



## A consumer guide to green labels and environmentally friendly shopping

The British Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has launched a consumer guide to green labels. The Shopper's Guide to Green Labels is a handy leaflet which folds down to credit card size. The leaflet explains the significance of the green labels and logos commonly used on products in the UK.

### Consumers are confused

In most countries, there is a large number of green labels. Some of them are labelling schemes from international or national organisations or authorities. Others are made by the manufactures and retailers of a given product. The latter may have varying seriousness.

Labels simply using phrases like *environmentally friendly* or *green product* do not give any substantial information. The large number of green labels, and the sometimes rather vague messages the labels communicate, may confuse the consumers. This calls for some kind of guidance.

### Trustworthy labelling

A good label provides useful information and clear messages on what the consumer can expect from the product. The labels can cover a wide range of issues, such as protection of natural resources, biodiversity and habitats, minimisation of energy and water used in manufacturing, restrictions on chemicals, air emissions, water and soil as well as reduction of energy consumption in use. Also the labels can reflect policies on packaging, waste management and recycling.

The Shopper's Guide to Green Labels is a reliable and trustworthy tool which may serve as an inspiring example for ministries of environment in other countries and environmental organisations aiming to promote reliable green labels. The guide may be downloaded free of charge from:

**[www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consumerprod/shopguide/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consumerprod/shopguide/)**

This newsflash is issued by the EECN which is DG Environment's support structure for European Environmental Communication Networks.

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