

***'What', 'Why' and 'How' of Eco-labelling: Consultative Workshops
for the Indian Textiles Industries***
Workshop Background
Tirupur, 10 March 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. Companies will be informed about the opportunities presented by eco-labelling, how to pursue these to improve their production, increase the supply of environmentally friendly products to both domestic and European market, and gain access to the growing market for green products in Europe through the competitive advantage provided by eco-labelled 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 workshops, 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, namely 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. Eco-labels represent voluntary, participatory, market-based and transparent economic instruments and aim to decrease the environmental impact of products throughout their life-cycle, promote natural resource efficiency of industrial processes, and enable consumers to make informed decisions based on the eco-friendliness of a product.

The 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 (primarily businesses, but also governments and NGOs).

Thus, in India the project aims at increasing the number of textile products (labeled with the EU Eco-label) from India to the EU, 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 under the project was a National Eco-labelling 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 Confederation of Indian Textiles Industries (CITI), in collaboration with UNEP.

The workshop brought together relevant Government decision makers, representatives from the textiles industry, 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 representatives from UNEP and the European Commission.

However, during this event many stakeholders expressed the need for a similar workshop in the southern part of India to generate wider awareness among 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. Approximately 40 stakeholders from the textile industries, associations and textiles laboratories in and around the Tirupur textiles cluster attended, leading to more awareness on the importance of sustainability and the opportunities presented by eco-labelling.

The project is in its second stage which entails in depth capacity building of textiles industries around the country through consultative workshops that are conducted by national experts who underwent an intensive training at a global train-the-trainer workshop which took place in September 2009 in Bonn, Germany.

The Event

This event in Tirupur is the second 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 Tirupur 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 Tirupur area.

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