

Analysis of the local use of ecolabelled detergents

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Abstract

Ecolabelling is an activity whose main goal is to establish a voluntary system of granting an Ecolabel for products with minimum environmental and health impact, for the product's whole life-cycle¹. The purpose of using Ecolabels is to promote the products that have minimal environmental impact; ecolabelling is a voluntary activity.

Keywords:

Ecolabel, ecolabelling as a voluntary activity, promotion of products with reduced environmental impact

Introduction

The aim of the EU politics, regarding business and environmental protection, is to take a step further towards a sustainable development. The EU ecolabelling scheme² is now part of a wider approach to Integrated Product Policy (IPP), through the EU Action Programme.

The EU Ecolabel is based on promoting the image of some non-food ecological products throughout Europe.

The goal of the community system, the one that grants the label, is to promote the products that can reduce the negative environmental impact, compared to other products from the same category, contributing this way to the efficient use of resources and a high level of environmental protection. This goal is reached through guiding and educating consumers by giving the right, precise and scientific-based information written on those products.

At national level, the ecological label is regulated through the Governmental Decision no. 661/2011 regarding the establishment of measures that ensure the application of the

¹ Ministry of the Environment - <http://www.etichetaecologica.ro>

² Regulation EC No. 1980/2000 in www.europa.ro

regulation's provisions (CE) no. 66/2010 of the European Parliament and Council from the 25th November 2009 regarding the EU Ecolabel³.

The EU Ecolabel is a unique way of certification whose purpose is to help consumers distinguish the eco friendly products and services; foods and medicines not included⁴.

The Ecolabel has an european dimension- a producer, retailer or a service povider who fulfills all the criteria for a group of products and who applies for ecolabelling, can sell on the European Union's market.

Another feature is that the Ecolabel is selective- it is granted only to products with minimum environmetal impact.

It is also transparent- the transparency and widespreading are influenced by the significant input of the representatives of the industry, commerce, environmental and consumer ogranizations.

The final consumer will recognize the flower logo as representing the criteria established according to technical and scientificl guides, with a great participation of the independent and neutral organizations⁵.

The Ecolabel works as a multi-criteria approach- the criteria is not based on a single parameter, but rather on a series of studies that analyze the product's or service's environmental impact through its lifecycle, starting with the processing of raw materials in the pre-production stage, then production, distribution and final storing⁶.

The Ecolabel is voluntary, the scheme is not established upon ecological standards that producers must follow. The merchant, the producer or the service provider may also decide on applying the Ecolabel or not. The voluntary nature of the scheme is based on the fact that it doesn't create commercial barriers⁷.

Material and methods

The field research has been done in 2013, in Arad, through 30 questionnaires whose purpose was to determin the level of knowledge regarding ecolabelled products, as well as the level of knowledge and the level of use of ecolabelled detergents. After applying the questionnaires on the field, the data was processed using the SPSS program; the findings and the results will be presented further on.

³ HG 661/2011 from www.legis.ro

⁴ EMAS - <http://www.eco-label.com>

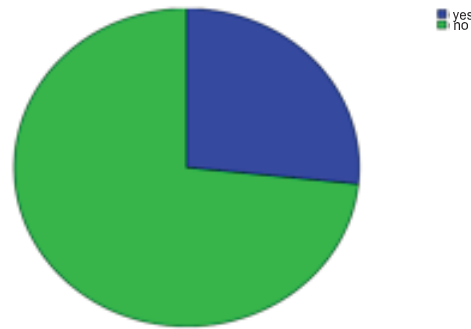
⁵ Ministry of the Environment - <http://www.mmediu.ro>

⁶ EMAS - <http://www.eco-label.com>

⁷ Ministry of the Environment - <http://www.etichetaecologica.ro>

Results and discussions

The first sought after aspect was that of evidentiating the level of awareness of the ecolabelled products; as shown in the figure below, 26.7% are aware of the Ecolabel, the other 73.3% are not.

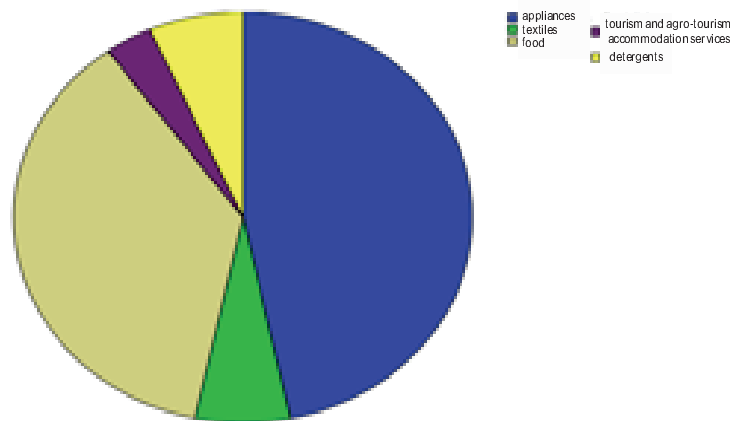


Source: Data collected from the questionnaires, 2013

Figure 1

Have you ever heard of the Ecolabel?

Analyzing the first experience with ecolabelled products, or rather on which products was the Ecolabel noticed for the first time, it can be seen that the majority of the subjects asked, 46.7%, claim to have come across it on appliances, household machines, and only 6.7% came across it on detergents, Fig. 2.

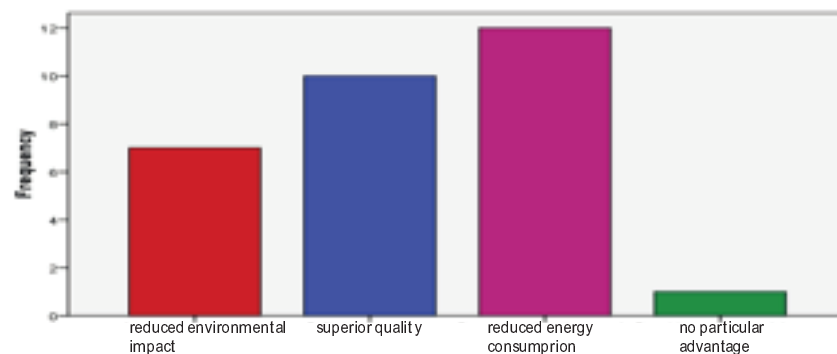


Source: Data collected from the questionnaires, 2013

Figure 2 On which of the following products/services did you come across the Ecolabel for the first time?

For this question it must be highlighted that, erroneously, a significant number of respondents claimed that they came across the Ecolabel on food products, confounding the Ecolabel with the bioproducts, which have a totally different legislation.

Further on, we wanted to show the characteristics of ecolabelled products and to see which is the level of knowledge of the subjects concerning these products, and, it has been noticed that even if the majority have not come across ecolabelled products, 40% still consider that these products have reduced energy, 33.3% that they are of superior quality, 23,3% that they have reduced environmental impact and 3.3% consider that ecolabelled products have no particular advantage. The data is shown in Fig.3.

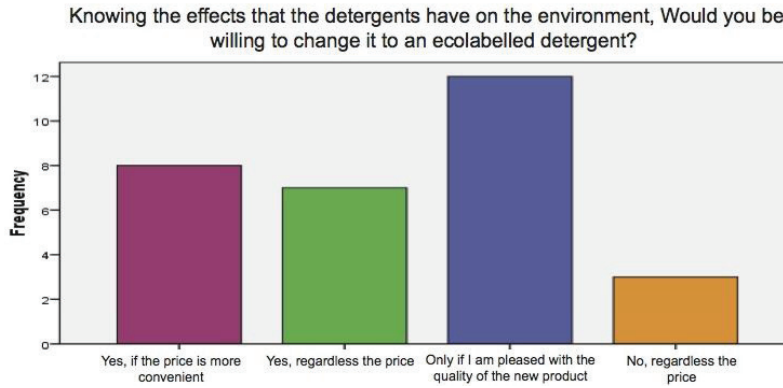


Source: Data collected from the questionnaires, 2013

Figure 3 What main advantage do you think ecolabelled products have?

When asked about the ecolabelled detergents, the percentage regarding the awareness about them shares the same levels as the awareness of other ecolabelled products. Hence, 26,7% are aware of the ecolabelled detergents and 63.3% are not aware of them.

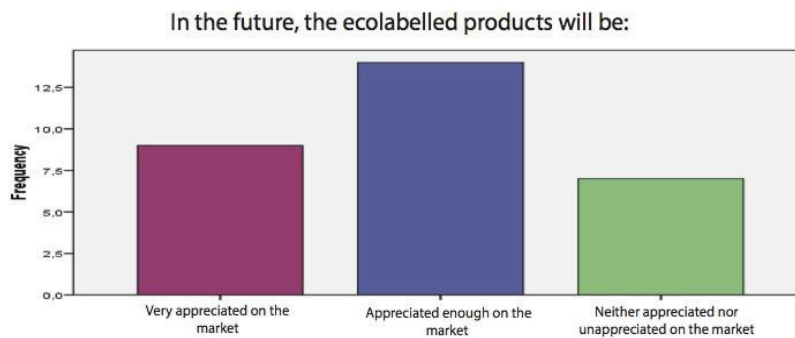
It is pleasantly surprising how the consumers embrace the new, because when asked if they would replace their usual detergent with an ecolabelled one, the vast majority replied with a yes. Hence 40% would make the change to the ecolabelled detergent if they were pleased by its quality, 26.7% would make the change if the price would be affordable, 23.3 % would make the change regardless of the price and 10% would not accept changing their usual detergent. Fig. 4.



Source: Data collected from the questionnaires, 2013

Figure 4

The respondents maintain this optimistic trend even when they are asked how they see the future of ecolabelled products. For this question, 30% consider that in the future, the ecolabelled products will be very appreciated on the market, 46.7% think that these products would be just appreciated, and 23.3% claim that they will be neither appreciated nor unappreciated; the data is shown in Fig.5.



Source: Data collected from the questionnaires, 2013

Figure 5

Consequently, it can be said that even though at the moment the ecolabelled detergents are relatively unknown to the wide public, in the future they will become appreciated and sought after by most consumers, some will acquire them regardless of their costs, some will do it depending on the cost while others will buy them if they are going to be pleased with the quality of the product, compared to the one that they usually use.

An optimistic trend towards the use of ecolabelled products and towards eco-products in general can be observed.

Recommendations

We recommend a better advertising of all kinds of ecolabelled products, especially the one studied today, the detergents Ecolabel.

References

- 1 Regulation EC N 1980/2000 in www.eco-label.com
2. European Union Eco-label - <http://ec.europa.eu>
3. Ministry of the Environment - <http://www.mmediu.ro>
4. EMAS - <http://www.eco-label.com>
5. Ministry of the Environment - <http://www.etichetaecologica.ro>
6. HG 661/2011 from www.legis.ro
7. Data collected from the questionnaires, 2013