

GREEN THREADS: ECOLABELS FOR PUNTERS

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ABSTRACT

With the sure growing storm of Global Warming, Eco-friendly products are finding their place amongst the coming generation, be it eatables, beauty products, shopping bags or textiles. Time has come for punters commonly known as consumers to take the lead in prompting manufacturers to adopt clean and eco-friendly technologies and environmentally safe disposal of used products through preventive and mitigate approaches. Labels attached to a variety of products to attract the attention of consumers about the environmentally positive features of the products. And these eco-friendly labels are known as eco-labels. The ecolabeling was initiated by Germany in 1978. Today, ecolabeling is being implemented in more than 30 countries. Coming to our domestic station “Ecomark” in Feb 1991 with the earthen pot as the symbol was launched in India. Eco Labels guide the consumers and producers that the product is ecofriendly with fewer adverse environmental impacts. Realizing the need to explore more on this issue, authors made an effort to know about ecolabels. Further it highlights the International and national scenario with a package of barriers. It also endorses a simple road map in shape of suggestions as to ponder this issue more determinedly, more sincerely.

KEYWORD: Ecolabels, Global scene, Schemes, Indian Scene, Barriers, Suggestions

Homo sapiens’s careless attitude towards natural resources, environmental problems are increasing day by day approaching us closer to global warming, resource depletion, increasing pollution. In the light of this awakening, the trend is changing in textiles from manmade materials to eco friendly ones. Moment has come for consumers to take the lead in prompting manufacturers to espouse clean and eco-friendly technologies and environmentally secure disposal of used products through preventive and allay approaches. Labels attached to a variety of products to magnetize the attention of consumers on the environmentally affirmative features of the products. And these eco-friendly labels are known as eco-labels.

1. ECO LABELS

Eco-labels are seals of sanction given to products that are surmised to have fewer impacts on the environment than functionally or competitively similar products. Eco-labeling is solitary one type of environmental labeling, and refers exclusively to the stipulation of information to consumers about the relative environmental eminence of a product. There are many different environmental performance labels and declarations being used or contemplated around the

world. In our day, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), fixed all the precise instruction for the overall target of these labels and declarations is through communication of confirmable and correct information, that is not misleading, on environmental facet of products and services, to persuade the demand for and supply of those products and services that cause less stress on the environment, thereby thought-provoking the potential for market-driven continuous environmental enhancement. Efforts has been made by ISO standardize the principles, practices and key characteristics relating to three major voluntary environmental labeling types.

- a. Environmental labeling (Eco-labeling): Organizations like ISO having third party program to award a license for authorizing or using the environmental label on the products or services of the company. It point towards largely environmental penchant of a product within its all product category supported on life cycle considerations.
- b. Self-declaration claims: Edifying environmental self-declaration claims.
- c. Environmental declarations (e.g. report cards/information labels): Voluntary programs that endow with quantified environmental data of a product, under pre-set categories of parameters set by a qualified third party and based on LCA i.e. life cycle assessment, and confirmed by that or an additional qualified third party.










For that reason, an ecolabel is a gizmo and tool that help out buyers juggle among a digit of products and services, often escorted by unverified claims about their supposed ecological advantages, and recognize those that essentially offer an improved environmental performance.




1.1 Origin of Ecolabels

Eco-labeling was first initiated by Germany in 1978 with the release of the “Blue Angel” programme. The objective was to enlighten consumers about the environment friendly nature of various products. Agenda 21, revealed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro, on June 14, 1992, recommends governments to promote environmental labeling to facilitate change in consumption patterns and thereby safeguard the environment for sustainable development. In 1992, an EU Regulated Eco-label was announced under Council Regulation (EEC) No. 880/2 of 23 February 1992 on a Community Award Scheme. The Regulation established a voluntary eco-label scheme intended to: promote the design, production, marketing and use of products which have a reduced environmental impact during their entire life cycle, provide consumers with better information on the environmental impact of products. It explicitly mentions environmental labeling as an instrument for improving the environmental quality of products. By the late 1980s and early 1990s over 15 independent national and multi-national eco-labeling programmes were established. Till date, most countries – both developed and developing – have established eco-labeling programmes in many different forms at local, national, regional and international levels. The relevance of this subject has been highlighted through its implications with trade relations, economic development and the environment.

2. GLOBAL PLATFORM

Table 1: Detailed view of globally used Ecolabels

ORIGIN	PRODUCT
Europe	
European Union  EU Flower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footwear • Bed Mattresses • Textile Products
Nordic Countries  Nordic Swan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textiles
Austria  Eco-label	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textile floor covering
Croatia  Environmental Label	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linen towel on the rail
Hungary  Környezetbarát Termék Védjegy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woolen- flax bed clothes • Bed mattresses made of natural material
Netherlands  Stitching Milieukeur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand dryers (cotton) • Footwear
Sweden  Bra Miljöval Bra Miljöval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textiles
Australasia	
Republic of China – Taiwan  Green Mark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloth Diapers • Non bleached towels
Thailand  Thai Green Label	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products made from cloth

<p>Korea</p>  <p>Environmental labeling (KELA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothing
<p>Japan</p>  <p>Ecomark</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloth Diapers • Cloth shopping bags • Unbleached clothes, bed linen and towels • Textiles made of waste fibres • Clothing made from recycled PET resin
<p>Australia/New Zealand</p>  <p>Environmental choice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wool pile carpets • Wool-rich pile carpets

2.1 Global Collaborations

- Mutual Recognition Agreement Between Green Mark and Environmental Choice Programs



Between Environment and Development Foundation and Terra Choice Environmental Services Inc. July 1998

- Mutual Recognition Agreement Between Green Mark and Green Seal Programs



Between Environment and Development Foundation and Green Seal, Inc. July 1998

3. SCHEMES

Table 2: Organizations involved in Ecolabeling Schemes

	Organization	Eco-label Examples
Private	Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	Good Environmental Choice (Sweden)
	Institution Related	Öko-Tex (EcoTex) 100 (Germany) Öko -Tex (EcoTex) 1000 (Germany) Öko -Tex (EcoTex) ® (Germany)
	Producer's association	AKN Trademark (Germany)
	Company related	Steilmann Otto Versand Hess Natur Green Cotton
Government	National	EKO-Seal (Holland) Environmental Choice (Canada) Eco-Mark (Japan) Green Mark (China-Taiwan) Eco-Mark (Korea), Environmental Labelling (China) Eco-Mark (India).
	Multinational	EU-label Nordic Eco-label

Table 2 elaborates the ecolabels in two capsules like Private and Government. National eco-labels are generally reputable by the individual National Standards Organization or Ministry of Environment. Multinational schemes are intended to smooth the progress of trade within their common markets. Private NGO and institution eco-labels set criterion that may be acceptable in a number of diverse countries. These tend not to be established in countries where a national eco-label previously exists. Within Egypt there are no national eco-labels for textiles nor are there any certifying bodies for internationally recognized eco-labels (as of August 2003). For the work undertaken by the SEAM Programme, the Öko-Tex (EcoTex) 100 eco-labels was selected, as:

- it was sound recognized in Germany, a key market for Egyptian products;
- it was extensively accepted in other West European markets;
- it was moderately easy to implement for the main export product lines.

3. INDIAN PLATTER

3.1 Eco Mark

The Government of India launched the 'Ecomark' Scheme in 1991. The label is awarded to consumer goods which meet with the specified environmental criteria and the quality requirements of India Standards.



Figure 1: Eco mark

An earthen pot has been chosen as the logo for the Ecomark (Figure 1). The familiar earthen pot uses renewable resources like earth, does not produce hazardous waste and consumes little energy in making. Its solid and graceful form represents both strength and fragility, which also characterizes the eco-system.

3.1.1 Factors that contributed to launch the Ecomark Scheme

- Concern about adverse environmental brunt of consumer products, scrupulously in disposal of garbage.
- Endorsing sustainable management of resources and eventually improving the quality of the environment.
- Triumphant advocacy by consumer bodies.
- Political determination of the Government.
- Call for lucid and plausible assistance regarding products that are environment friendly.

3.1.2 Main Objectives of the Ecomark Scheme

- to supply an incentive for manufacturers to lessen adverse environmental impact of products;
- to remunerate genuine initiatives by companies to condense unfavorable environmental collision of their products and processes;
- to help out consumers to become environmentally responsible by providing information to take account of environmental factors in their purchasing decisions;
- to encourage citizens to purchase products, which have less harmful environmental impacts; and
- to perk up the quality of the environment and to encourage the sustainable management of resources.

3.1.3 Criteria for the Ecomark Scheme

Criteria are based on the cradle-to-grave approach, i.e. from raw material extraction to manufacturing and to disposal. Level of product is examined in respect of the following environmental brunts.

- that they have substantially less potential for pollution than other comparable products in production, usage and disposal;
 - that they are recycled, recyclable, made from recycled products or are biodegradable, where comparable products are not;
 - that they make significant contribution to saving non-renewable resources, including non-renewable energy sources and natural resources compared with comparable products; and
 - that they product must contribute to a reduction of the adverse primary criteria which has the highest environment impact associated with the use of the product and which will be specifically set for each of the product categories.

3.1.4 Textile products with Ecomark

Table 2: Product categories in Textiles

Made by	Uses	Baby clothing	Close to skin	Outer Fabrics	Home textiles & clothing	Hessian & Socking
Cotton, wool, man-made fibres & blends		X	X	X		
Jute & Jute products					X	X
Silk & Silk products		X	X	X		

Table 2 depicts varied categories of textile products which are commonly used to get the tag of Ecomark. Like Cotton, wool, silk and manmade blends are used for home textiles, hessian and socking. Baby clothing, outer fabrics etc are being made by jute fibres.

3.2 Good Weave International

Good Weave International –formerly known as RUGMARK is a network of non-profit organizations dedicated to ending illegal child labour in Rug making industry founded in 1994 by children’s rights activist Kailash Satyarthi.



Figure 2: Good weave –Rugmark

3.3 India Organic - National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)



Figure 3: Indian Organic

The national programme engrosses the accreditation programme for certification bodies, norms for organic production, endorsement of organic farming. The NPOP standards for production and accreditation system have been recognized by European Commission and Switzerland as equivalent to their country standards.

3.4 The Green Signal –India’s First Eco-label

On 8 June 2011, launched India's first Eco-label - The Green Signal - which certifies environmental preferences adopted during the manufacturing of a product or a service by Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A). Amit Garg (associate Professor) is a co-promoter of this said "Our Eco-label shall give a big push to the industry and service sector on being greener. The availability of such a label in India will benefit both the conscious buyers and progressive sellers.



Figure 4: The Green Signal Ecolabel

4. GOVT. EFFORTS

Steps taken by Government of India are as follows:

- Banned 112 harmful Azo-dyes.
- Pro-active role played by Pollution Control Boards in laying norms for effluent treatment.
- Evolved eco-standards in textiles.
- Information dissemination efforts.

Strengthening testing labs and ISO certification facilities

5. BARRIERS

Some specific challenges raised by ecolabeling programmes are as follows:

1. **Methodology**-Methodologies are on occasion proved to be the failure reasons for few ecolabeling programmes in both criteria-setting and conformity assessment. Therefore some programmes has been disparaged for centering on only a few isolated environmental impacts that usually occur during the use stage but ignore the environmental burdens associated with the production process.
2. **Transparency** -At times, there is short of transparency and prospects involvement in the enlargement of product standards, such as bodies that might play a position in assessments of sustainability.
3. **Discriminatory effects** -Ecolabeling programmes may cause some discriminatory effects. Labels may be based on domestic environmental priorities and technologies in the importing country and may overlook acceptable products and manufacturing processes in the country of production.
4. **Financial cost**-The financial cost of ecolabeling could also be quite high. This may have two aspects: the adjusting production processes to ensure that the product will receive the relevant ecolabels; and the expense of subscribing to and maintaining participation in an ecolabeling programme. As a result, less developed countries (LDCs) have emphasized their need for greater financial and technical assistance for the improvement of fisheries management systems.
5. **Institutional constraints** -Institutional factors could include difficulties faced by producers in some countries in obtaining adequate supplies of materials, environmentally friendly technologies and other materials, which are acceptable for use in, or necessary to comply with standards for, ecolabeled products. Without the support of the government, many private industries may not become sufficiently organized to independently institute effective management programmes and achieve certifiable status.
6. **Trade barriers** -From the perspective of LDCs the most contentious source of debate centres on their concern that ecolabeling programmes may serve as de facto barriers to trade. The World Trade Organization (WTO) faces the challenge of reconciling ecolabel programmes with the technical barriers to trade (TBT) chapter of the 1993 Uruguay Round of trade negotiations (URGATT). It is essential, therefore, that certifying agencies be autonomous, and independent of incomes from license fees. This applies equally to the testing agencies involved in the certification process.

6. SUGGESTIONS

For making ecolabels more effective and reducing negative impacts, author jotted down few suggestions which are as follows:

- Consistent framework to guide the categorization of ecolabels.
- Targeting the individual customers, industrial customers, investors, government agencies or other drivers.
- Undertaking case studies and research work on why ecolabeling works or fails in environmental terms, as well as on the quantification of its trade effects;
- Collaboration with developing countries in gathering and analyzing market information on ecolabeling.
- Developing guidelines on how to integrate environmental requirements, including ecolabeling.
- Provisions for harmonization with other labels.
- Basis for prioritization of issues and development of criteria (e.g. science, consumer surveys, none).
- Collaboration between Govt. and NGOs as to spread knowledge regarding eco-labels through well planned campaigns.

7. CONCLUSION

Ecolabels maneuver as an imperative and unadulterated means to shield and conserve the environment, in chorus with upholding sustainable creation and consumption patterns. There is a call for mounting a roadmap in the direction of mutual recognition of ecolabeling schemes through amplified collaboration among the pertinent green bodies of developed and developing countries. An imperative facet determining the efficacy of ecolabeling schemes is greater consumer awareness. For this reason, consumer education is crucial to the success of these environmental programmes. The immaculate efforts by govt. prop up by environmental NGOs, support of consumer organizations and the media gizmo are key factors that should be used for endorsing ecolabels across the world to have better safer and healthier environment for the generations to come.

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