Greetings!

**Green purchasing tips for tourism accommodation facilities**

Purchasing of green products minimizes on the intensity of environmental footprint and increases the operational sustainability of accommodation facilities. Green purchasing is generally defined as purchasing a product that has a lesser or reduced negative impact or increased positive impact on human health and the environment, when compared with competing products that serve the same purpose (NASPO green purchasing guide). It is also known as environmentally preferred purchasing (EPP), environmentally responsible purchasing, green procurement, affirmative procurement, and eco-procurement.

This week’s eco-byte shares tips on key considerations in green purchasing and its importance. Green purchasing minimizes negative environmental and social impacts through the use of environmentally friendly products. Purchasing “green” products is cost effective, addresses the problems of persistent toxic substances in the environment, conserves natural resources, and reduces the quantity of solid waste generation.

**What are the benefits of green purchasing?**

- Improved brand image- by using green products a facility increases its competitiveness in the industry, and is highly ranked as compared to the facilities that do not use the eco-friendly products.
- Increased customer satisfaction and retention- most guests prefer staying at green facilities as they have become more eco-conscious. Using green products will also help boost your business profits through cost reduction.
- Cost reduction- Using green products can reduce costs on; hazardous material management, operations, repair and replacement, disposal and health & safety. Also, purchasing products in bulk reduces waste disposal costs.
- Effective risk management- using green products minimizes environmental risks such as water and land contamination, and waste management costs.
What are the key considerations in green purchasing?

- **The environmental qualities of products**

Ensure that the products do not release persistent toxic substances into the environment during operation and disposal. Consider purchasing certified organic produce and bio-degradable products such as bio-degradable cleaning & laundry detergents and bathroom shower products & toiletries. The products should contain minimal amounts of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). They should not contain chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), Freon, mercury or lead as these are toxic to the environment.

Bio-degradable chemicals such as detergents and shower products are usually accompanied by Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). This is a document that contains information on the product (e.g. ingredients and properties), potential hazards (environmental, health and reactivity), how to use the product safely, use, storage, handling and emergency procedures in the handling of the chemicals. MSDSs are prepared by the manufacturer or supplier of the material. As a facility, always confirm you have a copy of these data sheets which should be delivered together with the supply. Also ensure your employees are trained on the same.

The products should be efficient in energy and resource conservation during production, use and disposal. Purchase products that have a long life cycle, this minimizes on the costs used in the repair of spoilt products that usually have a short life cycle. Always consider purchasing products from companies that have environmental credentials, environmental management systems or participate in government pollution prevention programs.

Ecotourism Kenya has a Green Directory that profiles green service and product providers which is available in our website and within our publications and/or upon request.

- **The recycling and reuse quality of products**

Give preference to products made from recycled materials or renewable resources used in a sustainable way. Items with recyclable content include paper, packaging materials, plastic, glass and metal. Give preference to companies that reclaim or take back items such as plastic bottles, batteries, electronics, or carpeting at the end of the product's useful life.

**Green tip:** Where possible, influence your plastic bottles company supplier to take back their plastic waste for re-use/recycling each time they supply your facility with their products. This will not only reduce your burden and costs on disposal, but will also ensure the supplier takes responsibility of their waste.

- **Products that use minimal packaging**

Purchase products in bulk to avoid individual wrapping of items and then place/store them in reusable containers/receptors, to minimize waste resulting from packaging (e.g. dry goods such as
sugar, rice, flour, beans etc.) Consider purchasing the products from suppliers that are committed to the environmental improvement and protection. You can also reduce waste by asking your suppliers to pack materials in reusable or recyclable containers.

**Green tip:** If possible, reduce or eliminate purchasing disposable items such as individually packaged soaps, shower products, shampoos, individually wrapped butter, jam and milk portions (*illustration example below*).

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Implementing green purchasing policies is an important strategy in ensuring that your facility complies with the set environmental regulations. It is important to provide adequate information about green purchasing and its importance to the staff since they are directly involved in the procurement of products and services. Encouraging and supporting employees to search for products that meet the specifications can also help in the success of a green purchasing program.

*It’s smart to be responsible!*