EU Ecolabel Month

Mid-September to mid-October 2010

Press Pack

Contents

What is the EU Ecolabel Month?

What is the EU Ecolabel?

History and development

The new regulation

Testimonials

Current product groups

Green Store for consumers

EU Ecolabel Communication Award

Further information

What is the EU Ecolabel or former “Flower Month”?

The EU Ecolabel Month is an EU campaign to promote the EU Ecolabel. After four successful Flower Month campaigns in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009, the 2010 EU Ecolabel Month campaign will be held between mid-September to mid-October in several Member States. There will be a wide range of activities in the different participating countries.

The objective of this promotional campaign is to increase the knowledge of the EU Ecolabel and what it stands for among consumers, as well as to encourage its uptake in the manufacturing and tourism sectors.

Activities range from in-store actions and media activities to seminars and competitions to be held on websites, in magazines, or in schools. The competent bodies are the national project managers and planned activities vary according to local priorities. A key characteristic of the campaign is the active involvement of the different stakeholders: retailers, licence holders, environmental and consumer NGOs.

The information that follows is intended to provide you with background information and a summary of key statements.

What is the EU Ecolabel?

"The EU Ecolabel makes it easy to choose green"!

Established in 1992, the EU Ecolabel is a certification scheme aimed to promote products and services which have a reduced environmental impact thus helping European consumers distinguish more environmentally friendly products.

A company is allowed to put the EU Ecolabel logo on its products only when an independent body recognises that the product shows compliance with the strict ecological and performance criteria of the EU Ecolabel. The logo offers consumers a guarantee of scientific credibility and good quality and provides them with the opportunity to identify healthier and more environmentally friendly products. There are currently twenty-six different product groups covering a wide range of categories, from household appliances to cleaning products, from home and garden to clothing and paper products, and from tourist accommodation services to camping services (see below). Already more than 1100 licences have been awarded for thousands of products available on the market. In 2006, some retailers participating to the Flower Month Campaign experienced sales increases of up to 600%.

The EU Ecolabel is administered by the European Commission. The European Union Ecolabelling Board (EUEB) is the central body of the scheme and is mandated to contribute to the development and revision of EU Ecolabel criteria and to any review of the implementation of the EU Ecolabel scheme.
It is made up of representatives from the competent bodies of the Member States and the members of the Consultation Forum (representatives of consumer and environment NGOs, trade unions, industry, SMEs and commerce).

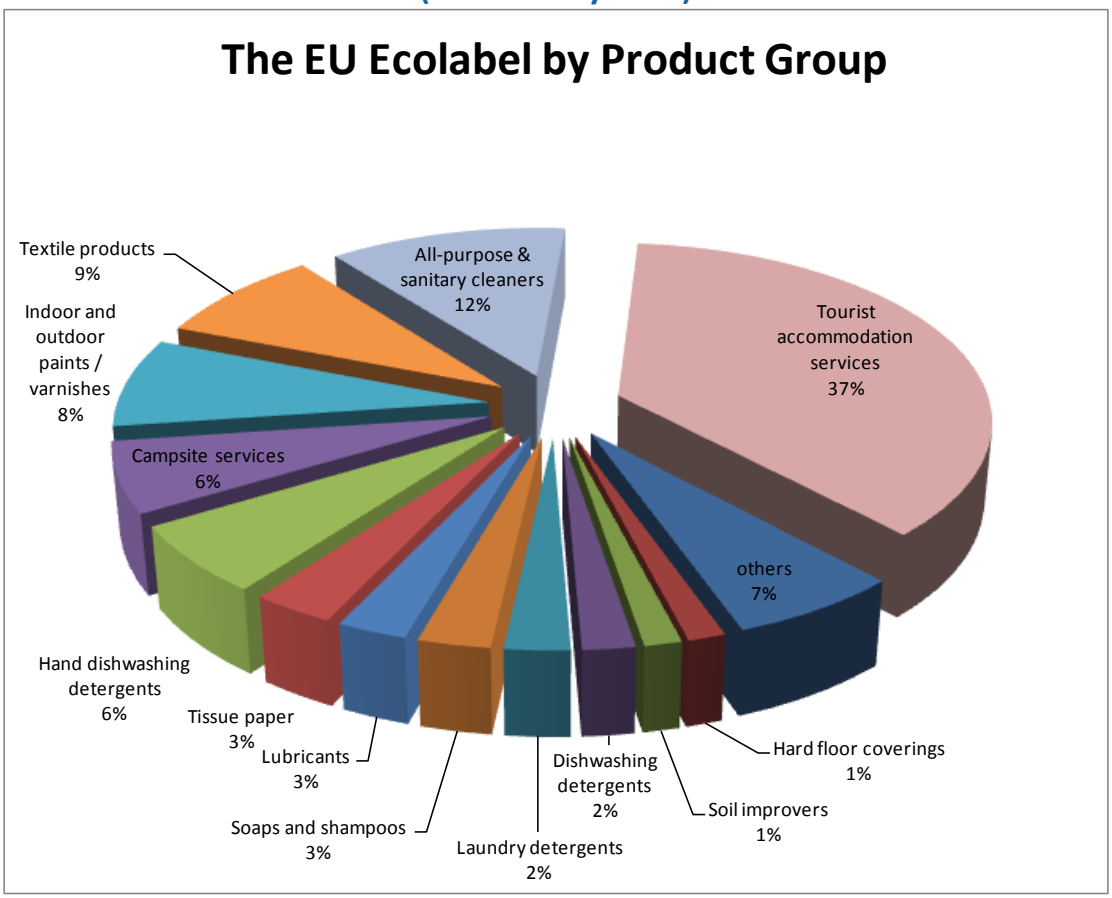
History and Development

The EU Ecolabel was established in March 1992. The following two years were spent drawing up the road map for the implementation of the scheme: decisions on procedural guidelines, on a standard contract and on establishing the fee system.

In 1993 the first two product criteria documents were adopted and a few months later, the first Ecolabel was awarded.

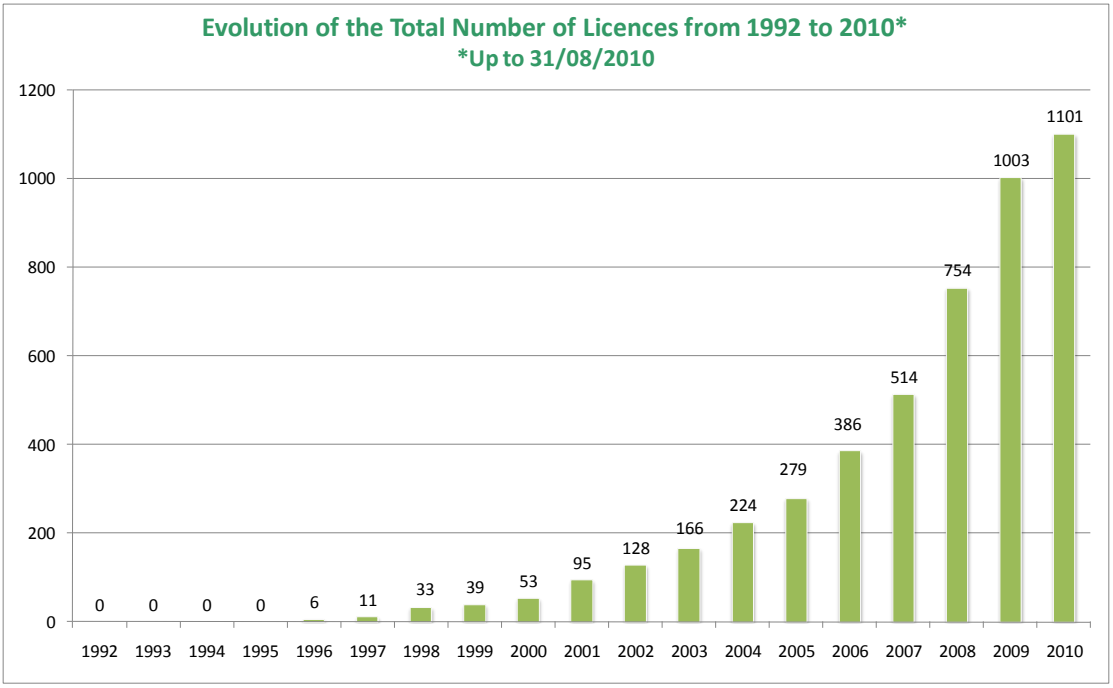
In November 1994 criteria for two further product groups - soil improvers and tissue paper - were introduced. Today there are 26 product groups with several more in preparation. The following chart shows the division of the licences by product group.

Figure 1: The EU Ecolabel by Product Group (as of 31 July 2010)



Since 1998 the numbers of EU Ecolabel holders shows a consistently high rate of growth as illustrated below.

Figure 2: Evolution of the Total Number of Licences from 1992 to 2010 (Up to 31 August 2010)



In the year 2000 a new Regulation on the EU Ecolabel entered into force aimed at streamlining the scheme and making it more attractive to producers. The EUEB was created. Reduced fees for SMEs were introduced. Traders and retailers were given the possibility to apply directly for the EU Ecolabel and the scope of the scheme was broadened to services.

The year 2001 saw the adoption of the Ecolabel working plan which looked to the longer term future of the EU Ecolabel. This includes its synergies with other types of environmental labelling and with EMAS, its role as a benchmark for public procurement, its resources, and the role of the EU Ecolabel in the wider policy framework of sustainable consumption and integrated product policy.

The EU Ecolabel working plan also included the revision of the scheme in 2005. Following a large-scale evaluation study of the scheme carried out in 2005, which showed that at micro-level, the Ecolabel scheme is achieving its objectives and can significantly improve the environmental performance of participating organisations, a public consultation took place beginning 2007.

The new regulation

The second revision of the scheme was proposed in July 2008 as part of the Sustainable Consumption and Production/Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan presented by the European Commission (EC). The objective of this last revision is to mainly streamline the procedure to allow a faster growth of the number of product and service groups and to make the system less costly and bureaucratic for SMEs as well as for large companies. In an interview with BIO Intelligence Service published in the Flower Newsletter (#01/2009), Cristina Marongiu from the UEAMPE[1] said: "*We are very positive about the attention accorded to reduce the "burdens on SMEs" (article 8), and particularly the reduced fees. […] We recognise the attempt to make the procedure easier, clearer and more transparent, and the effort to include the needs of SMEs.*"

The expected outcomes of the new scheme are:

- A total of 40 to 50 product groups bearing the EU Ecolabel by 2015
- An increasing number of EU ecolabelled products available in stores for consumers to choose from
- Simplified criteria documents which provide guidance and are more user-friendly for public purchasers
- A strong synergy between the EU Ecolabel and other national labeling systems so that the EU Ecolabel criteria become a standard for national schemes developing for the first time a product group already covered by the EU Ecolabel
- Limited/no annual fees while remaining strict and credible
- Broadening the scope of the EU Ecolabel with a possible inclusion of processed food and products of aquaculture

The new Regulation on the EU Ecolabel is now official, entering into force 21 days after its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union on January 29th 2010. The new regulation is available for download here.

[1] European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Testimonials from NGOs

"The EU Flower is more important than ever. Ecolabelled products can be an important part of the solution to global warming as they have to use less energy, both in production and in use, and have to be easy to dispose off, once the consumers have stopped using them."

FORBRUGERRÅDET Uafhængig - siden 1947

Claus Jørgensen, Senior Environmental Adviser, The Danish Consumer Council

"Buying ecolabelled products can not only reduce impacts on the environment but also encourage more producers to be public and transparent about their environmental performance. Certainly the EU Ecolabel is a consumer's guide to products and services that are more environmentally friendly."

Montse Torrent, Director of the Organització de Consumidores I Usuaris de Catalunya (consumer Organisation in Catalunia, Spain)

"To reduce our ecological footprint we need to choose products whose production methods have less environmental impacts on the Earth. For this reason, the WWF recommends consumers to purchase products which are awarded with an official label such as the European Ecolabel."

Dominique Royet, Director of Enterprises Relations, WWF-France

"Consumers are drowning in green claims made by producers. The result is that consumers do not know which labels to trust. The Flower logo is only awarded after it has been verified by an independent body that the product complies with established ecological criteria. It is therefore the assurance of European green authenticity."

Blanca Morales, Ecolabel Coordinator, BEUC (The European Consumers' Organisation)

Testimonials from Holders

"Since 2001, Peintures ONIP has been convinced that the EU Ecolabel will give a friendlier image to the paint area. More than 80% of the current total range of our paint products bears the Flower and this is due to the strong desire of consumers and professionals to adopt a green attitude. We are committed to research in order to offer our consumers the most innovating products in agreement with the EU Ecolabel criterias."

Patrick Verlhac, Technical Director, Peintures ONIP
(Indoor and outdoor paints and varnishes)

"The EU Ecolabel has brought to my business an independent and internationally recognised assurance of exceptional environmental management and performance. In addition to significant cost savings the EU Ecolabel has differentiated my Hotel with a competitive advantage and has attracted additional business. My only regret is that I did not pursue the Ecolabel earlier!"

Joseph Dolan, Managing Director, Bush Hotel
(Tourist accommodations)

"Media Strom has always believed that a good night's sleep is the most essential ingredient of a happy life. […] The EU Ecolabel certification of our mattresses, issued by an independent and trustworthy authority, is the recognition for our customers that our production methods respect the environment."

Calliope Tsiamalou, Marketing Director, Media Strom
(Bed mattresses)

"Traditionally, potting soil and soil improvers' manufacturers use great quantities of peat but it is harmful to the environment. In 1999, Norland SA was the first company in Belgium to be awarded the EU Ecolabel for a peat-free soil improver. Since then our production has increased regularly thanks to the Flower. What is good for the environment ensures our growth. This is exactly what sustainable development is about."

Luc Minne, Manager, Norland S.A.
(Soil improvers)

Current Product Groups

The EU Ecolabel scheme is open to any product and service, except food, drink, pharmaceuticals and medical devices. There are currently twenty-six product categories, for which ecological criteria have been developed, with several further groups under development.

In all product groups, the relevant ecological issues and the corresponding criteria have been identified on the basis of comprehensive studies of the environmental aspects related to the entire life-cycle of these products.

An individual product must comply with all environmental and performance criteria in order to be awarded the EU Ecolabel.

List of current product groups:

- Bed mattresses
- Footwear
- Hard floor coverings
- Indoor outdoor paints and varnishes
- Outdoor paints and varnishes
- Light bulbs
- Soil improvers
- Growing media
- Televisions
- All-purpose and sanitary cleaners
- Dish washing detergents
- Hand dishwashing detergents
- Laundry detergents
- Soaps, shampoos, and conditioners
- Tissue paper
- Personal computers
- Portable computers
- Copying and graphic paper
- Textile products
- Lubricants
- Tourist accommodation services
- Camp sites services
- Heat pumps
- Wooden furniture
- Wooden floor coverings
- Textile floor coverings

Product groups under development:

- Energy-using products
- Printed paper
- Buildings

Green Store for consumers

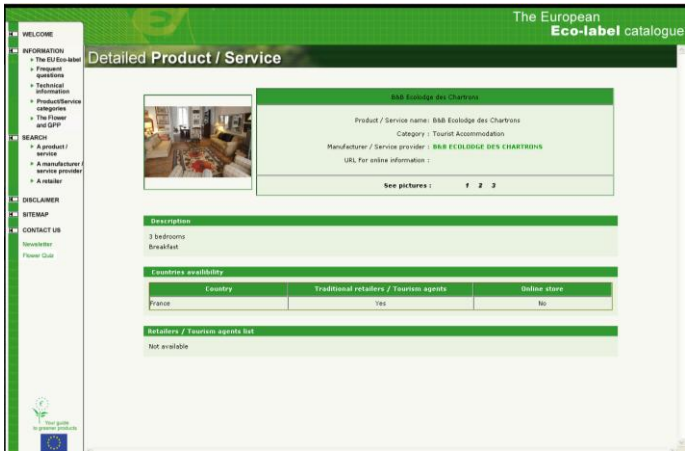
www.eco-label.com provides an interactive catalogue with details of the companies and products that have been awarded the EU Ecolabel. The catalogue is now available in 22 languages.

The site offers consumers a basic introduction to the EU Ecolabel. They are then able to browse through the range of products currently available and retrieve information on specific products and their manufacturers. Furthermore, the site gives a list of stores and provides links to existing on-line shopping sites.

Since 2005, a search engine for retailers has been added to the Green Store. The addition of this service enables consumers to not only search for a product via its manufacturer, but also to search for retailers selling ecolabelled products. European consumers can easily be informed about the selling points of environmentally-friendly products that have been awarded the EU Ecolabel.

Whilst the site is primarily aimed at individual consumers, it also has links for more technical enquiries and manufacturers.

In 2009, the average number of hits/month was 1.077.000 compared to an average of 170.000 hits/months in 2004.



Green Store

EU Ecolabel Communication Award

The European Award for Outstanding Communication on the EU Ecolabel aims to recognise holders that have undertaken exceptional promotional activities to increase public awareness of the EU Ecolabel. This new initiative is intended to encourage and inspire other Ecolabel holders to actively take advantage of the potential of the EU Ecolabel in their promotional activities.

Various criteria, including quality, creativity and relevance of activities, as well as the effective use of the logo, are assessed by a special jury. The winners of this year will be announced during a ceremony to be held in Brussels on 18 October 2010. If you are interested in having more information on the event, please contact the EU Ecolabel Helpdesk at ecolabel@biois.com.

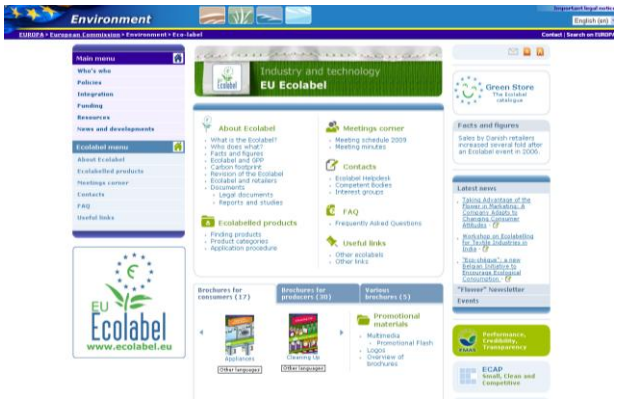
Trophy for the Award

Further information

Fully detailed information on all aspects of the EU Ecolabel is available on the new EU Ecolabel website:

www.ecolabel.eu

It includes a description of the scheme, all background documents, downloadable criteria documents and factsheets, agendas of past and upcoming events and meetings, contact addresses, news, details of on-going work, links to other ecolabels and much more…



EU Ecolabel website

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