

Eco-label: An Indian Context

Introduction

In the modern developed technology and increasing environmental awareness by consumers, the concept of the eco-label helps the consumers to take decisions about the products which are eco-friendly. It has emerged as one of the effective communication tools to communicate these actions to the consumers. It enables consumer to make safe and healthy purchasing decisions based on the information provided related to environmental characteristics and environmental impacts of eco-labeled products over its life cycle. So, it is now imperative for manufacturers to gain competitive advantage in the marketplace and to differentiate their products from others.



- **What is Eco-label**

Eco-labels are voluntary certification practiced around the world. It is developed by governments, manufacturers, and third-party organisations independently. Producers and service providers demonstrate through eco-label that they comply with high standards of environmental protection during the life-cycle of the product and the provided services.



- **Importance of Eco-labels**

Eco-labels are important for promotion of international sustainable consumption and production policy which aims at reducing the negative impact of consumption and production on the environment, health, climate and natural resources and encouraging corporate social responsibility and sustainable lifestyles.



International trade is defined as a trade which is ‘conducted across borders by a working framework that reconciles various laws, cultures and business practices.’ Eco-label has gained significance in international trade because the General Agreement of Trade and Tariff (GATT), executed by 22 nations (including India) in 1948, has insisted upon transparency of the governments involved in the trade agreements and international trade facilitated by World Trade Organisation (WTO).



- **EcoMark Scheme in India**

Government of India in 1991 launched its first eco-label scheme, known as ‘Eco-mark’ through the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), GoI that follows a cradle-to-grave approach (from raw material extraction, to manufacturing, and to disposal). It advocates pro-active and promotional roles of the consumers, the industry, and the government at one platform to address environmental protection issues and to implement environmental protection strategy.

The EcoMark Scheme of India is very similar to ecolabeling schemes of other countries. Ecolabel is awarded by most countries on the basis of environmental considerations, but in India it is also linked with the safety and quality of products. The products should meet both environmental and quality criteria set by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). The BIS is responsible for setting quality and safety norms and closely involved with the implementation of the Ecomark scheme.



The programme is run by the Ministry of Environment of Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), with the technical advice of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

- **The EcoMark Logo**

An earthen pot symbolises the Ecomark scheme that uses a renewable resource like earth, does not produce hazardous waste and consumes less energy in making. It puts across its environmental message and the image has the ability to reach people to promote a greater awareness of the need to be kind to the environment.



- **Implementation of EcoMark Scheme**

The Central Pollution Control Board has set up the guidelines for the environmentally friendly products. The products can obtain environmental labelling from the Government of India if they meet the criterion set by the acts in Indian laws- the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, the Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977 and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

The EcoMark is awarded to those consumer goods if they meet the relevant standards of the Bureau of Indian Standards and specified environmental criteria. The manufacturers should produce the consent clearance as per the provisions of Indian environmental laws, product packaging, displays environment friendly criteria in brief, and has eco-friendly packaging (reusable or recyclable or biodegradable materials).



It is not awarded for the services.

- **Product Categories identified in the Ecomark Scheme**

The CPCB has identified following product categories:

1. Aerosol Propellants
2. Batteries
3. Dry Batteries
4. Cosmetics

5. Electrical/Electronic Goods
6. Fire-extinguisher
7. Food Additives
8. Food Items: Edible Oils, Tea and Coffee
9. Leather
10. Lubricating Oils
11. Packaging Materials
12. Paints and Powder Coatings
13. Paper
14. Plastic Products
15. Soaps & Detergents
16. Textiles
17. Wood Substitutes

Out of 16 categories following 13 categories incorporated Ecomark requirements in their BIS standards. It is under process for rest three categories.

1. Batteries
2. Cosmetics
3. Electrical/Electronic Goods
4. Fire-extinguisher
5. Food Additives
6. Food Items: Edible Oils, Tea and Coffee
7. Leather
8. Packaging Materials
9. Paints and Powder Coatings
10. Paper
11. Soaps & Detergents
12. Textiles
13. Wood Substitutes

- **Need of creating awareness among industries**

The need of effective promotion for creating awareness, incorporating feasible product criteria, and positive lobbying of industry bodies can improve the visibility of this eco-label and position it as recognition of Indian efforts towards green products and commitment towards environmental protection at international level.

