



International  
Trade  
Centre



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information

The *Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information* offer private and public sector professionals clear guidance on making effective, trustworthy claims to consumers, on product-related sustainability information. They are applicable to all regions and companies of all sizes. A long term objective is to create a level playing field for developing new, and revising existing, product sustainability information.

Ultimately, the Guidelines aim to empower consumers to make informed sustainable choices on product choice, usage and disposal.

The Guidelines establish minimum requirements that must be met

(Fundamental principles); and encourage ambition, improvement and sustainability leadership over time (Aspirational principles). Associated guidance walks the user through improving their consumer communications.

The Guidelines' focus is on the information provided to consumers. This does not imply that the sole responsibility to reduce the adverse effects of product manufacturing and consumption on society and the environment lies with consumers. Sustainable consumption and production can only be achieved if all value chain stakeholders play their part and commit to more environmentally and socially sound actions.

# FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES



## RELIABILITY

Build your claims on a reliable basis

- Accurate and scientifically true
- Robust and consistent
- Substantiated data and assumptions



## RELEVANCE

Talk about major improvements, in areas that matter

- Significant aspects ('hotspots') covered
- Not masking poor product performance, no burden shifting
- Genuine benefit which goes beyond legal compliance



## CLARITY

Make the information useful for the consumer

- Exclusive and direct link between claim and product
- Explicit and easy to understand
- Limits of claim clearly stated



## TRANSPARENCY

Satisfy the consumer's appetite for information, and do not hide

- Developer of the claim and provider of evidence published
- Traceability and generation of claim (methods, sources, etc.) published
- Confidential information open to competent bodies



## ACCESSIBILITY

Let the information get to the consumer, not the other way around

- Clearly visible: claim easily found
- Readily accessible: claim close to the product, and at required time and location

## ASPIRATIONAL PRINCIPLES

### THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Show the complete picture of product sustainability

- Environmental, social, and economic dimension considered
- Burden shifting between the dimensions avoided
- Complementary certification schemes combined



### BEHAVIOUR CHANGE AND LONGER TERM IMPACT

Help move from information to action

- Insights from behavioural science applied
- Consumers actively encouraged to play a role, where appropriate
- Longer-term relationship built with consumer



### MULTI-CHANNEL AND INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Engage with consumers in diverse ways

- Various complementing communication channels used
- Different user groups addressed with different channels
- Information complementary and not overloading the consumer



### COLLABORATION

Work with others to increase acceptance and credibility

- Broad range of stakeholders included in claim development and communication
- Joint communication channels employed
- Inclusive language used to make consumers feel part of a movement



### COMPARABILITY

Help consumers choose between similar products

- Product comparisons substantiated and helpful for consumers
- Approaches initiated by government or third parties followed
- Specific guidance followed



## THE TARGET AUDIENCES

Private sector: primary producers, manufacturers, retailers and procurement practitioners, recycling, waste and resource management facilities

Marketing and advertising professionals

Labelling and voluntary sustainability standards schemes

Governments (including sub-national authorities) and public procurement practitioners

Trade unions, trade or industry sector bodies

Consumer, environmental and other civil society organisations

Market surveillance authorities

Apply the Guidelines for the development of product sustainability information

Compare/ adapt (upcoming) product sustainability information schemes and policies to the Guidelines

Check the quality of product sustainability information by comparing to the Guidelines

## THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND NEXT STEPS

The Guidelines build on recognised, well-established national, regional and sectoral guidance. They were developed in an international consensus-finding process under the 10YFP Consumer Information Programme for Sustainable Consumption and Production (CI-SCP). Between June 2015 and October 2017, UN Environment and the International Trade Centre convened a working group comprising over 35 experts from various sectors and regions, which held several virtual meetings and one in-person workshop to develop the Guidelines. Comments received from more than 90 organisations during a two-month global consultation were also vital to the development process. The Guidelines are being road tested with organisations from different sectors and regions in 2017.

This publication is an output of the Consumer Information Programme of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP). The Programme is a global platform supporting the provision of quality information on goods and services, to engage and assist consumers in sustainable consumption.

Download the complete Guidelines at:  
[www.scpclearinghouse.org/consumerinformation-scp](http://www.scpclearinghouse.org/consumerinformation-scp)  
or contact: [ciscp@un.org](mailto:ciscp@un.org).

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