How ‘green’ is our food?
Ensuring trustworthy information on food environmental impacts

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Getting rid of greenwashing
OBSTACLES ON THE WAY TO THE GREEN TRANSITION
WHY IS A CHANGE URGENT?

- Consumers more and more aware of the impact of their actions on the environment and climate change
  - 57% of consumers are receptive to environmental claims when making their purchase decision
  - 61% of consumers find it difficult to understand which products are truly environmentally-friendly

- Many green claims are unsubstantiated and potentially misleading
  - 45% consumers don’t trust environmental claims
INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK:

- Green Deal Commununication (December 2019)
- Circular Economy Action Plan (April 2020)
- New Consumer Agenda (November 2020)
- Proposal on empowering consumers in the green transition (March 2022)
- Upcoming proposal on substantiating green claims with the product environmental footprint method (Q3-Q4 2022 tbc)
1. Making an environmental claim related to future environmental performance without clear, objective and verifiable commitments and targets and without an independent monitoring system;
2. Advertising benefits for consumers that are considered as a common practice in the relevant market.

Targeted amendments to the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive expressly targeting green washing practices

Ban on a case by case basis
EMPOWERING CONSUMERS IN THE GREEN TRANSITION

1. Displaying a sustainability label which is not based on a certification scheme or not established by public authorities.

2. Making a generic environmental claim for which the trader is not able to demonstrate recognised excellent environmental performance relevant to the claim.

3. Making an environmental claim about the entire product when it actually concerns only a certain aspect of the product.

4. Presenting requirements imposed by law on all products within the relevant product category on the Union market as a distinctive feature of the trader’s offer.

Ban in all circumstances
RECOMMENDATIONS

- A pre-approval procedure for all green claims and labels inspired by the Health and Nutrition Claims Regulation

- An EU-level assessment

- Public Registry with an erga omnes effect

- Blacklist of claims impossible to substantiate

- Obligation to submit the evidence before using a claim

- Effective market surveillance

- Introducing a centralised accreditation scheme for green labels

For more information see: BEUC position paper
Before

Frank and Svetlana are shopping for a green washing up liquid.

But with so many products on the market claiming to be green, it’s hard to know what’s actually true!

After

With a proper pre-approval process for green claims, they know which claims they can really trust.

No products should be able to claim that they are green if they cannot prove it first!
Environmental labelling of food
Beware of a ‘label jungle’
What’s in the EU policy pipeline?

Proposal for a new law on a Sustainable EU Food System (by 2023):
➢ incl. a “sustainable food labelling framework”
Challenges in measuring the environmental impacts of food products

• Limitations of the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) method:
  ✓ Product-to-product comparison only possible where ‘PEF category rules’ exist.
  ✓ Lack of robust indicators for several key environmental impacts.
  ✓ Product-based approach.
  ✓ Positive externalities not considered.

KEY QUESTION IS: what signal do we want to send to consumers? Towards which products do we want to nudge them?

Any environmental food label and the methodology behind it **must drive changes in diets and food production methods which are in line with the EU's objectives for sustainable food and farming.**
A meaningful environmental label for food must ....

- Be transparently developed, based on solid scientific evidence free from commercial interests.
- Be interpretive (colour-coding) and applied across the board.
- Allow comparing products within (distinguish between production systems/agricultural practices) and across food categories (plant vs. animal source foods).
- Be accessible to all types of businesses, big and small.
What’s the point if all products score the same?
Beyond labelling and consumer information

THE ROLE OF THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

The shift to a more sustainable food system cannot rely solely on individual choices by consumers.

Environmentally friendly food must become more available and affordable, through an adequate mix of incentives and stricter regulations.
Thank you for your attention!

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