

Companies Review for 'Bio-D Company'

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Bio-D Company

Turnover: £5.25 m

Address: Bio-D Company, Sales Account Manager, Unit 10, Marfleet Technology Park, Westgate Way, Hedon Rd, Hull, HU9 5LW, UK

Climate: 70/100 (26 March 2024)

On 26 March 2024, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Bio-D Company, looking for information on what the company was doing to tackle climate change. Its 2024 Impact Report was viewed.

Ethical Consumer was looking for companies with turnover under £50m to satisfy the following criteria:

1. A credible and detailed discussion of how it has made emissions cuts in the past and how it will make them in the future.
2. Does not work in developing new extraction fossil fuel projects, building new fossil fired power stations or in doing anything with coal.
3. Is not engaging in highly misleading public messaging on climate change.
4. Has not been subject to significant secondary criticism on what it is doing on the climate.

1b. The company had credible discussion of past action to cut emissions. It stated that over the past five years it had transferred from fossil fuelled electricity to solar power. It had reduced its gas carbon footprint to 0 and its electricity by 2/3. It stated that it was now feeding excess energy from its solar panels to the grid. It also stated it had reduced CO2 from waste by more than half and CO2 from business travel had reduced to a quarter. It also mentioned that it had switched from fluorescent to LED lighting in its warehouse.

(30 points)

1c. The company had credible discussion of future action to cut emissions. It stated that it would implement sensors on canteen and locker room lights and carry out a life cycle assessment of its powder packaging. It also mentioned further reduction in packaging size and increasing recycled content in labelling.

(30 points)

2. The company was not found to work in developing new fossil fuel projects or doing anything in coal.
3. The company did not appear to be engaged in prominent misleading messaging.
4. The company did not appear to be subject to significant and reputable criticism related to its climate impact.

Final scores are capped at either 0 or 100. Overall, Bio-D Company scored 70/100 for Climate. (ref: 1)

Workers: 70/100 (27 March 2024)

On 27 March 2024, Ethical Consumer viewed the Bio-D Company website for information on the treatment of workers in its supply chain. The following documents were consulted: a questionnaire returned by the company in 2021, a questionnaire returned by the company in April 2024, and the Code of Ethics and Business Conduct and the Child Labour and Young Workers policy.

For companies with turnover under £50m Ethical Consumer looked for:

1. whether all the company's products were secondhand.
2. what proportion of the company's products were Fairtrade certified or if it showed that it was using fair trade principles.
3. whether it had supply chain policy or criteria.
4. whether it published the names and addresses of suppliers.
5. other good practices in its supply chain such as long term relationships with suppliers, visiting suppliers to monitor workers' rights, manufacturing products in-house, showing that it operated only where risk of worker's rights abuses were low, or good payment practices.

The company had a more comprehensive supply chain policy, including 6 or more parts of the ETI base code.

- 1) no use of forced labour
- 2) freedom of association
- 3) payment of a living wage (eg 'basic needs and some discretionary income')
- 4) working week limited to 48 hours and 12 hours overtime (ETI exemption 6.5 applies)
- 5) eliminations of child labour (under 15 years old, or under 14 if country has ILO exemption)
- 6) no discrimination by race, sex etc
- 7) a safe and healthy working environment.
- 8) regular employment is offered.

It did not meet criterion 4.

(40 points).

No supplier list was found (0 points).

The company was seen to develop long term relationships with suppliers. It stated "The majority of the supplies we use have been trading with us for many years."

(20 points).

In its April 2024 questionnaire it stated that it manufactured some of its products in-house (10 points).

Final scores are capped at either 0 or 100. Overall, Bio-D Company scored 70/100 for Workers. (ref: 2)

Tax Conduct: 100/100 (27 March 2024)

On 27 March 2024, Ethical Consumer viewed records for Bio-D Company, looking for indications that it might be using tax havens for tax avoidance purposes. Its corporate family tree was viewed on the D&B Hoovers corporate database.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria:

1. That it had no subsidiaries on our list of tax havens, or had the Fair Tax Mark accreditation;

2. That it had not been subject to credible secondary criticism for tax avoidance.

If it did have subsidiaries in tax havens but did not have the Fair Tax Mark, Ethical Consumer was looking for evidence that these were clearly not for purposes of tax avoidance. Such evidence might include:

1. A clear public tax statement confirming that it is company policy not to engage in tax avoidance activity and a narrative explanation for what each subsidiary located in a tax haven is for, and how it was not being used for purposes of tax minimisation
2. Public country-by-country reporting of sales made and tax paid in each jurisdiction that does not show likely avoidance activities.

Bio-D Company was not certified by the Fair Tax accredited.

Bio-D Company had no subsidiaries based in jurisdictions on Ethical Consumer's tax havens list.

(100 points)

No third party criticisms for tax avoidance were found.

Final scores are capped at either 0 or 100. Overall, the company scored 100/100 for Tax Conduct. (ref: 3)

Company Ethos: 70/100 (18 April 2024)

On 18 April 2024 Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Bio-D Company in order to assess its company ethos. Ethical Consumer was looking at a number of factors, including: director pay, lobbying, company structure, and whether the company operated in any controversial sectors, such as arms/military. Its website, impact report 2024, and accounts made up to 30 June 2023 were viewed.

The company was a certified B Corporation. (20 points)

The company was providing a social or environmental alternative - and this was considered to be core to its business: it was certified Cruelty Free, Vegan, and central to its business was the promotion of refills, and it had developed a closed-loop recycling system for its bulk containers. (30 points)

The company did not appear to have positive approach to pay ratios. (0 points.)

Director remuneration could not be found, but the company had a turnover of under £50m so it was considered unlikely that any of its directors would receive more than £1m remuneration. (0 points.)

The company did not appear to be Living Wage certified. (0 points.)

The company was not found to be in any lobby groups.

The company was not involved in any sectors considered by Ethical Consumer to be highly controversial: arms/military, fossil fuels, mining, nuclear power/weapons. (20 points)

The company was not found to be subject to a progressive boycott call. (0 points)

Final scores are capped at either 0 or 100. Overall, Bio-D Company scored 70/100 for Company Ethos. (ref: 1)

Packaging: 80/100 (15 April 2024)

On 15 April 2024 Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Bio-D Company for details of what it was doing to reduce packaging, especially plastic packaging. Its website and sustainability report 2024 were viewed.

The company was found to reduce packaging in its own operations. In its questionnaire it stated: "20L containers are 30% PCR and we operate a Closed Loop system where customers and suppliers return the 20L for us to launder and reuse." (20 points)

No evidence could be found that the company had reduced packaging in its supply chain. The above quoted statement was taken as relating to Bio D's own operations. Ethical Consumer was looking for evidence that the company had a policy to reduce the packaging used by its suppliers (for example, by pressuring suppliers to reduce the packaging of raw materials supplied to Bio D), but this could not be found. (0 points.)

The company's packaging was primarily reusable, returnable, or unpackaged, and the remaining packaging was plastic free, but was made from virgin materials. The company offered a refill service and encouraged consumers to reuse plastic bottles. This appeared core to the company's offering. It stated:

"Though our refill range is available to buy from our website, we encourage customers to use refill stations in their local independent stores across the country to recycle and reuse their Bio-D bottles.

Our Closed Loop process via our wholesale partners has contributed to this great achievement and this is something we're really proud of! ... Even with those fantastic numbers, the whole team at Bio-D are always looking to innovate and improve. That's why – after crunching the numbers, fine tuning the process, and getting the okay from our team in the lab – we're happy to announce that the Closed Loop process for 20L containers is now rolled out to UK individual customers and UK independent stores to return just two or more 20L containers for our relaundering and refilling process."

It also had a 'plastic free range', such as soaps, which were packaged in cardboard, though the cardboard appeared to be made from virgin materials rather than recycled. (60 points.)

The company was not found to have taken any other significant steps to reduce the packaging of its products. (0 points.)

No significant and reputable third party criticisms were found.

Final scores are capped at either 0 or 100. Overall, Bio-D Company scored 80/100 for Packaging. (ref: 4)

Palm Oil: 80/100 (15 April 2024)

On 15 April 2024, Ethical Consumer searched for information on Bio-D Company's use of palm ingredients, as palm was widely used in food, household cleaning & personal care products. The mass production of palm oil has relied on the destruction of rainforests, which has wide ranging impacts including contributing to climate change, as well as loss of biodiversity and human rights.

To get a Best rating in this category, a large company (>£100m annual turnover) needs to have all palm oil and derivatives certified, for at least 50% of total ingredients to be from a physically certified supply chain, to publish a list of all its mills (with no problem ones appearing), and to publish an annually updated grievance list. The criteria are simpler for smaller companies.

The company was a non-food company, with a turnover under £10m, and all palm oil AND derivatives were certified RSPO or organic.

The company's palm oil policy was viewed. This stated "Because we do not believe in using synthetic ingredients we therefore choose natural or plant based options a few of which do have a percentage of palm oil. However, all ingredients that have an element of palm oil are carefully selected from suppliers who have the RSPO accreditation, ensuring the protection of the oil, the workers and the land".

(80 points)

The company sent a document that stated that the palm used in its hand soap bars was also certified organic.

Final scores are capped at either 0 or 100. Overall, Bio-D Company scored 80/100 for Palm Oil. (ref: 5)

Harmful Ingredients: 80/100 (18 April 2024)

N.B. This Ref was updated on 21/05/2024 at 11:25, after the last checked date for the company.

On 18 April 2024 Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Bio-D Company for details of its approach to phasing out harmful ingredients, notably: triclosan and triclocarban, parabens, phthalates, formaldehyde, and microplastics / poorly degradable liquid polymers. Its website and a questionnaire returned by the company in April 2024 were viewed.

Triclosan and triclocarban are antibacterials and suspected endocrine disruptors. Parabens are also endocrine disruptors and have been linked to breast cancer and are used as preservatives. Phthalates, usually DEP or DEHP, are used in fragrances and are endocrine disruptors. Formaldehyde and 'formaldehyde releasing' preservatives are linked to cancer, skin irritation, and respiratory harm. Some forms or uses of these chemicals are banned or restricted in the EU or the USA.

Ethical Consumer did not conduct a comprehensive search of all of the company's ingredients in its products, therefore it was assumed that if a company did not explicitly prohibit these substances, it was possible they were being used.

According to Beat the Microbead, there are more than 500 known microplastics ingredients that can be found in our personal care products such as toothpastes, face washes, scrubs and shower gels. They can also be found in makeup including mascara, lipstick and foundation. They are tiny plastic particles that are added for their exfoliating properties, but sometimes purely for aesthetic purposes only.

A recent report by Code Check found that poorly-biodegradable liquid polymers were also prevalent across a wide range of cosmetic products. Like microplastics, these materials degrade with a similar difficulty in the environment and may cause similar harm.

In 2018, the UK government banned the use of microbeads in toothpastes, shower gels and facial scrubs. However, some products classified as "leave on" were not subject to the ban, this would include lotions, sun cream and makeup, as well as abrasive cleaning products. This ban did not extend to poorly-biodegradable liquid polymers.

The company stated in its questionnaire response that it did not use triclosan. (20 points)

The company stated in its questionnaire response that it did not use parabens. (20 points)

The company stated in its questionnaire response that it did not use phthalates. (20 points)

The company stated in its questionnaire response that it did not use formaldehyde. (20 points)

The company stated in its questionnaire response that it did not use microplastics nor poorly-biodegradable liquid polymers: "No, all our ingredients are readily biodegradable". However, according to the company's website its dishwasher tabs were wrapped in a "Water soluble biodegradable film."

Ethical Consumer assumed this to be polyvinyl alcohol (PVA/PVOH) because this is the material generally used by brands to coat dishwasher tabs. An article about Bio-D on the Which? website dated 16th April 2024 stated "Bio-D's film is made of pVOH....The alternative to this is to use individual plastic wrapping around the tabs, which is hard to recycle, or a heavier laminated outer box, which is also hard to recycle as it is a multi-layered material. So Bio-D says its film is the best option for its product."

Polyvinyl alcohol was considered to be a poorly-biodegradable liquid polymer. (0 points)

Final scores are capped at either 0 or 100. Overall, Bio-D Company scored 80/100 for Harmful Ingredients. (ref: 6)

Animals: 100/100 (23 April 2024)

On 23 April 2024, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Bio-D Company and the website of its parent/company group, looking for information on the company's approach to animal testing and animal derivatives in its products.

The highest marks were awarded to companies with a fixed cut-off date (FCOD), a criteria which Leaping Bunny certification would meet. Some marks were awarded for companies that stated that they do not use animal-derived ingredients. Some marks were awarded for companies that had some policy, such as stating that no ingredients were tested on animals or that it only tested for medical or legal reasons etc. Companies received some marks for vague statements such as stating that they are opposed to animal testing.

The company was found to have a fixed cut-off date (FCOD) for all of its own brand products (and it didn't appear to retail any non-own brand products). It stated that all its offering was Leaping Bunny certified. (60 points)

The brand was found to have a policy which prohibited the use of animal-derived ingredients in its products: it stated that it was fully vegan. (40 points)

The company was not found to have received any third party criticisms dated within the last five years, therefore no points were deducted.

Final scores are capped at either 0 or 100. Overall, Bio-D Company scored 100/100 for Animals. (ref: 7)

References

- 1 - BIO-D Corporate Communications:<https://biod.co.uk> (26 March 2024)
- 2 - Bio-D Company Corporate Communications:Code Of Ethics And Business Conduct (2020)
- 3 - Hoovers 2024 www.dnb.com:Generic Hoovers ref 2024 (2 January 2024)
- 4 - Bio-D Company Corporate Communications:<https://biod.co.uk/blog/hints-tips/ways-to-recycle-with-bio-d/> (15 April 2024)
- 5 - Bio-D Company Corporate Communications:Palm oil policy (15 April 2024)
- 6 - Which?:<https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/shopping-sustainably/article/green-brands/green-brands-bio-d-a52Gz5r>
- 7 - Bio-D Company Corporate Communications:Questionnaire returned in April 2024 (18 April 2024)