

FAIRPHONE

Fairphone

Fairphone operates at a much smaller scale than the rest of the companies in the Guide, and in its brief history has offered only two versions of a single product, the Fairphone smartphone. Fairphone set out to try to solve many of the IT sector's toughest and most important problems: design a phone and a supply chain to build it that does not exploit its workers or the planet. While Fairphone has not established the level of corporate-wide reporting and commitments to address the environmental impacts of its supply chain that larger companies have, Fairphone has made important breakthroughs in modular design that make it easy to repair and upgrade, in contrast to recent designs by Samsung and other large smartphone manufacturers that are heading in the opposite direction. Fairphone currently only sells its smartphones in the European market, though has aspirations of expanding beyond.

Renewable Energy & Climate Change

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TRANSPARENCY. Fairphone has greatly added to its supply chain transparency by creating an online map of its supply chain.¹ While Fairphone does not publish corporate-level greenhouse gas emissions, it has produced a very detailed life-cycle analysis (LCA) for the Fairphone 2, which includes detailed emissions estimates for its only product, including breakdown of major components and final assembly.² Fairphone requests energy data from its suppliers, though has received such data only from its final assembly supply partner. Fairphone should ultimately report its energy footprint at a corporate level, including amount of renewable energy used to manufacture its products, but the level of detail and transparency in the LCA of its sole product currently provides significant insight into Fairphone's energy footprint.

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COMMITMENT. Although Fairphone does not set a GHG reduction goal or renewable energy commitment at a corporate level as many of the larger companies do, the company is committed to using a lifecycle analysis approach to manage sourcing and selection of materials, to avoid trade offs/burden shifting unintentionally. Fairphone should set more concrete goals for addressing its GHG emissions and recognize the opportunity to play an influential role both through its own procurement and through collaboration and policy advocacy to shift its supply chain away from coal and toward renewable sources of energy.

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PERFORMANCE. Fairphone's modular product design has been deliberately geared to reduce the carbon footprint of its product, enabling longer product life by making it easy to repair the device, and also making it possible to upgrade the phone to extend its usefulness. Fairphone's recent offering of an upgradable camera modules represents a major step forward in reducing the carbon impact of smartphones by extending product life. According to Fairphone, extending product use from three to five years reduces the carbon footprint by 30%.³ Fairphone also has sought to reduce the carbon footprint of its smartphones by making some accessories such as cables optional rather than included in purchase by default.

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ADVOCACY. No evidence found of positive or negative advocacy.

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Sustainable Design & Resource Reduction

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TRANSPARENCY. With the publication of a very detailed life cycle analysis, Fairphone has set a high bar on reporting the resource consumption involved in the production of its smartphone.⁴ Fairphone also recently published a detailed materiality assessment of its phones, providing a prioritization of opportunities for having an impact on the supply chain of 10 priority materials.⁵ This assessment includes an analysis of the best recycling methods to recover the most material while also generating the least amount of emissions.

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COMMITMENT. Fairphone's goals to improve product longevity and to improve both recycling of electronics and sourcing of recycled and closed-loop materials for its devices are central to its business model and differentiation in the marketplace.⁶ Fairphone's materiality assessment identified 10 priority materials for the development of more detailed roadmap for addressing the impact of materials going into its devices. Fairphone also commits to provide spare parts and repair manuals for its products directly to the end user.

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PERFORMANCE: CIRCULAR PRODUCTION. Along with Dell, Fairphone has shown early leadership in establishing a sustainable material supply. Fairphone currently reports using 50% of recycled plastic and tungsten.⁷ In addition to securing certification for tantalum, tin, and tungsten "conflict minerals," Fairphone has taken extra steps to secure a fair trade certified supply of gold for its devices.⁸ Fairphone has a take-back program for all of EU for its products and expressly identifies where recycled phones will be sent. Additional progress on the ten materials identified in its own materiality assessment will put pressure on global manufacturers to rethink the "take, make, waste" model that has been difficult to displace.

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PERFORMANCE: PRODUCT LIFE EXTENSION. The Fairphone 2's modular design allows the end user to easily replace commonly failing or damaged components at a low cost, and most importantly, without having to replace the entire phone, as evidenced by Fairphone 2 scoring 10/10 on the iFixit repairability rating system. Fairphone's recent offering of upgradable camera modules represents a major step forward in reducing the carbon impact of smartphones by extending product life.⁹ Fairphone makes repair manuals and spare parts directly available to its customers, further facilitating maintaining its devices for long life.

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ADVOCACY. Though much smaller in economic size than other companies in the Guide, Fairphone has been among the most active in pushing for policies and standards to raise the bar on minerals procurement, supporting both the adoption of conflict mineral legislation in the EU¹⁰ and also supporting the adoption of more stringent due diligence procurement standards in the Netherlands.¹¹

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Hazardous Chemical Elimination: Products & Supply Chain

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TRANSPARENCY. Fairphone publishes restrictions on hazardous chemicals inside its devices including phthalates, brominated flame retardants, and halogenated flame retardants.¹² Fairphone should follow the lead of larger brands and publish a complete restricted substances list for both product and process chemicals with thresholds that cannot be exceeded by its suppliers.

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COMMITMENT. Fairphone has eliminated those hazardous materials from within product as required by Rohs, and have fully eliminated PVC, and largely eliminated BFR, HFRs, and phthalates. On manufacturing process chemicals, Fairphone has thus far committed to eliminate benzene and n-hexane from use in final assembly.¹³ Fairphone should adopt more explicit commitments to prioritize the elimination or substitution of hazardous chemicals from the manufacturing process.

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Hazardous Chemical Elimination... (continued)

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PERFORMANCE. In addition to the elimination of certain classes of hazardous chemicals, Fairphone has sought work directly with its suppliers to limit the amount of overtime of workers in its suppliers, or hiring of temporary workers, both of which can undermine worker safety and increase the exposure risks from workplace chemicals.

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ADVOCACY. Fairphone is part of the Clean Electronics Production Network (CEPN) with a goal to move toward zero exposure of workers to toxic chemicals in the electronics manufacturing process.¹⁴

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ENDNOTES

1 <https://www.fairphone.com/en/how-we-work/mapping-phone-made/>

2 https://www.fairphone.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Fairphone_2_LCA_Final_20161122.pdf

3 <https://www.fairphone.com/en/upgrade-fairphone2-camera/>

4 https://www.fairphone.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Fairphone_2_LCA_Final_20161122.pdf

5 <https://www.fairphone.com/en/2017/02/01/fairer-materials-a-list-of-the-next-10-were-taking-on/>

6 <https://www.fairphone.com/en/our-goals/>

7 <https://www.fairphone.com/en/2016/06/20/fairphone-2-good-vibrations-with-conflict-free-tungsten-2/>

8 <https://www.fairphone.com/en/2016/01/27/how-we-got-fairtrade-certified-gold-in-the-fairphone-2-supply-chain/>

9 <https://www.fairphone.com/en/upgrade-fairphone2-camera/>

10 <https://www.fairphone.com/en/2017/03/21/new-eu-conflict-mineral-legislation/>

11 <https://www.fairphone.com/en/2017/06/21/fairphone-wants-to-increase-supply-of-fair-gold/>

12 <https://support.fairphone.com/hc/en-us/articles/215392683-How-about-hazardous-materials->

13 <https://support.fairphone.com/hc/en-us/articles/215392683>

14 <https://www.greenamerica.org/media-mention/us-network-targets-solvent-and-adhesive-alternatives-electronics>