



ARTICLE

SUSTAINABILITY AND KEY REGULATIONS IN UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE MANUFACTURING

Sustainability has become an essential focus for the upholstered furniture industry, with 77% of manufacturers believing it should be a priority. According to the Sustainable Furnishings Council (SFC), sustainability in this sector refers to the design, production, and sale of furniture that minimizes negative environmental, health, and social impacts throughout its lifecycle.

According to CSIL research, **45% of manufacturers struggle to implement effective sustainability solutions**. A circular approach that emphasizes material longevity, recyclability, and efficient resource management is key to achieving meaningful sustainability.

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As regulatory pressure and consumer expectations grow, manufacturers must adopt strategies that align with sustainability goals, ensuring compliance while maintaining competitiveness.

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Key regulations shaping sustainability in upholstered furniture:

Furniture manufacturers must comply with evolving environmental policies and traceability requirements to remain competitive and responsible. Here are the key regulations that shape the industry:

01 —> The European Green Deal

The European Green Deal aims to make the EU climate-neutral by 2050, with goals to cut emissions by 55% by 2030 and transition to a fully circular economy. It encourages furniture manufacturers to adopt renewable materials and energy-efficient production processes.

Companies are required to reduce their environmental footprint and improve their supply chain transparency.

02 —> EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)

With deforestation contributing to 10% of global emissions, the EUDR mandates that all wood and wood-based products used in furniture be sourced sustainably. Manufacturers must ensure traceability and provide evidence that their materials do not originate from deforested areas.

Failing to comply could lead to legal consequences and reputational damage.

03 —> California Proposition 65

Proposition 65 requires manufacturers to label products containing harmful substances, such as formaldehyde, which is found in adhesives and particleboard. Studies show that exposure to such chemicals can increase health risks, making compliance critical for consumer trust.

This regulation compels manufacturers to prioritize non-toxic materials and transparent disclosures.

04 —> Digital Product Passport (DPP)

A proposed initiative in the EU, the DPP will require manufacturers to provide digital records for products, tracking their sustainability credentials from production to disposal. With 73% of consumers demanding greater transparency, this initiative could drive widespread adoption of traceability solutions.

Furniture manufacturers will need to digitize supply chain data and enhance sustainability reporting.



Challenges of sustainability in upholstered furniture

While sustainability is becoming a major priority for the upholstered furniture industry, manufacturers face several key challenges in transitioning toward more eco-friendly and responsible practices.

One of the most pressing issues is **recyclability**, as upholstered furniture is made of composite materials like foam, wood, and textiles that are difficult to separate and recycle. This leads to a large portion of furniture waste ending up in landfills, with **Europe alone generating 5 million tonnes annually**.

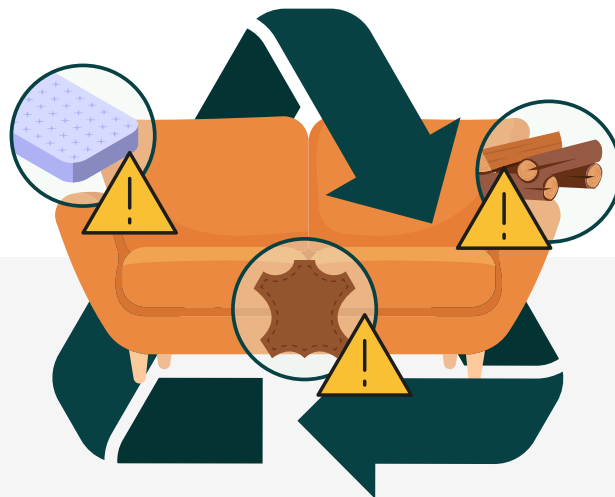
Another challenge is the **high cost of sustainable materials and processes**. Eco-friendly production methods and materials like responsibly sourced wood and low-emission adhesives are often more expensive, and implementing energy-efficient processes requires significant upfront investment, posing a barrier for manufacturers with tight profit margins.

Labor shortages also pose a significant hurdle in the transition to sustainability. As more companies adopt sustainable manufacturing techniques, there is a growing need for workers with expertise in eco-friendly production methods, materials science, and circular economy principles. However, skilled labor in this niche remains scarce, making it difficult for companies to scale their sustainability efforts effectively.

Beyond these challenges, **regulatory compliance and evolving sustainability standards** add further complexity, requiring manufacturers to constantly adapt to new reporting and traceability measures. While promoting responsible sourcing and transparency, these initiatives also demand more resources for compliance and supply chain adjustments. Companies that proactively address recyclability, cost efficiency, labor training, and regulatory adaptation will be best positioned for long-term success in the sustainable furniture market.

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is generated by Europe alone.



Recognized sustainability certifications for upholstered furniture

One of the most effective ways for manufacturers to navigate these sustainability challenges is by obtaining industry-recognized certifications. These certifications **help ensure compliance with evolving regulations, validate responsible sourcing, and support circular economy practices**, making it easier for businesses to implement sustainable solutions.

By meeting certification standards such as FSC, OEKO-TEX, and Cradle to Cradle, manufacturers can **demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, optimize material use, and enhance product credibility** in a competitive market. Here are some of the most recognized certifications and how they contribute to more sustainable furniture manufacturing:

01 —> FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)

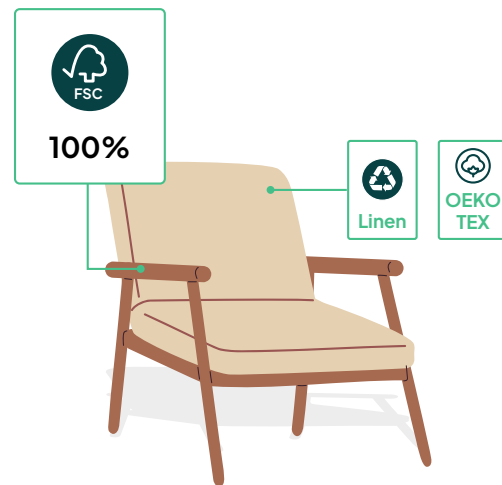
FSC certification ensures wood products are sourced from responsibly managed forests, reducing deforestation risks and ensuring ecological balance. As of today, more than 200 million hectares of forest are FSC-certified globally.

It promotes responsible forestry and biodiversity conservation while enabling manufacturers meet EU and US sustainability regulations.

02 —> OEKO-TEX® Standard 100

With over 16,000 companies certified worldwide, OEKO-TEX guarantees that upholstery textiles are free from harmful substances, ensuring consumer health and product safety.

It ensures compliance with global chemical safety standards, therefore building trust with environmentally conscious consumers.



03 —> Cradle to Cradle Certification

This certification promotes a circular economy by assessing a product's full lifecycle. Certified products are designed for reuse, recycling, and material recovery, helping reduce the 9 million tons of furniture waste generated annually.

This encourages closed-loop production cycles, supporting resource efficiency and long-term cost savings.

04 —> European Eco-label

This official EU certification evaluates products based on their entire lifecycle impact, from raw material sourcing to disposal. The label is currently applied to over 37,000 products across Europe.

It provides credibility and visibility in the EU market, helping manufacturers comply with sustainability directives.

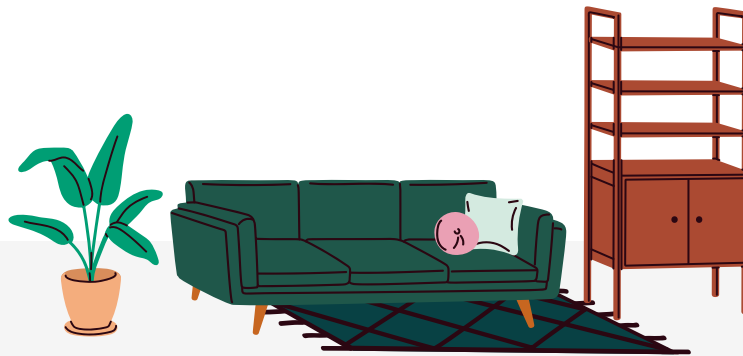
05 —> BIFMA LEVEL Certification

BIFMA LEVEL is a multi-attribute certification that assesses environmental, social, and economic sustainability across furniture products. Over 500 manufacturers have adopted this certification to showcase their commitment to sustainable business practices.

It enhances corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts, differentiating sustainable brands in the market.

Sustainability in the upholstered furniture industry is evolving rapidly, driven by regulatory requirements, consumer expectations, and the need for long-term environmental responsibility. **To stay competitive and compliant, manufacturers must adopt sustainable materials, embrace circular economy models, and obtain certifications that validate their efforts.**

By aligning with key regulations such as the EU Green Deal, EUDR, and California Proposition 65, and pursuing recognized certifications such as FSC and OEKO-TEX, businesses can demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and build trust with eco-conscious consumers.



Ultimately, sustainable practices not only benefit the environment but also **drive cost efficiency, improve product longevity, and foster brand loyalty.**

As the industry continues its transition, **those who proactively embrace these changes** will be best positioned for future success.

To find out more, read our white paper on
Sustainable upholstered furniture: what strategies and technologies?

[READ OUR WHITE PAPER](#)