

Types of Ecolabels

Globally, there are three types of ecolabels as defined by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO). Each type has specific characteristics, but they are not all equal. Standard criteria for an ecolabel are that the standards must:

- *be developed in a transparent process open to the public*
- *address multiple key environmental and health impacts over the product life cycle*
- *be attainable, verifiable and measurable*
- *consider the performance of the product*
- *be published and available for inspection by anyone*
- *be updated regularly to represent environmental leadership*

Type 1 environmental labelling is defined in the "ISO 14024:1999 Environmental labels and declarations – Type 1 environmental labelling" Guidance Standard as "A voluntary, multiple-criteria based, third party program that awards a license which authorizes the use of environmental labels on products indicating overall environmental preferability of a product within a particular product category based on life cycle considerations." A Type 1 label is a scientifically accredited label on goods that meet specific criteria which are recognised and independently reviewed by a third party.

Type 2 environmental labelling represents claims by manufacturers, importers, retailers, or distributors which focus on all or only some of the life-cycle aspects and the environmental characteristics of a product or service, e.g 'dolphin safe'. This type of ecolabel is

- *self-declared*
- *focuses on a particular quality of a product, e.g. compostable; recyclable; etc*
- *not independently certified*
- *should be verifiable (but is not always)*
- *can raise questions about the validity of certification when unverifiable*

Often referred to as 'Corporate Labels', Type 2 ecolabels may or may not meet all of the criteria associated with Type 1 labels, and are generally used as a marketing or promotion tool.

Type 3 environmental labelling is one which makes voluntary declarations of the sustainability of a product or service's entire life cycle. This type of ecolabel

- *may or may not be third-party certified*
- *is often B2B in nature*
- *does not certify any specific environmentally responsible quality of a product/service*
- *facilitates the drawing independent conclusions about the sustainability of a product or service*

Type 3 are perhaps the most common labels in the marketplace because they are generally created with the specific intention to sell a product or service that might otherwise not fully consider the life-cycle of the product or service - or not be regarded as fully environmentally responsible. Good examples are products that place a green leaf symbol; a recyclable logo or other non-specific terminology without providing validation of the claims being made on packaging.

