

SustainCheck

Indicator analysis: ISO 14001:2026

For the SustainScore

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Indicator: ISO 14001:2026

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How to read this document

ISO 14001:2026 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 14001:2026 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.

This is the successor to ISO 14001:2015, published on 15 April 2026 (source 1). It remains a management system: stricter and more explicit on context, lifecycle and the chain, but still without a fixed performance threshold. ISO 14001:2015 is a separate indicator; see that file. A different year = a different analysis.

1. Identity

This chapter says what ISO 14001:2026 is, what does and does not fall under that name, and which outcomes a company can have.

1.1 Official name

Official name: ISO 14001:2026, Environmental management systems. Requirements with guidance for use (source 1). This file does not reproduce ISO's mark. ISO does not certify (source 2, source 3).

1.2 Short name and aliases

- Short name: ISO 14001:2026
- Also in data or texts: ISO 14001, EMS (without a year this is ambiguous: it can be 2015)

1.3 Owner / scheme owner

Role	Organisation	Country
Who writes the standard?	ISO (ISO/TC 207)	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

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. SustainCheck uses the certificate against that standard.

1.5 Version

- ISO 14001:2026, published 15 April 2026 (source 1).
- It replaces 2015 in substance, with a transition period. Until the IAF deadline, 2015 remains a separate, still valid indicator (ISO 14001:2015 file).

1.6 What this analysis treats as one indicator

One indicator: an active ISO 14001:2026 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 14001:2015 and any other edition or year. A different year = a different ISO standard = a different analysis (ISO 14001:2015 file).
- Implementation without a certificate.
- EMAS, ISO 14064, ISO 50001, EPDs, SBTi, FSC.
- Non-accredited certificates.
- Suspended, withdrawn, expired, cancelled or inactive status.
- Sister or subsidiary companies without their own certificate on their certified entity name.

1.8 Possible outcomes for a company

Boolean: present or not.

Outcome	What it is	Score in chapter 5
Active ISO 14001:2026 certificate	Status Active, standard ISO 14001:2026, on the certified entity	Yes: E2, E6, G3, G4
Not present	No active 2026 certificate on that entity (including 2015 only)	None

During the transition a company can hold 2015, 2026 or both. Each edition is its own indicator. Combining them: SustainScore methodology.

2. Scope

2.1 What is assessed

- Object: the EMS, limited to the scope on the certificate.
- Own operations plus stronger attention to lifecycle and externally provided processes (source 1, source 6).
- Score always on the certified entity name, never on a loose site.

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

Same limit as for 2015: the scope is free text, no field for 'whole entity / one site', no total number of sites of the company (source 5). One rule: every active 2026 certificate on the certified entity gets the same score, with unknown coverage already in the figure.

2.2 What the standard does and does not cover

Covered:

- A broader environmental context: organisations must consider climate, biodiversity, ecosystem health, pollution and availability of natural resources in clause 4.1 (source 1, source 6).
- Clearer lifecycle, change management (clause 6.3), risks and opportunities (clause 6.1.4), stronger operational control of externally provided processes (clause 8.1) (source 6).
- Still: the organisation sets its own objectives.

Not covered:

- A validated climate target (SBTi), a forest label (FSC) or a water-stewardship standard. Considering something in the context is not E1 or E4 performance (3.4).
- ISO 14001:2015 as if it were 2026.

2.3 Validity and version transitions

- Three-year cycle with surveillance, ISO/IEC 17021-1 (source 7).
- Publication 15 April 2026. Transition expected to last three years, until around April 2029; after that, 2015 certificates are no longer valid (source 1, source 6). This file scores 2026 only.

3. Requirements

3.1 Material requirements

- The same PDCA backbone as 2015, tightened.
- Clause 4.1: explicitly consider and document the five environmental factors, including where the conclusion is 'not material' (source 6).
- Lifecycle perspective on aspects; a register of risks and opportunities; controlled changes.
- Clause 8.1 broader: externally provided processes, products and services, not only 'outsourced'.
- Still no numerical environmental threshold in the standard.

3.2 Mapping to SustainScore subcategories

Scale: strong / moderate / weak.

Requirement	Subcategory	Coupling	Evidence in the standard	Source
Aspects and operational control, including pollution in the context	E2	moderate	Still a system, no discharge cap; more explicit than 2015	1, 6
Resource availability, lifecycle, circularity as an opportunity	E6	moderate	Stronger lifecycle than 2015, not a materials label	1, 6
Internal audit with objectives, management review, leadership	G3	moderate	Governance of the EMS tightened	1, 6
Externally provided processes, products, services (8.1)	G4	weak	Chain influence, not a trader or product-chain certificate	6

E1, E3, E4 and E5 get no row. 2026 names climate, water quality and biodiversity in the context. That is considering and documenting, not a performance requirement. Same reason as for Amd 1: too little concrete, comparable information to lift E1 or E4 (3.4).

3.3 Primary versus secondary

Primary: E2. Secondary: E6, G3. Weak: G4.

3.4 Limits of coverage

- Higher than 2015 on the same themes, still below SBTi (E1) and FSC (E4), which get no score here.
- Clause 4.1 climate and biodiversity: no E1 or E4 score. Too little concrete information, impact too small to count as climate or nature performance.
- G4 is thinner than Fairtrade trader.
- Unknown scope coverage is built into the scores.

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.

4.2 Audit practice

- The same 17021-1 cycle as 2015. A 2015-to-2026 transition audit can coincide with surveillance or recertification (source 6, source 7).

4.3 Accreditation

ISO/IEC 17021-1, accreditation body in the IAF MLA framework (source 7).

4.4 Verifiability

SustainCheck uses, among other sources, IAF CertSearch to see which companies hold this ISO standard (source 5). Relevant fields: certified entity name, standard name (ISO 14001:2026), status Active.

4.5 Overclaim risks

- Presenting 2026 as SBTi, FSC or as proof of falling emissions.
- Reading a 2015 certificate as 2026.
- The context requirement on climate/biodiversity as E1/E4 performance.
- Reading a site scope as the whole company.

5. Conclusion: impact on the SustainScore

Boolean. Slightly higher than 2015 on E2, E6 and G3 because the requirements are more explicit, plus a low G4. Still a system, not a performance label. Unknown scope coverage included.

5.1 Score per outcome and subcategory

Outcome	Subcategory	Score	Note
Active ISO 14001:2026 certificate	E2	87	More explicit than 2015; still no performance cap
Active ISO 14001:2026 certificate	E6	67	Stronger lifecycle; not a circularity certificate
Active ISO 14001:2026 certificate	G3	60	Tightened audit and review
Active ISO 14001:2026 certificate	G4	47	Clause 8.1 broader; thin chain link
Not present	all	none	Including 2015 only

For comparison, ISO 14001:2015 in that file: E2 79, E6 60, G3 56, no G4. 2026 sits above that, below dedicated performance labels.

5.2 What this indicator does not do

- No score on E1, E3, E4, E5, S1 to S8, G1, G2.
- No E1 or E4 via clause 4.1 (considering is not performance).
- No score for ISO 14001:2015 (separate file).
- 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 (15/04/2026). ISO 14001:2026 published: raising the bar for environmental performance. <https://www.iso.org/news/2026/04/iso-14001-2026-published> See also: <https://www.iso.org/standard/14001> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
2. ISO. Management system standards. <https://www.iso.org/management-system-standards.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
3. ISO. Certification. <https://www.iso.org/certification.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
4. SustainCheck. Indicator analysis ISO 14001:2015, version 1.0 (this pack). Accessed: 30/08/2026.
5. IAF. IAF CertSearch. <https://www.iafcertsearch.org/> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
6. DQS. ISO 14001:2026 Transition Guide: Key Changes, Timeline, and Audit Focus (clause comparison 2015/2026). <https://www.dqsglobal.com/en/explore/blog/iso-14001-2026-transition-guide> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
7. ISO. ISO/IEC 17021-1. <https://www.iso.org/standard/61651.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.

6.2 Looked for but not found

- The full paid standard text of ISO 14001:2026 as a freely citable document. Clause content rests on ISO's own explanation plus an independent clause comparison (source 1, source 6).
- A standardised field for 'whole entity versus part of the entity'.
- A definitive IAF end date for the 2015 transition in one stable IAF MD number; certification-body sources name April 2029.