

SustainCheck

Indicator analysis: ISO 9001:2015

For the SustainScore

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Indicator: ISO 9001:2015

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How to read this document

ISO 9001:2015 is an indicator for the SustainScore. An indicator is a label, certificate, standard, commitment, rating or similar instrument that says something about a company's sustainability.

The analysis sets out to determine two things:

- Which ESG subcategories of the SustainScore does ISO 9001:2015 affect? (chapter 3)
- Which score applies to each possible outcome, per subcategory affected? That follows from the requirements (chapter 3) and the assurance (chapter 4), and is set out in chapter 5.

ISO 9001 is a quality management system, not an environmental or human-rights standard. SustainCheck only includes a valid certificate, not mere implementation of the standard. ISO itself says certification is not required in order to use ISO 9001 (source 1, source 2).

1. Identity

This chapter says what ISO 9001:2015 is, what does and does not fall under that name, and which outcomes a company can have.

1.1 Official name

Official name: ISO 9001:2015, Quality management systems. Requirements (source 1). ISO is a protected mark. This file uses the name ISO 9001:2015 and does not reproduce ISO's mark. ISO does not allow the ISO logo on certification claims (source 2, source 3).

1.2 Short name and aliases

- Short name: ISO 9001:2015
- Also in data or texts: ISO 9001, QMS, ISO 9001:2015/Amd 1:2024
- Often wrong: 'ISO-certified', 'certified by ISO', or ISO 9001 without a year (that can be a different edition)

1.3 Owner / scheme owner

Role	Organisation	Country
Who writes the standard?	ISO (ISO/TC 176/SC 2)	Switzerland (international)
Who certifies?	Independent certification bodies, not ISO itself	worldwide
Who accredits?	National accreditation bodies under ISO/IEC 17021-1, in the IAF MLA framework	per country

ISO writes the standard. ISO does not certify (source 2, source 3).

1.4 Type of instrument

Possible types:

- label
- certificate
- management system standard
- commitment
- rating
- statutory register
- membership
- charter
- award
- hybrid

Main type: management system standard. The public evidence SustainCheck uses is the certificate against that standard, not the text of the standard alone.

1.5 Version

- This analysis covers ISO 9001:2015 only, including the climate amendment Amd 1:2024 insofar as it sits on 2015 certificates. That amendment does not receive a separate E1 score (3.4).
- The sixth edition (ISO 9001:2026) has been approved as FDIS and is scheduled for publication on 16 September 2026 (source 4). That will be a separate indicator and a separate analysis. This file does not score 2026 certificates.

1.6 What this analysis treats as one indicator

One indicator: an active ISO 9001:2015 certificate on the certified entity. SustainCheck uses, among other sources, IAF CertSearch to see which companies hold this ISO standard (source 5).

1.7 What we do not include under this name

- ISO 9001:2026 and any other edition or year. A different year = a different ISO standard = a different analysis.
- Implementation of ISO 9001 without a certificate. ISO stresses that certification is not required (source 1, source 2).
- Non-accredited 'ISO certificates' and claims of 'certified by ISO'.
- The ISO 9000 family without 9001, ISO 9004, sector derivatives (IATF 16949, AS9100) as if they were 9001:2015.
- Suspended, withdrawn, expired, cancelled or inactive status.
- Sister or subsidiary companies without their own certificate on their own certified entity name.

1.8 Possible outcomes for a company

Boolean: present or not. No formula, no levels within 9001:2015.

Outcome	What it is	Score in chapter 5
Active ISO 9001:2015 certificate	Status Active, standard ISO 9001:2015, on the certified entity	Yes: G3 and S8, see 5.1
Not present	No active 2015 certificate on that entity (including another status, another edition, or implementation only)	None

2. Scope

2.1 What is assessed

- Object: the quality management system of the certified organisation, limited to the scope on the certificate (activities, products, services, sites) (source 1, source 5).
- Own operations. Not a chain standard.
- The score always attaches to the certified entity name, never to a loose site as a separate company.

Site versus the whole entity: what we can and cannot see

An ISO certificate often does not cover 'everything the company does'. The scope is free text (activities, products, services, sometimes locations). There is no closed pick-list and no field for 'whole entity / one site'. Extra sites may be listed, but the total number of sites or the company's share of revenue is not (source 5). SustainCheck therefore cannot systematically tell whether the certificate covers the whole legal entity or only part of it.

So there is one rule, as with Fairtrade where the product share is unknown: every active certificate on the certified entity gets the same score. That score is lower than a hypothetical 'whole company, all activities' coverage, because coverage is unknown. We do not guess a higher figure per file if the free text appears to say 'all activities': that text is not standardised.

2.2 What the standard does and does not cover

Covered:

- A QMS: context, leadership, planning, support, operation, evaluation, improvement (source 1).
- Customer focus, consistent products and services, complaints and nonconformities.

Not covered:

- Environment, climate, labour rights, anti-corruption, chain labels.
- Proof that every product or every site falls under the scope.
- ISO 9001:2026.

2.3 Validity and version transitions

- Typically a three-year cycle with surveillance, under ISO/IEC 17021-1 (source 6).
- ISO 9001:2026 is scheduled for 16 September 2026 (source 4). After publication a three-year transition is expected; 2015 certificates remain valid in that period until the IAF deadline. That does not affect this file: 2026 gets its own analysis.
- Amd 1:2024 (climate in the context) changes 2015 slightly; not a new edition, not a separate indicator (source 7).

3. Requirements

3.1 Material requirements

- Harmonized structure (Annex SL): clauses 4 to 10.
- Seven quality-management principles, including customer focus and continual improvement (source 1).
- Documented QMS, internal audit, management review, nonconformities and corrective action.
- No ESG performance threshold.

3.2 Mapping to SustainScore subcategories

Scale: strong / moderate / weak.

Requirement	Subcategory	Coupling	Evidence in the standard	Source
QMS, leadership, internal audit, nonconformities, improvement	G3	moderate	Clauses 5, 9, 10: a managed system, not a whistleblowing or anti-corruption standard	1
Customer focus, consistent output, complaints	S8	weak	Customer focus; no product safety, privacy or marketing ethics in the ESRS sense	1

3.3 Primary versus secondary

Primary: G3 (there is a managed system). Secondary: S8 (a weak but direct quality-to-end-user link).

3.4 Limits of coverage

- G3 does not cover culture, compliance programmes or whistleblowers. It covers 'there is a QMS with audit and improvement'.
- S8 does not cover digital security, misleading claims or physical product safety. Only the quality side towards the customer.
- Amd 1:2024 requires the organisation to determine whether climate is a relevant issue (clause 4.1/4.2). That does not yield usable climate performance. SustainCheck gives no E1 score for it: too little concrete information, and the amendment's impact is too small (source 7).
- Unknown which part of the entity is in scope (2.1). That is built into the scores in 5.1.

4. Assurance

4.1 Assurance level

Possible levels:

- 1. Self-declared: the company claims it itself, with no independent check.
- 2. Second party: a check by a customer, a trade body or another interested party.
- 3. Third-party audit: an independent auditor, without accreditation against an international standard.
- 4. Accredited third party: independent certification under accreditation. Typically ISO/IEC 17021-1 for management systems.

Level for this indicator: 4, for an active accredited certificate. A self-declaration or a certificate outside accreditation does not count.

4.2 Audit practice

- Initial certification (stage 1 and 2), annual surveillance, recertification every three years (source 6).
- On-site and/or remote under the rules of the certification body and the accreditation.

4.3 Accreditation

ISO/IEC 17021-1, through an accreditation body in the IAF MLA framework for management systems (source 6).

4.4 Verifiability

SustainCheck uses, among other sources, IAF CertSearch to see which companies hold this ISO standard (source 5). Relevant fields for this analysis: certified entity name, standard name (ISO 9001:2015), certification status (Active only).

4.5 Overclaim risks

- 'We are ISO' or 'certified by ISO'.
- Presenting a 9001 certificate as environmental proof or as coverage of the whole group.
- Treating a 2026 certificate as 2015, or the other way around.
- Continuing to claim an expired or suspended certificate.
- Presenting Amd 1:2024 as a climate certificate.

5. Conclusion: impact on the SustainScore

Boolean. Based on chapters 3 and 4. Scores sit below 100 because ISO 9001 only partly covers the subcategories and because the share of the entity in scope is unknown.

5.1 Score per outcome and subcategory

Outcome	Subcategory	Score	Note
Active ISO 9001:2015 certificate	G3	64	A managed QMS with audit; not the full G3. Unknown scope coverage included
Active ISO 9001:2015 certificate	S8	39	Weak, direct quality-to-customer link; no privacy or product safety
Not present	all	none	Including another edition, another status, implementation only

5.2 What this indicator does not do

- No score on E1 to E6, S1 to S7, G1, G2, G4.
- No E1 via Amd 1:2024.
- No score for ISO 9001:2026 or another year.
- No score on sites as separate companies.
- No proof that all of the company's activities fall under the certificate.

6. Sources

Every statement in this document that is later used in the SustainScore points to a source below.

6.1 Sources used

Numbering:

1. ISO. ISO 9001:2015, Quality management systems. Requirements. <https://www.iso.org/standard/62085.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
2. ISO. Management system standards (certification is not a requirement). <https://www.iso.org/management-system-standards.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
3. ISO. Certification. ISO does not certify. <https://www.iso.org/certification.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
4. ISO/TC 176/SC 2. ISO 9001 revision update: ISO/FDIS 9001 approved; publication 16 September 2026. <https://committee.iso.org/sites/tc176sc2/home/news/content-left-area/news-and-updates/news-1.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
5. IAF. IAF CertSearch. <https://www.iafcertsearch.org/> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
6. ISO. ISO/IEC 17021-1, Conformity assessment. Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems. <https://www.iso.org/standard/61651.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
7. ISO. ISO 9001:2015/Amd 1:2024, Climate action changes. <https://www.iso.org/standard/88431.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.

6.2 Looked for but not found

- A standardised field in the public certification data that distinguishes 'whole entity' from 'part of the entity'.
- The share of revenue, sites or activities that falls under a given 9001 scope.
- The final IAF transition text for ISO 9001:2026 (publication of that edition is still to come).