

ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Executive Summary

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Green Public Procurement (GPP) is recognized as a key driver for transitioning towards sustainable consumption and production. The government's substantial purchasing power can significantly influence market dynamics by increasing the demand for green products and services, encouraging suppliers and the private sector to adopt more sustainable practices.

The Philippine government, through the Government Public Policy Board (GPPB), has been integrating GPP strategies into its current public procurement infrastructure. The GPP Roadmap was instituted in 2017 to identify 20 products and develop the green criteria for each. Through the Philippine Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production (PAP4SCP), GPP is powering the greening of infrastructure and markets through identified strategies for short- (2022-2023), medium- (2024-2030), and long-term (2031-2040) goals.

However, challenges remain in integrating GPP in current public procurement practices. Key issues include the need for more defined implementation guidelines, stronger alignment of government procurement policies with ecolabeling programs, mechanisms to enhance private sector engagement in green procurement, creation of a consumer-friendly online directory for green products, and the need for consistent periodic policy review.

This policy brief offers these recommendations: (1) ensuring a clear implementation pathway for GPP; (2) recognition of ecolabels in government procurement; (3) incentivizing the private sector to adopt green procurement; (4) enhancing online directory for green products; and (5) adoption of MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning) framework in periodic policy reviews.

Keywords: sustainable consumption and production, SDG12, sustainable procurement

Background

Green public procurement (GPP) has been identified as a catalyst in sustainable transitions. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, GPP can shape market demands to foster transformation towards consumption of green products, thereby reducing environmental impacts and promoting resource efficiency.

Green Public Procurement

The Commission of European Communities defines GPP as the process by which the government and its enterprises choose and procure goods, services, and works that will have a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle (Commission of the European Communities, 2008). Green practices can be integrated within the regular procurement process. As suggested by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), five of the ten steps in the environmental procurement—Procurement Planning (Step 1), Requirement Definition (Step 2), Sourcing (Step 3), Evaluation (Step 7), and Contract Management (Step 10)—can integrate sustainable interventions (UNEP, 2011).

In the Philippines, the government is a major economic consumer with public procurement accounting for 10 to 20% of GDP (GPPB, 2017). This implies that the government's purchasing power can be a catalyst in shaping a green market through sustainable demands for goods and services, therefore encouraging suppliers to adopt greener production, supplies, and processes. The Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB), governing the body for public procurement's direction and policy in the Philippines, claims that green practice will be incorporated gradually into the current "state-of-the-art" procurement system, making a sustainable public procurement will contribute to the sustainable national development plans (GPPB, 2017).

Over the past two decades, the government has attempted to include green or sustainable programs in the public procurement framework and legislation. Initial efforts of *Executive Order No. 301/2004* conflicted with Republic Act 9184 (2002) or the Government Procurement Reform Act of 2003, or the modernization of the government's procurement process, with brand names forbidden during bidding as well as the usage of eco-labels (GPPB, 2017). Subsequent support for GPP/SPP came in through GPPB Resolution No. 15 series of 2013 (2013).

In 2017, the GPP Roadmap incorporated green practices focusing on the purchasing of common-use supplies and equipment (CSE) and non-common-use supplies and equipment (non-CSE), based on green criteria and technical specifications. Currently, only about 10 out of 297 CSE items, which includes multi-copy papers, toilet papers, record books, cleaners, chairs, disinfectant sprays, trash bags, liquid hand soaps, detergent powder, and LED light bulbs, are identified as suitable for GPP and have a defined selection criterion and technical specifications. Additionally, 10 non-CSE categories, including computer monitors, desktop computers, laptops and copiers; air conditioners; fridges and freezers; toilets and urinals; vehicles; services of training facilities and hotels, food and catering services; paints and varnishes; textiles, uniforms, and work clothes, are suitable for GPP.

GPP was further included in the 2017-2022 and 2023-2028 Philippine Development Plans, with the latter strengthening the implementation of green public procurement (National Economic and Development Authority, 2023). In 2023, the latest RA 12009 IRR commits to GPP in procurement procedures through environmental, social, and economic criteria. Please see the comparative table between RA 9184, Presidential EO 301/2004, and RA 12009.

Table 1. Comparative table between RA 9184, Presidential EO 301/2004, and RA 12009.

Republic Acts and Executive Orders	Law's Relevance	Strengths	Conflict Points
<p>Republic Act No. 9184 Government Procurement Reform Act (GRPA 2003) An Act Providing for the Modernization, Standardization, and Regulation of the Procurement Activities of the Government and for Other Purposes</p> <p>Sources: The Philippine Green Public Procurement Roadmap: Advancing GPP until 2022 and beyond (2017); The updated 2016 revised implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act No. 9184 (2024); and Republic Act 9184: Government Procurement Reform Act (2002).</p>	<p>Improve the previous public procurement legal framework in the country</p>	<p>The GRPA has included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of manuals for standardized bidding documents and processes 2. Using the approved Budget for the contract as the basis for bid prices 3. Implementing competitive bidding is implemented 4. Introduction of procurement training and certifying procurement officers 5. Implementing electronic procurement 6. Observers may participate in the procurement process 7. Availability of penalties and sanctions for violations 	<p>RA 9184 prohibits the use of brand names in bidding documents as it limits competition.</p>

<p>Presidential EO 301/2004 Establishing a green procurement program for all departments, bureaus, offices, and agencies of the executive branch of government</p> <p>Source: Executive Order No. 301, s. 2004 (2004)</p>	<p>The Executive Order first introduced green practices in public procurement. It recognizes the government's role as a leader in protecting the environment, emphasizing environmentally informed decisions in government.</p>	<p>Presidential EO 301/2004 includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each government entity (department, office, and agency) is to establish a green procurement program. 2. Each agency needs to submit its green procurement program to the national ecolabeling program board (ELPB) within 6 months, including an 18-month timetable of full implementation. ELPB needs to submit compliance and performance reports of the agencies to the Office of the President. 3. ELPB to provide a certified list of environmentally sound products. 4. DTI to ensure allocation of funds for the operations of the ecolabeling program of the Philippines. 	<p>The presidential EO 301/2004 had a conflict with the ongoing reform of the public procurement process (GRPA 2003) when it comes to the use of brand names. Limited evidence of the execution of the executive order.</p>
<p>Republic Act 12009: New Government Procurement Act. An act revising Republic Act No. 9184. Otherwise known as the "government procurement reform act". And for other purposes.</p> <p>Sources: Republic Act No. 12009 (2023); The implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act No. 12009 or the New Government Procurement Act (2025); GPPB-TSO (2024).</p>	<p>The Republic Act promotes the ideal of good governance and strengthens government procurement. The purpose of RA 12009 is to revise RA 9184</p>	<p>Revision to RA9184 includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduces a dynamic procurement framework that will fit the purpose of the procurement entities throughout the introduction of a variety of procurement methods, showcasing a fit-for-purpose approach. 2. Allowing PE to choose pragmatic approaches to meet their specific needs. 3. GPPB may authorize modifications procurement process and be flexible to the adoption of modern and emerging technologies. 4. RA 12009 IRR included a sustainable public procurement and green public procurement strategy. 	<p>RA 12009 IRR does not explicitly prohibit or mention the use of eco-labels as part of the procurement process. Rather, RA 12009 discusses the use of an expansive approach in incorporating environmental considerations in preparing procurement process.</p>

National Ecolabelling Program

The National Ecolabeling Programme - Green Choice Philippines (NELP-GCP) is managed by the Philippine Center for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development, Inc. (PCEPSDI). It is a voluntary, third-party certifying body that provides a certificate of adherence and compliance to product standards after a testing and verification process. It encourages producers and service providers to adopt cleaner production processes and offer environment-friendly products. With the "Seal of Approval", it gives guidance to consumers in choosing products that pose minimal risk to the environment.

There are three types of ecolabeling certification. Type I is considered as "classic" ecolabel that identifies products and evaluates their adherence to environmental quality

standards in the same category. This is awarded by a third-party ecolabel certifying body. Type I is designed to be consumer-friendly, as it gives assurance of meeting quality standards through recognizable logos (e.g. energy star, organic). Type II ecolabel is self-declared environmental claims made by an organization and focuses on a specific product quality (e.g. compostable, recyclable). Type III ecolabel contain environmental declarations that provide quantifiable life cycle data (e.g. energy use) and is based on Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). It details the environmental impact of a product from cradle to grave (ISO, n.d.; Ecosystems United, n.d.). NELP-GCP awards Type I ecolabel certification and has certified products under the following categories: ceramic tiles, tissue paper, synthetic laundry detergent, food service, and packaging. Currently, it has developed 45 product and service criteria that provide certification and recertification guidance to interested organizations (PCEPSDI, n.d.).

Together with GPP initiatives, NELP-GCP has a crucial role in the country's journey towards sustainable consumption and production.

Achieving Sustainable Consumption and Production Through GPP

The Philippines is committed to the achievement of SDG 12 targets. In the Philippine Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production (PAP4SCP), GPP is cited as an initiative for greening infrastructure and markets. PAP4SCP serves an overarching national roadmap for the government in advocating for sustainable consumption and production (SCP), which is the focus of SDG 12. Authored by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) in cooperation with various agencies and stakeholders, it aims to promote Philippines' long-term vision of a "Matatag, Maginhawa at Panatag na Buhay" for all Filipinos by integrating consideration for social and environmental impacts into the economic system.

PAP4SCP outlines policy reforms and actionable strategies to be implemented over short- (2022-2023), medium- (2024-2030), and long-term (2031-2040). Specifically, it integrates GPP in the following outcomes and goals (PAP4SCP, 2023), please see Table 2.

Table 2. Sub-Outcome 2: Natural resources are efficiently used and equitably allocated

<i>Intermediate Outcome 2.1: Innovation and investment in green technologies and systems increased</i>			
	Short-term (2022-2023)	Medium-term (2024-2030)	Long-term (2031-2040)
Policy and Regulation	Integrate green criteria in the procurement guidelines, bidding documents, and technical specifications	Strengthen the ecolabelling program & other green certification schemes	Review and evaluate policy implementation
Promotion and Education		Encourage companies to green their supply chains and adopt green procurement Develop an online directory for ecolabeled products	

POLICY ISSUES

Assessing Short-term Goals

PAP4SCP prescribes the integration of green criteria in the government public procurement guidelines, bidding documents, and technical specifications, for the period of 2022 to 2023. The green criteria have been dutifully integrated in the public procurement guidelines, with a focus on ten (10) CSEs and ten (10) non-CSEs. It leveraged on the existing structures of the Department of Budget and Management Procurement System by highlighting these 20 products in the procurement process. GPPB monitors the adoption of green specifications in the procurement of

The technical specifications of these 20 products have been created under the GPPB – Technical Support Office (GPPB-TSO) and was developed through the support of the European Union. It provides details on the criteria, considerations, and the processes for developing GPP technical specifications with consideration for the environmental impact of products throughout their lifecycle, material composition, use, and disposal; market readiness; cost implications; and support for government objectives and local economy (Kahleborn et al., 2017)

Currently, the Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management (PS-DBM) is spearheading efforts to review and update existing Common-Use Supplies and Equipment (CSE) Technical Specifications to align with environmental, social, and economic sustainability standards, as the current criteria focuses heavily on environmental specifications. As of September 2024, PS-DBM reported having 29 CSE items with green specifications in their product catalog, with plans to integrate green specifications for 25 more CSE items through the technical assistance of GIZ (Philippine Government Procurement Policy Board – GPPB, 2024).

Achieving this short-term goal lays the framework for the roadmap towards achieving medium-term goals. However, what is lacking is the mechanism for implementation and evaluation for it to carry over to the succeeding years. Medium-term goals already shift the focus to the ecolabeling program and the participation of the private sector. While this is warranted, proper implementation of the green criteria within the government agencies at the national, regional, provincial, and local levels still needs to be operationalized and spelled out so GPPB can ensure that the Procuring Entities are properly trained and guided in adhering to the green procurement of CSEs and non-CSEs.

The EO 301/2004 mandates that all government departments and agencies submit their individual green procurement programs to the National Ecolabelling Program Board, which in turn submits these reports to Office of the President (see Table 1). In contrast, RA 12009 does not explicitly require the same submissions. Instead, it merely encourages the adoption of green criteria in the procurement process. With limited publicly available data, the actual adoption rate of government agencies of green public procurement is hard to find.

Assessing Medium-term Goals

The medium-term goals of the Philippines' plan for sustainable consumption and production included objectives for policy, regulation, promotion, and education. RA No. 19002 mandates that public procurement should consider responsible and sustainable consumption and production practices.

However, despite the objectives presented by PAP4SCP, current public procurement practices show weak alignment in achieving these goals, and there remains a lack of clear guidelines for their implementation. For instance, the medium-term goal is to strengthen ecolabeling programs and other green certification schemes; however, the government's commitment to ecolabels in public procurement remains inconsistent, as this is not explicitly mentioned in RA 12009, which is the latest and revised procurement act. Despite the acknowledgment of eco-labels as one of the best practices in GPP, and there are directives for adoption, GPPB identified ecolabels to be problematic, complicated, and contradictory to national legislations (GPPB, 2017). While the PDP 2023-2028 mentions ecolabelling and green certification, it does not explicitly state the use in public procurement. Currently, NELP-GCP, overseen by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), drives ecolabelling in the country. However, there is no formal coordination between GPPB and NELP-GCP, despite the need to expand the list of green CSEs and non-

CSEs with green technical specifications— an area where NELP-GCP could play a critical role. Furthermore, the IRR for Republic Act No. 12009 (2025) does not refer to ecolabel rather the use of 'green specifications' as procurement criteria.

Second, the goal of encouraging companies to green their supply chains and adopt green procurement practices lacks a regulatory framework and enforcement mechanisms to encourage voluntary engagement. Although the government acknowledges its purchasing power to encourage a green market, one persistent challenge is market readiness. RA 12009 mandates the development of a cost-efficient, accessible, affordable, and aligned with the best practices program for the validation and certification of green products through the DTI. However, clearer guidelines are necessary to ensure implementation.

Third, the objective of developing an online directory for ecolabeled products has been partially achieved through the NELP-GCP website. RA no 19002 also mandates an up-to-date directory of green local vendors. However, the current website is not user-friendly, limiting effectiveness in promoting sustainable procurement.

Assessing Long-term Goals

The long-term goal focuses on the review and evaluation of policy implementation and is stated to happen from 2031 to 2040. While review and evaluation are necessary actions in the implementation of policy interventions, the timing appears to be too late. The proposed action will happen after the implementation measures from 2022 to 2030 (eight years), and the review and evaluation will take place for nine years. Several risks may arise from delayed reviews and evaluations. First, if review and evaluation are done after a long period, there is no opportunity to adjust the interventions or address the issues that may arise from its implementation. In an earlier report, several challenges have been identified: lack of GPP awareness, partial compliance to GPP criteria, lack of market readiness, and lack of technical expertise as a result of the high turnover rate in GPPB (APRSCP and SWITCH-Asia, 2022). These have not been addressed in more recent documents. Second, reviews play a critical role in informing decision-making, generating high-quality data, and providing matching recommendations; delayed or untimely evaluations will increase risks of missing real-time data, postponing the identification of issues that need to be addressed, and deferring recommendations needed for the timely improvement of program delivery (OECD, 2025).

Therefore, there is no need for a long period of review to nine years. What it needs is a periodic and consistent review and evaluation to achieve GPP implementation successfully.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To align green public procurement with the PAP4SCP goals, here are some policy recommendations.

First, ensure that there is a clear pathway for the implementation of GPP. Action-oriented tactical strategies focusing on GPP implementation at the national, regional, provincial, and local levels can ensure adherence to GPP standards. Develop goals that are measurable and attainable, but flexible and adaptable. This means that processes with specific steps, as well as rigorous training of Procuring Entities, need to be carried out to strategically align with green criteria.

Second, to strengthen the ecolabeling program and other green certification schemes, these should be formally recognized by future government procurement policies. Although generally viewed as voluntary programs, ecolabels and green certification were already recognized in EO 301/2004 as important catalysts in green public procurement; however, the lack of recognition and statement in RA 12009 IRR (2025), ecolabels are not being utilized even as an alternative. In the objective of RA 12009, which is to encourage the use of a pragmatic procurement process or fit-for-purpose approach to the needs of the procurement entities, ecolabels could be considered as an alternative to product technical specifications that procurement entities may use.

Divergent views have led several countries to actively support ecolabels and green certifications, while some remain ambivalent. EcoAdvance and One Planet Network (2024) present a series of case studies showcasing good practices in the use of eco-labels and sustainable public procurement from several countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, France, Japan, South Korea, the United States, Thailand, and China. These countries have aligned their public procurement criteria to their existing ecolabels and green environmental certifications. The series highlights the ecolabel practice, which will benefit not only in the government strategies but also contributes to educating consumers and companies about sustainability.

Therefore, the Philippines' public procurement process may utilize ecolabels and green certification as an alternative or

complementary basis in product evaluations, along with the traditional green technical specifications in the procurement process. Since ecolabels and green certifications pass through a green check (by local or international certification bodies), any certified product could serve as a pre-validated assurance that the product meets environmental standards. This also makes it easier to recognize products that meet specific green technical specifications rather than manually verifying each specification.

Another strategy that can be applied is the collaboration between GPPB and NELP-GCP through DTI in standardizing ecolabels to be used for public procurement. Since GPPB is only focusing on the integration of GPP by including green parameters and criteria in the technical specifications of CSE, and the professionalization of Procurement Management Officers, GPPB must speed up in writing green technical specifications for the rest of the CSEs. The collaboration could allow GPPB to provide guidelines to NELP-GCP that would help speed the public procurement process concerning the technical specifications of products. The collaboration will also allow NELP-GCP to help expand the current list of green CSE and non-CSE items under GPPB. This collaboration could strengthen the green procurement guidelines at the same time as ecolabelling processes, ensuring alignment of the procurement process of GPPB with PAP4SCP.

Third, to encourage private companies to adopt green procurement, a strong incentive policy should be created. A strong green demand could encourage private companies to adopt green business practices. However, such practices are perceived to be expensive, such as going for certification. Incentives could be beneficial, as well as lower barriers for private companies to consider adopting green practices, especially for small and medium enterprises. Best practices from the European Union (European Environmental Bureau, 2024), Japan Green Purchasing Law (Ministry of the Environment, 2016), and the Green Labelling Scheme by Singapore (Singapore Environment Council, n.d.) incorporate incentives such as favoring, prioritizing, and recognizing ecolabeled products during public procurement. This, therefore, attracts private companies to seek ecolabels and certification to avail of government projects more easily.

In providing practical recommendations in the Philippines, NELP-GCP or DTI may provide financial incentives, like discounted certification fees, to private companies seeking certification for their products. GPPB then may incorporate additional points in procurement evaluations for companies

or products meeting green technical specifications or having certifications or ecolabels as compared to competitors. These could be included in the NELP-GCP and GPPB partnership to provide a consistent incentive among private suppliers.

Fourth, in developing and improving an online directory for ecolabel products and green suppliers, NELP-GCP needs to improve its current website for easier navigation. Currently, the website contains five categories of awarded products (i.e., ceramic tiles, tissue paper products, synthetic laundry detergent, food service establishments, and packaging products), whereas its GCP criteria page contains 45 criteria for products and services. The regular update of new awarded products, plus improving the layout through seeking professional advice, enhances the effectiveness of the webpage to those who are seeking information.

Meanwhile, the current government procurement portal called PhilGEPS contains the list of CSE and non-CSE with technical specifications. However, PS-PhilGEPS Executive Director Jose Tomas Syquia suggestion of a GPP portal to be incorporated (Procurement Service, 2016) is yet to be achieved. To streamline the development of GPP portal, PhilGEPS website could be linked to NELP-GCP's website, where the integration may be effective in access to ecolabel products, green technical specifications, and a list of certified and accredited green suppliers.

And lastly, periodic review and evaluation should be executed consistently. The MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning) framework may be adopted by PS-DBM to systematically track progress, assess effectiveness, promote accountability among stakeholders, and ensure continuous learning for improvement. This is a cyclical process that involves (American Evaluation Association, n.d.):

- **Monitoring** – This covers continuous and systematic data collection related to GPP implementation to track progress and compare with targets, identify pain points, and enact adjustments for improvement.
- **Evaluation** – This focuses on objective assessment of design, implementation, and results of GPP implementation. This may be carried out in different stages through surveys and/or focus group discussions with stakeholders.
- **Accountability** – Transparency and responsiveness are crucial in any policy intervention, and this phase ensures ethical conduct in GPP implementation.

- **Learning** – Reflection on evaluation findings can help identify best practices and provide an understanding of what works, what does not, and why.

Conducting MEAL can ensure evidence-based decision-making and timely, effective, and efficient program improvements.

CONCLUSION

GPPB's approach to GPP, among others, is to incorporate green technical specifications among its CSEs and identify sustainable products in the market. It also claims that public procurement adheres to responsible and sustainable consumption and production practices. The PAP4SCP discusses short-term (2022-2023), medium-term (2024-2030), and long-term (2031-2040) goals for the Philippines in terms of achieving sustainable consumption and production. The integration of green practices in public procurement is critical in promoting sustainable consumption and production.

However, the existing goals of PAP4SCP and recent legislation and frameworks on GPP have exposed some policy issues, specifically in alignment and implementation. First, by the end of the allotted timeline for the short-term goals, the goals were partially achieved, and there is a lack of concrete implementation and evaluation mechanisms; this makes it difficult to operationalize GPP across the government levels. Second, medium-term goals challenges include unclear integration of ecolabels in public procurement policies, absence of formal collaborations between the government and ecolabeling bodies, weak encouragement for businesses to follow green production, and limited functionality of the online green product directories. Third, the long-term goal of reviewing and evaluating policies, scheduled from 2031 to 2024, is deemed to be delayed and prolonged; this pose missed opportunities to address arising and ongoing challenges in procurement processes. These identified policy issues reduce the effectiveness of GPP at the same time, minimizing the achievement of the PAP4SCP goals.

Actionable policy recommendations are suggested to help align GPP with the goals of the PAP4SCP. Recommendations include developing a clear, actionable roadmap at all government levels with measurable objectives, along with training of the procuring entities; strengthening the role of ecolabels in procurement policies; and fostering collaboration between GPPB and NELC-GCP to streamline not only the

ecolabeling and certification process but also development of green technical specifications for CSEs and non-CSEs. To engage private businesses to go with green production and encourage the green market, an incentive mechanism could be introduced. Improving the usability of online directories and the public procurement system will also be critical for easier access to green products; this could be achieved by linking NELP-GCP and PhilGEPS online systems. Finally, adopting a MEAL framework will ensure consistent review and evaluation of the improvements in GPP implementation over time. Through these recommendations, the government, with its purchasing power, may unlock its potential to drive and transform a sustainable or green market and help in achieving the medium and long-term sustainability goals.

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