

'What', 'Why' and 'How' of Eco-labelling: Consultative Workshops for the Indian Textiles Industries

**UNEP/EC Project 'Enabling developing countries to seize eco-label opportunities'
New Delhi, 09 February 2010**

Objective

The overall objective of the consultative workshops is to promote sustainable production and consumption among the Indian textiles companies by encouraging them to increase the amount of eco-labelled textiles exports from India. The main outcome of the trainings will be companies informed about advantages presented by eco-labelling, pursuing these opportunities to improve their production, increase the supply of environmentally preferable products to both domestic and European market, and gain access to the growing market of green products in Europe through of a competitive advantage of the eco-labelled certified products.

After attending the workshop delivered, participants should:

- have improved understanding of eco-labelling, factors for its effectiveness and opportunities presented to producers and consumers;
- understand the technical adaptation required by industries to meet the eco-label criteria;
- understand and follow the application process for the EU flower certification;
- understand how to place and market such products

Following the trainings, a number of companies will submit business proposals for getting the eco-label awards for their products and three of them will be selected for the purpose of this project. They will receive technical assistance of the national experts to go through certification. The ultimate goal of these programmes is to have at least one (or more) products from India certified with the EU Flower.

Background

This four-year project [Duration: 2007-2010] is implemented by Sustainable Consumption and Production Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics together with InWEnt – Capacity Building International in close association with the local country partners and is co-funded by the EU (EC Programme on Environment in Developing Countries) & the Federal Ministry for the Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ, German Ministry).

The project involves six countries, e.g. Brazil, China, India, Kenya, Mexico and South Africa which have selected different export product groups, i.e. textiles, footwear, televisions and paper for which the project will help to seize eco-labelling opportunities.

Leveraging on trade and specifically on developed countries' demand for environmentally friendly products, the project intends to foster target countries' use of eco-labels that represent voluntary, participatory, market-based and transparent economic instruments aiming at decreasing the environmental impact of products throughout their life-cycle, promoting natural resource efficiency of industrial processes, while enabling consumers to make informed decisions based on environmental preferability of a product.

Primary objective of this project is to increase the number of export products from target countries eco-labelled with the EU Eco-label or other European countries' eco-labels (Type 1) mainly through capacity building and technical assistance to relevant stakeholders (business, including industrial designers and retail sector, governments, NGO's).

Thus in India the project aims at increasing the number of textile products from India to EU with the EU Eco-label through capacity building and technical assistance to the textile

industries and relevant government officials in India. Product compliance with EU environmental standards and regulations will increase their competitiveness in the international and specifically in the EU market, leading in the mid-term to economic benefits for industry (and government) representatives, as a result of less natural resources being employed and to the reduced recovery costs of environmental degradation.

Context

The first on the ground activity of the project consisted in the organisation of a National Ecolabelling Workshop in each of the countries involved in the project. In India the workshop was organised in Jaipur on 23-24 June 2008 by Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS), the Indian partner of the project and the Confederation of Indian Textiles Industries (CITI), in collaboration with UNEP.

The national eco-labelling workshop brought together relevant Government decision makers, textiles industry representatives, as well as representatives from textiles associations, national laboratories associated with the manufacturing of textiles, national representatives of the Ecomark scheme and standardisation bodies, NGOs and consumer organisations, representatives of the EU eco-label scheme, international eco-label and sustainable consumption experts, industry representatives that got their textiles successfully eco-labelled, as well as UNEP and the European Commission representatives.

However, during this event many stakeholders expressed the need for a similar workshop in southern part of India to generate wider awareness among the stakeholders about the project activities and its related benefits. Giving this view considerable importance, a similar workshop was held on 27 July 2009 in Coimbatore– a major textiles hub in South India. Approximately 40 stakeholders from the textile industries, associations and textiles laboratories in and around the Tirupur Textile Cluster attended, leading to more awareness on the importance of sustainability and the opportunities related to eco-labelling.

The second stage of the project entails in depth capacity building of textiles industries around the country through training programmes or consultative workshops that are conducted by national experts who underwent an intensive training at the global train-the-trainer workshop which took place in September 2009 in Bonn, Germany. The third stage will entail providing technical and financial assistance to three Indian companies to get one or more of their products labeled by the EU Eco-label.

The Event

This event in New Delhi is the first of five one day consultative workshops to be held around the country from February – April 2010.

Expected Outcome

The expected outcomes of the consultative workshop are:

- More aware textiles industries around the Delhi NCR area on the importance and benefits of eco-labelling, and how to follow the procedural application process for the certification with the European Union (EU) flower eco-label
- Up to three companies being provided with technical and financial assistance on going through the process of certification
- At least one (or more) products from India certified with the EU Flower

Participants

Around 30 participants from textiles industries in and around the Delhi/NCR area.

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