



Different Options for Communicating Environmental Information for Products

Final Report

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Information on the environmental characteristics of products, such as on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions caused during their production or their energy efficiency, are essential in order to allow consumers to make informed choices on which products to buy. This study investigated different design options for product-related environmental information addressed at consumers. The Ecologic Institute contributed, in particular, an analysis of the law of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the requirements it contains for legal rules on environmental labels. The report is available for download.

The study was carried out against the background of the 2012 of the EU Sustainable Consumption and Production Industrial Policy (SCP/SIP) Action Plan. Providing consumers with comprehensive information on the environmental performance of products is a possible initiative in this context. The aim of this study was to examine different mechanisms and vehicles for communicating product-level environmental information to consumers. The study investigates which type of information consumers will most easily and understand. Different labels were developed and tested with the help of individuals and groups from different countries and specific designs suggested.

However, labeling rules are subject to certain legal rules at the international level, notably to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (BTB), both part of the WTO legal order. Christiane Gerstetter, Nils Meyer-Ohlendorf and Malte Preuss of the Ecologic Legal Team have analysed these rules, taking account of recent WTO case law on environmental labels. They conclude that such rules are, in principle, admissible under WTO law, but subject to certain conditions. For example, imported products must not be treated worse as compared to domestic products.

The [study](#) [pdf, 1.8 MB, English] as well as the [annex](#) [pdf, 2.4 MB, English] are available for download.

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Table of contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

Chapter 1: Communicating Environmental Information to Consumers

1.1 The Challenges of communication environmental information to consumers

1.2 What multi-criteria information to communicate

1.3 How to communicate multi-criteria environmental information

1.4 Where to communicate

1.5 Summary of literature review findings and implications for consumer survey

Chapter 2: Methodology of Consumer Survey

2.1 Design of options

2.2 Focus group

2.3 Refinement

2.4 Development of survey

Chapter 3: Results of Consumer Survey

3.1 Demographic information on survey participants

3.2 Consumer understanding of product environmental information

3.3 Consumer expectations for product environmental information

3.4 Summary of key findings

3.5 Selection of most optimal design options

Chapter 4: Legal Considerations

4.1 Applicable WTO Agreements

4.2 Recommendations to avoid WTO inconsistency of environmental labels

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