

3-CO Project overview

Labels and certification for bio-based products: Counteracting greenwashing and increasing consumer trust

Webinar

Margaux Le Gallou, ECOS, December 13 2024



ecos




Funded by
the European Union

The 3-CO project receives funding from the Horizon Europe Framework Programme under grant agreement number 101086086. Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



3-CO:


Concise Consumer Communication through Robust Labels for Bio-based Systems



ACTION
Horizon Coordination
and Support Actions




BUDGET
2,870,000



PARTNERS
9



COUNTRIES
7




TERM
01 Feb 2023 –
31 Jan 2026



3-CO The goals

- Improve the sustainability performance and competitiveness of bio-based systems by ***improving consumer-oriented labelling options for sustainable industrial biobased products*** by:
 - a) Developing a supportive framework that includes actionable guidelines for label design for labelling and certification scheme owners that reflect consumers' and other stakeholders' needs
 - b) Developing digital solutions to support better-informed decision-making processes of consumers
 - c) Putting forward policy recommendations to support the biobased sector, incl. social measures.
-  Enable and support consumers to make more sustainable/environmentally responsible purchasing choices



Are biobased labelling and certification schemes fit for purpose?



Selection of Bio-based Value Chains



Textiles

- Baby Clothing
- T-Shirts
- Mattresses



Housing

- Wooden Houses
- Furniture



Household Goods

- Biodegradable Plant Pots
- Bio-based PET/PEF-bottles



Bio-based Plastic Toys



Beauty Care



Deliverable 1.1

Selection of 25 Labelling and certification schemes

- Evaluation of LCS in the 10 industrial bio-based value-chains
- Assessment of the monitoring systems and indicators for these LCS
- Definition of affordability and economics of these LCS
- Evaluation of the effectiveness and robustness of existing labels
- Schemes include ecolabels (Blue Angel), raw material (FSC, BCI), social aspects (UEBT), biobased (ISCC+), etc.



Deliverable 1.2

Labelling and certification schemes criteria analysis

- LCS predominantly cover environmental aspects
 - Commonly addressed: chemical use, waste management, pollution, and water resources
 - Emerging topics: circularity, climate change
- Social aspects are covered to varying levels
 - Commonly addressed: child labour, discrimination, gender equality
 - Criteria beyond basic human rights are still rare
- All relevant aspects are covered by at least some LCS, but not one LCS can cover them all.

Robustness and effectiveness of schemes

- LCS must **manage expectations** from society, re. scope of certification, strictness of criteria. Labels are one tool to guide choice, among others.
- There is a need to **demonstrate impact**, beyond the number of certificates.
- **Mainstreaming paradox** for schemes that want to extend beyond best-in-class: attract more companies or keep strict criteria. This results in different approaches to support companies, and different impacts.
- Role of **collaboration and mutual recognition**: avoid the proliferation of differing criteria and overlapping labels, mutualise resources to cover new topics.
- **Role of consumers** in governance is still undervalued. Ecolabels are an exception.



Communicating to consumers



Consumers' behaviours and expectations

- Literature review:
 - Labels **positively influence** consumers' willingness to buy and pay for products
 - Labels influence **consumers' knowledge**, awareness, involvement, and trust.
 - Labels should focus on design, **visibility**, persuasiveness, information clarity, and private benefit
 - Lack of research on the **use of digital tools** to inform consumers about labels and products
- 3000 respondents survey across 10 European countries, 3 persona defined:
 - **Active advocate:** A consistently positive and proactive stance towards sustainable development
 - **Passive skeptics:** A consistent ambivalence towards sustainable development: they show neither positive nor negative inclination towards sustainability initiatives
 - **Convenience seekers:** Intellectual and emotional support for sustainable development, but actions don't always align.





Best practices in communicating sustainability to consumers

- There is a global consensus (regulation, guidance, standards) on the five key pillars of **accessibility, clarity, reliability, relevance and transparency**.
- Ecolabels and schemes with long B2C history (FSC) tend to show **better communication** in logo/label, website and claims than specialised schemes (especially those that still focus on B2B, e.g. RSB).
- It is **rarely possible to distinguish best in class / full lifecycle labels** from other types of labels by looking at a product.
- Too often logos and claims **lack clarity**, especially on the scope, grades or content attribution.
- LCS give good **guidance on claims and explanatory statements**, but they are **often not mandatory**: important to ensure that companies use these statements. Good examples from EU Ecolabel and Blue Angel.
- Open question: Should very specific labels be displayed to consumers, or rather incorporated in wider-ranging labels like ecolabels?

Upcoming Results

- Consumer-based digital solutions for LCS
- Guidelines on the design of B2C-labels for BBPs
- Recommendations on social measures to support better-informed decision-making, processes, social engagement and innovation





Thank you for your attention!

For more information, go to:

<https://3co-project.eu/>

Margaux.legallou@ecostandard.org



Funded by
the European Union