



WHEN GETTING A B IS ACTUALLY A+

A triple bottom line is at the heart of these Santa Cruz businesses

B Corporations, including the Santa Cruz businesses highlighted here, make it their mission to balance profit with social and environmental purpose. When you shop locally with them, or purchase their goods, we all benefit.

If you've never heard of a B Corporation you're not alone, since there actually aren't all that many in the Santa Cruz area. There are, however, 4,000-plus B Corps currently certified around the world in more than 70 countries. A business of any size can be certified as a [B Corporation](#) if they meet a set of good-for-the-planet standards. This includes an overall dedication to social and environmental accountability, as well as a triple bottom line that takes people and the planet into account, in addition to profit.

Think of B Corp status as you do Fair Trade coffee or a LEED certified building. It's a way for companies, and consumers, to measure and celebrate green and equitable businesses -- companies that are not solely focused on the bottom line, but that use business as a force for good for their people and communities.

Some national B Corp certified companies that you might know of, and maybe already favor with your wallet, include Patagonia, Ben & Jerry's, Stonyfield Organic, Seventh Generation, Dr. Bronner's, New Belgium Brewing, and Athleta. These companies are committed to the social and environmental importance of leveraging their influence for the greater good.

Since its founding in 2006 by three friends in business and private equity, the Pennsylvania-based nonprofit B Lab, with offices around the world, has been certifying B Corps in the U.S. and abroad via a rigorous certification process. B Lab closely monitors these companies' social and environmental standards and performance, as well as their overall accountability and transparency.



Once a company becomes certified as a B Corporation, they typically hold that certification for three years. In B Lab's first year of operation, 2007, they certified 82 businesses. Although most B Corps are small businesses, large companies and multinationals can also apply.

Business as a force for good



The intended result of B Lab's third-party certification process is to catalyze a global movement that harnesses business as a force for good. In that spirit, B Lab works toward creating more inclusive and regenerative economies around the world. Their Declaration of *Interdependence* states that, "through their products, practices, and profits, businesses should aspire to do no harm and benefit all."

The intended result of more awareness of B Corporation certification is that companies, whether certified or not, will be influenced and encouraged by consumer awareness to care more deeply about the health and wellbeing of their employees, their communities, and the environment.

It tilts the scale away from business being solely profit-centric and toward balancing purpose with profit. As we continue to experience next generation shifts socially and culturally, as well as in the marketplace, hopefully we will continue to move toward real systemic change with more awareness of and advocacy for social justice, equity, diversity, and greener climate-friendly standards.

Triple bottom line

In 2013, Central Coast grocer [New Leaf Community Markets](#) was the first grocery store in California to achieve B Corp status, and the second grocery store in the world to become a B Corp. They were recently recertified in March 2021, and their commitment to just and sustainable long-term social and environmental change is loud, proud, and unwavering. One impressive testament to that: New Leaf gives 10 percent of their after-tax profit back to the community.

Not only is New Leaf Community Markets a B Corp, they carry more than 100 products throughout their stores from fellow B Corp'ers such as Clover Sonoma, Dr. Bronner's, Guayaki Yerba Mate, Seventh Generation, Vital Farms, and Yogi Tea.

In terms of the past couple years, New Leaf Community Markets senior manager of sustainability Athena Petty says, "The pandemic has forced all businesses to rethink where their values lie. Being a B Corp has helped New Leaf identify areas where we can make the biggest impact -- for our workers, for our communities, and for the environment."



And tracking company impact in this very public way also means mission-aligned solidarity. Petty adds, "The scorecard we get from the B Corp certification and the support we find in our B Corp community has helped us get through these last few turbulent years."

Shop local

Did you know that there are several other Santa Cruz B Corp certified businesses? Since we all know what a big difference shopping local makes, the next time you're looking to purchase organic and sustainable clothing, 100 percent recycled and reusable bags, or a bit of

sustainability consultation, consider purchasing one or more from a Santa Cruz B Corp - specifically Synergy Organic Clothing, Bagito, or Environmental Innovations.



Shopping locally, whether from B Corps or not, is one way to be a bit like a B Corp yourself -- to be actively engaged in your community and committed to reducing your impact. By doing so you support sustainability and you also help create and keep jobs within the community. Added bonus: studies show that local businesses donate to community causes at more than twice the rate of national chains.

According to Local First, a Colorado nonprofit devoted to bolstering locally owned, independent businesses, for every \$100 that you spend at a locally owned business, \$68 stays in the community. When you spend the same amount at a national chain, only \$43 stays in the community. Spending locally, instead of shopping online or in another state, also ensures that your taxes are reinvested right where they belong -- in your community.

New Leaf Community Markets director of operations Andrew King says, "When you buy items that are locally made, you support small producers. And those folks are what make up the beauty in this community. There are so many options for consumers, but when you support a local maker, you could be getting that person's child swim lessons, or ensuring that everyone gets a warm winter coat this season." That's a huge selling point.

And, King adds, "It's another way we can care for each other and show up for each other, no matter what's going on in the world."

How to get your business B Corp certified

B Corp certification occurs every three years and a company can only be recertified if they improve their previous B Corporation score. Companies need to prove their commitment to cultivating positive change in five evaluated impact areas -- community, customers, environment, governance, and workers. B Corp certification is rigorous, and on average only one in three companies that submit for certification become B Corps.

New Leaf Community Markets vice president Forrest Gonsiewski wholeheartedly believes in the importance of B Corps. "Being a B Corp makes us proud. It's next level accountability -- confirmation that the way we do business is right for our customers, employees, community, and the environment."

The B Corp certification process and requirements differ based on a company's size and structure -- ranging from startups to large companies and multinationals -- but detailed information for all, including a guide to completing the assessment, can be found at B Lab's [website](#).

It's nice to know that there are myriad ways to harness the power of business for good -- to make a measurable positive impact on the planet in terms of wealth inequality, climate change, and social responsibility. In other words, to treat the earth like home. B Corporation certification, as well as shopping local, is a powerful, purpose-driven, driver of change.