During the pre-analysis, TÜV AUSTRIA experts may contact suppliers to investigate the composition and properties of components or to ask for available laboratory test reports. Only based on a complete understanding of the product's composition the minimum laboratory testing needed can be identified by the Conformity Assessment Officer. The pre-analysis may take several weeks depending on the complexity of the certification but will make identification of the most efficient laboratory testing possible.

The certification process can be stopped after delivery of the pre-analysis report, without any further obligations towards TÜV AUSTRIA. In this case only the pre-analysis fees have to be covered.



## 4 | Testing

With the necessary testing identified in the pre-analysis report, applicants wishing to proceed on the certification should contact and set up a contract with one of the registered laboratories. The laboratory will communicate on the pricing, availability and amount of material needed for testing.

The list of laboratories who are proficient, audited and trusted can be found on our website [\[list of registered labs\]](#).

For OK biobased® certifications, the testing might be coordinated by TÜV AUSTRIA. The test consists of Total Carbon (TC) and/or Bio-based Carbon (BCC) analysis by C14 testing. The certification contract covers the complete coordination, sample handling and testing fees. Testing fees will be presented in the pre-analysis report after detailed evaluation of the product. The Conformity Assessment Officer will inform you of the quantity of test material needed in this report.

There is possibility that testing might be coordinated directly by customer under conditions that one of registered laboratories is used. We will also request samples directly from the laboratories concerned.

Please note that while the results for Total Carbon and Bio-based Carbon Content (C14) measurements for the OK biobased® certifications are obtained within several weeks, OK compost®, Seedling®, REAL and/or OK biodegradable® testing may take several months.



## 5 | Assessment

Based on the test results, the Conformity Assessment Officer evaluates the conformity of the product(s) to the [certification schemes](#) applied for.

For OK compost®, Seedling®, REAL or OK biodegradable® certifications the biodegradation, disintegration, ecotoxicity and chemical characteristics requirements are evaluated. To learn more about the technical criteria for conformity, please check the certification schemes available on the [okcert.tuvaustria.com](http://okcert.tuvaustria.com) website.

For OK biobased® certifications the class (five ranges) and the exact amount of total carbon and biobased carbon is determined. The minimum requirement to obtain certification is 30% total carbon and 20% biobased carbon. ([OK biobased scheme](#)).



## 6 | Certification

If the product is evaluated positively for every requirement of the certification scheme(s), TÜV AUSTRIA issues the assessment and infrared reports, the certificates and the related logos digitally. A hard copy of the certificate is sent to the licensee only on demand.

Each OK compost®, OK biodegradable® or OK biobased® logo carries a licensee specific "S-Code" in the bottom right corner. The S-code allows both TÜV AUSTRIA and consumers to identify the licensee related to the product through our online database [\[search\]](#).

Similarly, the "7P" reference for Seedling® certificates is affixed under the Seedling® logo and allows for identification through our database.

Certificates under REAL's Compostable Materials Certification schemes starts with UKIC2XXX and/or UKH2XXX allows for identification through our [database](#) and [REAL's database](#).

To avoid a non-authorized use of the logo, clients may validate the artwork for packaging or product design with the TÜV AUSTRIA monitoring team before printing and/or publishing [\[graphical chart\]](#). You can contact our team directly: [monitoring.okcert@tuv-a.com](mailto:monitoring.okcert@tuv-a.com)



## 7 | Monitoring

TÜV AUSTRIA ensures the value of the certification through periodical controls and market monitoring. Through web searches, sampling from the manufacturer's stocks, mystery shopping and samples sent to us by different stakeholders in the market claims on our certifications are checked to be authorized. Each licensee will be asked to send samples on a regular basis for monitoring.

An annual fee is charged yearly for the use of the logo and the financing of the above-mentioned control. The fee is invoiced for each upcoming year, the first time 12 months after initial certification.

Certification is valid for five years (three/six in case of Seedling) after which the certification can be prolonged without additional charge for another five (three/six) year period.

Stopping certification can be done at any point in time but this does not allow the licensee to escape its obligations (see [Certification Rules](#)).

In case of non-conformities of the product to the certification scheme, non-conformity handling processes are initiated. The processes differ depending on the technical (composition, thicknesses, colours) or administrative (use of the logo, misleading communication) non-conformities.

Depending on the reaction and immediate corrective actions from the company in question actions are taken by TÜV AUSTRIA. These actions may include temporary suspension or definitive withdrawal of the certificate from the licensee up to legal prosecution.

Costs for handling non-conformities will always be charged by TÜV AUSTRIA.

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