

Seal Use Standard

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For Stakeholder
Consultation

Preferred
by Nature
Certification



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Introduction



This Standard sets out the conditions for using the Preferred by Nature Seal (the Hummingbird Seal; the Seal) under the Preferred by Nature Certification (PBNC) programme. The Seal is reserved exclusively for organisations producing or sourcing products certified against the **PBNC Sustainability Scope**. Products or organisations certified solely against the Regulatory Scope are not eligible for use of the Seal.

All parts of this document are normative unless otherwise stated. The Preferred by Nature [Seal Graphic Guidelines](#) apply in addition to this Standard. Before use, organisations must sign a legally binding agreement with Preferred by Nature covering certification services¹, which includes further requirements for Seal use. Some conditions are linked to other normative documents of the PBNC programme, as listed in **Box 1**. The latest version of any referenced document applies, unless otherwise specified.

Scope

This Standard applies to all organisations within the PBNC programme that produce, process, package, or take ownership of certified products and wish to use the Seal. All such organisations must be certified and comply with the Seal-use requirements.

Organisations engaged only in transporting, distributing, or selling final certified products, without modifying them or applying the Seal, are not required to hold certification. However, if these organisations wish to use the Seal in relation to their products, they must contact Preferred by Nature to obtain simplified Seal-use requirements and sign the corresponding agreement.

This Standard does not regulate the use of the Seal on non-certified promotional items (e.g. gifts or souvenirs). Such use is permitted but requires prior agreement with Preferred by Nature.

Version history

Version 1.0 | 11 September 2023

Version 2.0

¹ The agreement is signed with Preferred by Nature OÜ, which is the designated certification body for the Preferred by Nature Certification.

Box 1.

Normative Documents for Preferred by Nature Certification

PBN-01. Sustainability Framework

Establishes the principles, criteria, and indicators that land-use managers must follow to demonstrate responsible, sustainable practices, as well as social requirements for supply chain entities.

PBN-02. System Standard

Sets out generic quality system requirements applicable to all Preferred by Nature certified operations.

PBN-03. Due Diligence Standard

Defines requirements for supplier collaboration, supply chain information, risk assessment, and mitigation for due diligence and includes a EUDR specific annex.

PBN-04. Seal Use Standard

Sets requirements and conditions for using the PBN Seal.

PBN-05. Chain of Custody Standard

Specifies requirements for chain of custody models and traceability systems used to manage claims and track products throughout the supply chain.

PBN-06. Terms and Definitions

Provides definitions and concepts used in the Preferred by Nature Certification programme.

PBN-07. Pesticides Policy

Defines PBN's policy on the use of pesticides.

PBN-08. GMO Policy

Defines PBN's policy on the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

Terms and definitions

Claim

A message used to describe or promote a product, process, business, or service in relation to its sustainability attributes or credentials.

Component

A part or element of a semi-finished or finished manufactured product. For clarity and brevity, the ingredients of food products are also referred to as components in this Standard. A component can, for example, be cocoa in a chocolate bar or a specific wooden element in a piece of furniture.

Core component

The main component in a multi-component product, usually the element most closely associated with the product. It is typically a substantial and often visible or prominent part of the product. For example, in chocolate, cocoa is a core component. In case of doubt, organisations should contact Preferred by Nature to clarify whether a component is eligible as a core component for a given product. Correct application of this definition is critical for multi-component products and related claims.

End user

A person or organisation that purchases a product for consumption or for its intended final use. End users always purchase final products. However, final products may also be traded between business entities that are not end users, such as distributors, traders, and wholesalers.

Final product

A product that undergoes no further modification (including packing or repacking). Final products may be sold and purchased by distributors and wholesalers, but they will ultimately be sold to end users. In the context of this Standard, the importance of the term lies in the fact that extra requirements apply when using the Seal on final products or when promoting final products to end users. Intermediate products are referred to as non-final products in this Standard.

Multi-component product

Products composed of multiple components, such as a table with a glass top and wooden frame, or a chocolate bar containing cocoa, cocoa butter, sugar, and nuts.

Off-product

Refers to Seal use related to products, indicating the certified status of final products without placing the Seal directly on the products or their packaging. Examples of off-product use include the Seal on marketing materials, product catalogues, or social media when referring to the certified status of specific final products. This term is used in this Standard only in relation to final products.

On-product

Refers to the use of the Seal directly on certified final products or their packaging to communicate that they have been produced with care for people, nature, and the climate. On-product use includes applying the Seal directly to products, packaging, labels, tags, stickers, hangtags, or any other items attached to the product or its packaging. This term is used in this Standard only in relation to final products.

Organisation

In the context of this Standard, “Organisation” refers to any entity wishing to use the Seal. The Organisation is fully responsible for the correct use of the Seal and for conformance with the requirements of this Standard.

Product-related

Refers to the use of the Seal in relation to final products. Product-related use has two options: (i) On-product use, meaning application of the Seal directly on a product or its packaging; and (ii) Off-

product use, meaning use of the Seal in connection with products, for example in catalogues or other promotional materials. This term is used exclusively in this Standard in relation to final products.

Seal

In the context of this Standard, the Seal refers to the Preferred by Nature round hummingbird illustration (as depicted on the right). Various colour versions of the Seal are available, as detailed in the [Preferred by Nature Seal Graphic Guidelines](#)



Segregation marking

The use of the Seal to facilitate identification of certified non-final products in the supply chain. Segregation marking may be used internally within an organisation to help staff recognise and distinguish certified products, as well as in business-to-business transactions to help buyers in the supply chain identify certified products. Segregation marking must not be used on any final products or in any way that may make it visible to end users.

Scope

The “Scope” of the chain of custody system is defined by the models applied, the products included, the crops/species/commodities processed, the claims covered, and the sites and members involved.

Certification code

Each certified organisation is assigned a code by Preferred by Nature. This code is specified on the certificate issued to organisations that have demonstrated conformance with the relevant requirements of the Preferred by Nature Certification programme.

PBN Seal overview

The Preferred by Nature Seal indicates that a product originates from, or that an equivalent volume has been sourced from farms or forests operating in line with the Sustainability Scope requirements of the PBNC programme.

The Seal provides a visual means of expressing a commitment to people, nature, and the climate, in alignment with Preferred by Nature’s Standards and the sustainability practices specified in the PBN-01 Sustainability Framework. Specific additional requirements governing the use of the Seal are outlined in this Standard.

The Seal can be used in three primary ways:

- 1 To communicate the certified status of the organisation**
- 2 To mark segregation in the supply chain**
- 3 To indicate product-related Seal use for final products**

This section outlines requirements that apply to any use of the Seal and must be adhered to at all times.

Types of Seal use and related requirements

A critical factor influencing the criteria for Seal use is whether the product falls into the category of **final** or **non-final products**.

The three Seal-use options are outlined below, followed by the specific requirements for each type.

1. Seal used to communicate the certified status of the organisation

Organisations certified under the Sustainability Scope are permitted to use the Preferred by Nature Seal in their communication materials to indicate and promote their certification status. This may include use on websites, corporate reports, press releases, social media channels, trade fair booths, or other public-facing materials where the organisation wishes to highlight its certification.

When used in this way, the Seal must always be clearly linked to the organisation's certification under the PBNC programme and must not imply or suggest certification of products unless those products are explicitly covered by the certificate. The Seal may only be used in accordance with the Preferred by Nature Seal Graphic Guidelines and the legally binding Seal-use agreement.

Organisations are responsible for ensuring that such communications are accurate, not misleading, and limited to the scope of certification. Where only specific sites, activities, or product lines are certified, the organisation must avoid any suggestion that non-certified parts of the business are included.

2. Seal used for segregation marking

Certified organisations that manufacture, process, or trade PBNC-certified products under the Sustainability Scope requirements may use the Seal as a segregation mark. The purpose of segregation marking is to provide a clear and practical way to distinguish certified products as they move through the supply chain.

The Seal may be applied directly to products, product packaging, or accompanying documents such as task orders, shipping documents, and invoices. Its use in this context is strictly limited to business-to-business communication and is not permitted on final products, consumer packaging, or promotional materials. Segregation marking must never be visible to, or directed at, end users.

3. Seal use related to final products

Certified Organisations that wish to use the Seal in connection with final products reaching end consumers must meet additional requirements. Seal use in this context may be:

- **On-product** (applied directly to the product or its packaging) or

- **Off-product** (used in marketing or promotional materials directly linked to the certified product).

Only products certified under the Sustainability Scope of the Preferred by Nature Sustainability Framework are eligible for Seal use. Products or organisations certified solely under the Regulatory Scope are not permitted to use the Seal.

To use the Seal on or in connection with final products, **certificate holders shall comply with the following additional requirements:**

3.1 Product carbon footprint

The product's carbon footprint shall be measured and transparently reported, in accordance with the Preferred by Nature [Carbon Footprint Certification Standard](#).

AND

3.2 Climate and biodiversity contribution

In addition to carbon footprint disclosure, the organisation shall make a financial contribution that demonstrably supports **climate-positive outcomes** and generates **net benefits for people, nature, and the climate**.

Preferred by Nature provides three options for fulfilling this contribution requirement:

1. Contribution to Preferred by Nature's recognised climate and biodiversity fund.
2. Direct support to verified conservation or restoration projects aligned with Preferred by Nature criteria.
3. An equivalent mechanism pre-approved by Preferred by Nature.

OPTION 1. Contribute to Preferred by Nature projects supporting people, nature and the climate.

under this option, the organisation commits to make an annual contribution towards Preferred by Nature projects supporting biodiversity enhancement, ecosystem restoration, and positive climate impacts. This commitment is fulfilled through payment of a climate and biodiversity contribution. The specific amount is determined by **two factors**: the total volume of products sold with the Preferred by Nature Seal and the carbon footprint of those products (CO₂e). Contributions are paid annually.

Preferred by Nature has set a contribution rate of **EUR 20 per 1 ton of CO₂e**. This rate has been determined based on market analyses and takes into consideration the price of carbon credits. The purpose of Option 1 is to channel investments into projects that support biodiversity, ecosystem restoration, and positive climate impacts, while also having a positive influence on social welfare. The carbon market pricing level is used as a proxy for Options 1 and 2 to be roughly comparable in terms of cost level. Preferred by Nature recognises the volatility of carbon markets and may revise the contribution rate, with a minimum of 12 months' notice provided.

Preferred by Nature invests the contribution into projects supporting positive climate impacts, conserving biodiversity, and protecting the wellbeing of people. While the entire contribution is allocated to these projects, a portion is utilised to cover administrative expenses associated with managing the collection and disbursement of the contribution. Preferred by Nature maintains a public

list of projects on its website, which may be fully or partly funded using the **Preferred by Nature Climate and Biodiversity Contribution**.

OPTION 2. Compensation through verified carbon credits

The organisation will purchase and retire certified carbon credits from an eligible certified carbon project in a volume equivalent to the footprint of all the final products labelled with the Preferred by Nature Seal. Projects that serve as the source of certified carbon credits must satisfy all three of the following conditions. These requirements have been set by Preferred by Nature to ensure the purchased credits lead to direct benefits for nature, climate, and people.

- The projects shall rely on **nature-based solutions**, focusing on agriculture, forestry, or other land use improvements, such as wetlands; and
- The projects shall deliver **carbon removal or carbon emissions reductions** (credits from avoided emissions projects, for example avoided deforestation, are not eligible); and
- The projects shall be **verified under credible carbon certification schemes** that also take into account social aspects, adhering to the conditions outlined in Annex 1. Some examples of such schemes include VERRA (in combination with CCB (Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standard)), Gold Standard, or Plan Vivo. If in doubt, organisations may contact Preferred by Nature for clarification on eligibility.

Examples of eligible project types related to points 1 and 2 above include:

- (a) Restoration projects, such as afforestation, reforestation, or revegetation
- (b) Improved forest management projects, such as reduced-impact logging, extension of rotation age, or conversion from low-productive to high-productive forests
- (c) Improved agricultural land management and regenerative agriculture projects, such as improved cropland or grassland management, or cropland and grassland land-use conversions
- (d) Projects reducing methane emissions, such as improved cattle management or improved rice cultivation projects
- (e) Wetland restoration.

OPTION 3. Direct contribution to other projects

Preferred by Nature has created this third option to allow case-by-case investment into other types of projects that benefit people, nature, and the climate, focusing on biodiversity, restoration, climate mitigation, and social benefits. This option is similar to Option 1; however, instead of paying the contribution to Preferred by Nature, it can be directly invested in related projects. The minimum size of the contribution is the same as under Option 1 — **EUR 20 per 1 ton of CO₂e**.

Projects selected under this option must be agreed in advance with Preferred by Nature to ensure they are credible, verifiable, and aligned with the intended outcomes of the contribution. Evidence of the financial investment and documentation of project impacts must be provided as part of the organisation's certification records.

Seal use requirements

#	Requirements	Guidance
1	Preferred by Nature Seal	
1.1	1.1. General requirements for Seal use	
1.1.1	Organisations using the Seal shall hold a valid Preferred by Nature certificate, be certified against the Sustainability Scope, and meet all relevant Seal-use requirements.	The Seal can be used to indicate the certified status of the organisation or for specific products (product-related use). Please note that this Standard applies to organisations that need to undergo certification and will receive a Preferred by Nature certificate. Organisations engaged in the transportation, distribution, and sale of final products, without making any alterations to the products or their packaging, are exempt from the certification process. If such organisations purchase certified products and want to use the Seal in relation to them, they should contact Preferred by Nature to receive a simplified set of Seal-use requirements and sign a related agreement.
1.1.2	When used, the Seal shall be displayed together with the organisation's certificate code, positioned adjacently and legibly, so that the association between the Seal and the certification code is unmistakable.	The certificate code enables organisations, consumers, and other stakeholders to identify the certificate holder and access relevant information about the scope of their certificate. A list of certificates is published on Preferred by Nature's website.
1.1.3	Seal use shall meet the Graphical Guidelines for the PBN Seal and retain examples of all artwork used.	
	Non-certified distributors or sellers of final products shall only use the Seal under a PBN-issued simplified agreement and shall keep evidence of conformance.	
2	Types of Seal use and related requirements	
2.1	Seal use for communication of certified status	

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2.1.1	Certified organisations may use the Seal to communicate their certified status.	This option intends to empower Preferred by Nature-certified organisations to convey their certified status. This communication can be directed towards businesses or the general public, utilising a variety of communication channels.
2.1.2	Seal use to communicate certified status shall not be made in relation to a specific product, and the Seal shall not reach the end user.	
2.1.3	The organisation shall include a clarifying statement whenever it uses the Seal if any of the following apply: (a) The organisation manufactures or trades any products not certified by Preferred by Nature. (b) The organisation is a land manager and manages areas excluded from the scope of its Preferred by Nature certificate. (c) The organisation is a land manager producing multiple crops or products, and only some are certified by Preferred by Nature. (d) The clarifying statement shall make clear which products and/or areas are certified and which are not.	In most cases, supply chain companies are also involved in handling products that are not Preferred by Nature certified. When using the Seal to convey the organisation's certified status, it is necessary to include a clarification that this status does not encompass all products manufactured or traded by the organisation. In the case of certified land managers, typically all areas managed by the organisation and their associated products are certified. Nevertheless, if this is not the case, it is equally important to provide a clarifying statement.
2.2	Seal use for segregation marking	
2.2.1	The Seal may be used for the purpose of segregation marking within the product supply chain: (a) Internally within an organisation or in business-to-business interactions (b) For the purpose of easy identification of certified products	The purpose of segregation marking is to provide a practical and easy way to distinguish certified products as they travel through the supply chain. Segregation marking can be used both directly on the product or product packaging, but it can also be used on related documents, such as task orders, shipping documents, and invoices.
2.2.2	Use of the Seal as segregation marking may only be used for products that are covered	It must always be clear to which products the segregation marking refers. No Seal use is allowed in relation to any products that

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	by the scope of a valid Preferred by Nature certificate with the Sustainability Scope.	are certified to only meet the Regulatory Scope.
2.2.3	For any use of the Seal for the purpose of segregation marking, the organisation shall ensure the following: (a) The Seal is not used on final products or their packaging. (b) The Seal shall not reach end users.	Segregation marking is allowed only within the supply chain and only for non-final products. Segregation marking is not allowed on any final products or in any way related to them.
2.3	Seal use related to final product	
2.3.1	Seal use related to the final product is exclusively permitted for products falling within the scope of a valid Preferred by Nature certificate with the Sustainability Scope.	The scope of the certification is detailed on the certificate, which can be accessed on Preferred by Nature's website. No Seal use is allowed in relation to any products that are certified only under the Regulatory Scope.
2.3.2	The Seal shall not be employed with products in a manner that could lead to uncertainty or misunderstanding about which products it is associated with. Additional clarifications shall be included whenever there is a potential risk of confusion.	For example, if both certified and non-certified products are included in the same marketing materials, any use of the Seal shall explicitly refer to the certified products. The Seal shall not be used in a way that may indicate that all products in the catalogue are certified. The Seal usage may be enhanced by providing a written explanation that elucidates the link between the Seal and the certified products.
2.3.3	When using the Seal in connection with final products, the Organisation shall ensure that these products are also certified under the Preferred by Nature Carbon Footprint Certification Standard.	The Carbon Footprint Certification (CFC) Standard includes requirements for measuring the product's footprint and disclosing relevant information to the public.
2.3.4	When dealing with multi-component products, the Organisation may use the product-related Seal exclusively for those products in which the core component is certified under the Sustainability Scope requirements and complies with all relevant requirements.	Please refer to the Preferred by Nature Chain of Custody Standard for more information and requirements related to multi-component products.

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2.3.5	For any product-related Seal use, the Organisation shall choose one of the three available options: a Climate and Biodiversity Contribution (see options below).	For any product-related Seal use, the organisation shall choose one of the three available options: (a) Climate and Biodiversity Contribution (b) Compensation through certified carbon credits (c) Direct contribution to other projects (d) (see details for each option below).
3	Climate and biodiversity contribution	
3.1	Requirements for OPTION 1 Contribution to Preferred by Nature projects	
3.1.1	The organisation shall contribute to Preferred by Nature Climate and Biodiversity projects at the valid rate, based on the volume of products sold with the Preferred by Nature Seal and the carbon footprint of those products.	The total size of the contribution is calculated by multiplying the volume of labelled product by the carbon footprint in CO ₂ e of these products and then multiplying it by the valid contribution rate. The valid rate is 20 EUR per 1 ton of CO ₂ e. EXAMPLE: If the organisation wishes to label 90 tons of a product with a carbon footprint of 0.5 ton of CO ₂ e per 1 ton of the product, the total payable contribution is 900 EUR (90 t of products * 0.5 t/CO ₂ e * 20 EUR = 900 EUR).
3.1.2	The organisation shall decide on the payment timeline and shall make the payment either: (a) Upon production of the products and as they are stocked for further distribution (b) Before the product carrying the Seal is sold to customers, or (c) Within a maximum period of 12 months from the date of sale	The three options have been provided taking into consideration different business scenarios. The first option may be simpler for companies that plan to label a known quantity of products with the Seal. The second option can be used when the number of products sold with the Seal is unknown, unpredictable, or subject to significant fluctuations.
3.2	Requirements for OPTION 2 Compensation through certified carbon credits	
3.2.1	The organisation shall purchase and retire the number of carbon credits equivalent to the total carbon footprint of the certified products subject to product-related Seal use.	The carbon footprint calculation shall be aligned with the principles and meet the applicable requirements specified in the Preferred by Nature Carbon Footprint Certification Standard.

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3.2.2	The organisation shall ensure that the projects from which the carbon credits originate meet the Preferred by Nature requirements for eligible carbon projects.	The eligibility requirements are described above and include the specification that avoided emissions projects are not accepted.
3.2.3	The organisation is responsible for confirming that the projects generating carbon credits are certified under a credible carbon project scheme and that the credits adhere to the following requirements: (a) Represent genuine, additional, permanent GHG emissions reductions (b) Are unique and not double-counted (c) Entail no carbon leakage (d) Are issued only after emissions reductions linked to the carbon project have occurred, unless specified otherwise by the relevant carbon standard (e) Are supported by publicly available project documentation (f) Are stored and retired in an independent and credible registry.	Projects which are certified under credible and well-known carbon schemes would typically meet these requirements. However, if there is any uncertainty, organisations are welcome to contact Preferred by Nature for guidance.
3.2.4	The organisation shall decide on the option and shall purchase and retire the credits, either: (a) Upon production of the products and as they are stocked for further distribution (b) Before the product carrying the Seal is sold to customers, or (c) Within a maximum period of 12 months from the date of sale.	The three options have been provided considering different business scenarios. The first option may be simpler for companies that plan to label a known quantity of products with the Seal. The last two options can be used when the number of products sold with the Seal is unknown, unpredictable, or subject to significant fluctuations.
3.3	Requirements for OPTION 3 Direct contribution to other projects	
3.3.1	For any product-related Seal use, the organisation shall invest a contribution into eligible projects that benefit people, nature, and the climate, based on the volume of products sold with the Preferred by Nature Seal and the carbon footprint of those products.	The basis for calculating the contribution is the same as under option 1. The total size of the contribution is calculated by multiplying the volume of labelled product by the carbon footprint in CO₂e of these products and then

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		multiplying it by the valid contribution rate. The valid rate is 20 EUR per 1 ton of CO₂e. EXAMPLE: If the organisation wants to label 90 tons of a product with a carbon footprint of 0.5 ton of CO₂e per 1 ton of the product, the total payable contribution is 900 EUR (90 t of products * 0.5 t/CO₂e * 20 EUR = 900 EUR).
3.3.2	The organisation is required to obtain written approval from Preferred by Nature for each project where the contribution is made.	It is crucial to coordinate and secure approval from Preferred by Nature for each project to ensure that it aligns with the goal of the contribution, which is to achieve climate benefits while also promoting biodiversity enhancement and benefiting people.
3.3.3	The organisation shall decide on the payment timeline and shall make the payment either: (a) Upon production of the products and as they are stocked for further distribution (b) Before the product carrying the Seal is sold to customers, or (c) Within a maximum period of 12 months from the date of sale.	These options have been developed with various business scenarios in mind. The first option may be simpler for companies that plan to label a known quantity of products with the Seal. The last two options can be used when the number of products sold with the Seal is unknown, unpredictable, or subject to significant fluctuations.
4	Seal use monitoring	
4.1	Requirements for Seal use monitoring	
4.1.1	The organisation shall maintain records of all uses of the Preferred by Nature Seal.	The organisation is responsible for maintaining comprehensive records, encompassing the artwork, design, and the context of Seal usage. These records must be accessible to Preferred by Nature auditors upon their request for the purpose of certifying compliance.
4.1.2	The organisation shall maintain records of the types and volumes of products which have been labelled with the Seal.	The information must be accessible to auditors to certify compliance.
4.1.3	The certificate holder shall make all Seal-use relevant records available to auditors upon request, including final artworks/claim	Product-related use of the Preferred by Nature Seal does not require prior approval. Certified organisations are responsible for

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	text, and evidence linking labelled products to certificate scope and volumes.	ensuring all uses comply with the Seal Use Policy and the Seal Graphic Guidelines. Preferred by Nature will verify Seal use during certification audits and may request examples at any time. Any misuse will result in non-conformities and required corrective actions, and Preferred by Nature may suspend or restrict Seal use until issues are resolved.
4.1.4	If the organisation has any uncertainty about the correct use of the Seal or wants to use the Seal in ways that are not clearly regulated, the organisation shall seek approval from Preferred by Nature before using the Seal.	Preferred by Nature provides an online client platform that can be utilised for submitting requests for Seal-usage approval.

Preferred by Nature is an international non-profit organisation working to support better land management and business practices that benefit people, nature and the climate. We do this through a unique combination of sustainability certification services, projects supporting awareness raising, and capacity building.

For 30 years, we have worked to develop practical solutions to drive positive impacts in production landscapes and supply chains in 100+ countries. We focus on land use, primarily through forest, agriculture and climate impact commodities, and related sectors such as tourism and conservation.

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