



# CIRAIG

Interuniversity Reference Center for the life cycle  
Assessment, Interpretation and Management of  
products, processes and services

## Ecolabel and Transparency

Université  
de Montréal

MEG

ÉCOLE  
POLYTECHNIQUE  
MONTRÉAL

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# Goal of labels and declarations (ISO 14020)

- Through communication of verifiable and accurate information, that is not misleading, on environmental aspects of products and services, to encourage the demand for and supply of those products and services that cause less stress on the environment, thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continuous environmental improvement



# Goals

- Protection of the environment (Natural environment)
- Encourage environmentally sound innovations (Enterprises)
- Build consumer awareness of environmental issues (User)



# Environmental labels and declarations

- ISO 14024 Environmental labels and declarations  
(Type I environmental labelling)
- ISO 14021 Self-declared environmental claims  
(Type II environmental labelling)
- ISO 14025 Environmental labels and declarations  
(Type III environmental declarations)



# Type I Label specific goal

- Identify overall environmental preference of a product or service within a particular product/service category based on life cycle considerations.



# Type I Label

- Voluntary
- Delivered by a third party
- Evaluation criteria are scientific, complete and transparent
- Regional, national or international application

**Ecolabel Type I *ISO14024***



# Ecolabelling process (Type I)

- Setting criteria
- Certification

**Ecolabel Type I *ISO14024***

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# Setting criteria

- Product category
- Life cycle considerations

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# Certification

- Compliance to criteria
- Agreement

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# In practice

- Life cycle and criteria (Type of evaluation used)
- Organizational and legal aspects (Example: The Canadian Environmental Choice Program managed by Terra Choice.)

**Ecolabel Type I *ISO14024***



# Evaluation used in programs

## 1- Qualitative LCA

Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, United States, Italy.

## 2- Qualitative as well as quantitative considerations in some life cycle stages

Austria, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Netherlands, United kingdom.

## 3- Quantitative LCA

France, Denmark.

**Ecolabel Type I *ISO14024***

# Example

## Environmental Choice Canada :

- The criteria of 55 products were determined by the initiative of Terra Choice with its Consultative Committee.
- The criteria of 85 other categories were given following the request of a producer. Terra Choice left with the producer the care to prove in what his product is less damaging than other similar products.

### Result:

- Delivery of an ecolabel for a product which, at a given stage of its life cycle, is 20% less damaging than other products of its category.

**Ecolabel Type I ISO14024**



# Organizational and legal aspects

- Because most of the programs are managed by private organizations, there is a lack of government involvement and regulation. The Canadian Environment Choice Program is a good example of this situation.
- In North America, ecolabelling programs rely on the private sector. This reality has an impact in the selection of products and ecolabeling criteria as well as on the methodology used.

**Ecolabel Type I *ISO14024***



# Conclusion on Type I

- The determination and the weighting of the criteria from one program to another rest on different methodologies and practices.
- The mode of definition of the criteria of ecolabelling for these various programs translates into the preeminence of a competing logic over an ecological logic.

**Ecolabel Type I *ISO14024***



# Type II Specific goals

- Standardize the use of self-declared environmental claims
  - More specific claims
  - Promote environmental improvements
  - Minimize imprecise claims
  - Reduce confusion
  - Facilitate international commerce
  - Make well informed choices

**Ecolabel Type II *ISO14021***





# Frequently used terms in environmental claims

- Compostable
- Degradable
- Designed for disassembly
- Extended life product
- Recovery energy
- Recyclable
- Recycled content, etc.

**Ecolabel Type II *ISO14021***



# Danger with self-declared environmental claims

- Claims are made according to a specific life cycle phase
  - The phases where the impact is more important can be ignored. Consequently, the labeled product is not necessarily the one with the less impact.

**Ecolabel Type II *ISO14021***



# Environmental Declarations Type III

- Same general objectives as 14020
- The difference is on the methodological aspects
  - quantified environmental information on product in type III declarations must be based on procedures and results issuing from a life cycle analysis in conformity with ISO 14040 standards.

Ecolabel Type III *ISO14025*



# Use of Type III declarations

- Give environmental information on a product
- Compare products

Ecolabel Type III *ISO14025*



# Main difficulties in Type III

- Availability of data bases
- Specific methodology and data for local and regional impacts
- Accessibility for SME

Ecolabel Type III *ISO14025*



# Objectives of labelling

Declaration	Environment	Enterprises	User (public)
Type I	No	Yes	No
Type II	No	Yes	No
Type III	Yes	Yes if...	Yes if...

# Improvements

- Evaluation (SLCA with single score indicator)
- Governmental implication
- Legislative framework
- Banned on self-declared claims



# Improvement (difficulties)

- May be expensive for the Government at the beginning, but this expenditure must be considered as a long term investment.
- The possible and future responsibility for the Government in granting Ecolabel to products which could prove to be harmful in the future (e.g. of asbestos).
- Risk of favoritism towards certain companies.

