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The Eco-Choice Ecolabel Programme Product Standard

Environmentally Innovative Products



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Use of This Standard

This voluntary environmental labeling standard may be used by competent environmental assessors to establish product compliance with the Heritage Eco-Choice Ecolabel Programme. Products that are certified with the mark of conformity in terms of this standard have been independently assessed and demonstrate compliance to the environmental and social performance criteria detailed in this standard. The overall goal of environmental labels and declarations is the communication of verifiable and accurate information, which is not misleading, on environmental aspects of products and services. This encourages the demand for, and supply of, those products and services that cause less stress on the environment, thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continuous environmental improvement.

This standard identifies environmental, quality, regulatory and social performance criteria that products sold on the South African market can meet in order to be considered as good “environment practice”. Products that have been certified as complying to this standard may gain greater market recognition and a marketing advantage in government and business procurement programs, as well as broad consumer preference.

This standard can be used by South African producers to guide their designs for environment programs by using the environmental criteria as key performance benchmarks to reduce the environmental loads of their product. The standard is necessarily restricted in its identification of environmental loads from the product lifecycle. Producers should consider other environmental measures along the product cycle, which are not included in this standard, in their environment program designs for and aim for even higher levels of environmental performance where technically possible.

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Eco-Choice Ecolabel Programme

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ECO-CHOICE ECOLABEL PROGRAMME STANDARD FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS

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Abstract

This Standard specifies environmental performance requirements for the award of the Eco-Choice ecolabel to products that may objectively be classified as environmentally innovative and are outside the scope of any other Eco-Choice Ecolabel Programme or other South African National standard. The Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program complies with ISO 14024: "Environmental labels and declarations - Guiding principles" which requires environmental labelling specifications to include criteria that are objective, reasonable and verifiable.

Definitions

Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program is the Type 1, ISO 14024 compliant eco-labelling program operated by Eco-Choice South Africa.

ECA is the acronym for Eco-Choice Africa

Environmental Load is defined as stress (such as pollution) and excess demand for natural resources placed on ecosystems by the active ingredients in a product or service during its intended life cycle.

GEN is the acronym for Global Ecolabelling Network, the international environmental product labelling association.

Label means the Eco-Choice Label.

1 INTRODUCTION 1.1

Purpose

This Standard seeks to provide a framework for the recognition of good environmental performance for environmentally innovative products. Voluntary environmental labelling standards implemented by Eco-Choice Africa (ECA), aim to specify environmental performance criteria for the environmental loads of products and services throughout the major aspects of their life cycle.

1.2 Background

The production and consumption of products and services invariably generates a number of environmental loads, many of which result in the degradation of our natural environment. The purpose of this Standard is to define the environmental load reduction requirements for a diverse range of products for the South African market which can be classed as "environmentally innovative" products.

There is a growing public awareness of the need for sustainable consumption and a concomitant increase in consumer demand for products and services that reduce the environmental burden of day to day life. Product designers are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of their choices, and continuous technological innovations are creating opportunities for significant environmental gains by allowing the redesign of previously environmentally harmful products or the invention of new functional products with a greatly reduced ecological footprint.

Eco-Choice Africa uses this Standard to recognise and support truly environmentally innovative products where there is clear evidence of strong environmental load reductions compared to competing products performing the same function in the South African market, and where the product would not otherwise receive recognition based on an existing or planned ECA Standard category.

2 STANDARD CATEGORY SCOPE

This standard is applicable to the full range of products on the South African market that are not addressed by other voluntary environmental labelling standards.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

3.1 Fitness for Purpose

Certified products should be good performers in their intended application. Certain standards of quality and product performance are implicit in the Label. The manufacturer of the product must ensure that the product is fit for its intended purpose and that:

3.1.1 Applicable Standards

The product meets or exceeds the requirements of the relevant South African Standard for its intended application, or the product meets or exceeds the applicable and accepted standard in its target market if it is to be exported, or

3.1.2 Other Evidence of Fitness for Purpose

Where there is no suitable industry standard governing fit-for-purpose, the product can demonstrate sufficient quality by providing testing reports from an independent laboratory or organization, or case studies that demonstrate market suitability and quality.

3.2 Environmental Load Reduction

The product shall exhibit an environmental improvement or have innate properties that demonstrate a significant reduction of environmental load compared with products that meet the same consumer need. This reduction must be related to the primary environmental loads of the product, and not be limited to small or insignificant improvements to an existing product. The principles of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) outlined in ISO 14040 shall be used to identify the primary loads of a product. Environmental innovation may be demonstrated in one of two ways:

- The product shall exhibit an environmental load reduction of at least 30% on a primary environmental load during the product life cycle or,
- The product shall exhibit environmental load reductions of at least 20% in each of the top four primary environmental loads of the product life cycle via a comparative analysis with products meeting the same consumption need and
- Environmental load reductions must not result in an increase in environmental loads at a different stage along the product life cycle (i.e., non-transference). Exceptions may be granted if a life cycle assessment of the product clearly demonstrates that a transferred load is insignificant compared to the major load reductions outlined above.

Applicable environmental loads are only those that can be determined or influenced by the product designer or manufacturer. Loads that cannot be influenced by the manufacturer are not considered under this Standard.

3.3 Material Requirements

Individual components, such as adhesives, textiles, refrigerants, timber or natural fibres that fall under an existing ECA Standard category, must fulfill the requirements of the relevant Standard.

Products shall not contain carcinogenic substances in IARC categories 1 or 2A as classed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer - <http://www.iarc.fr> at levels which expose the user to a maximum level of one twentieth of the allowable limit determined by applicable standards or legislation.

Products containing or using environmental toxins or pollutants in the finished product or manufacturing process shall have a policy in place to test environmentally preferable alternatives that claim to provide equal fitness for purpose. Manufacturers must commit to adopting suitable alternatives if they are found and fitness for purpose is verified. This requirement includes but is not limited to:

- Elemental halogen use (e.g., chlorine bleaching).
- Chelating agents or surfactants that are not readily biodegradable.
- CFC, HCFC, HFC, methylene chloride or other halogenated organic compounds (including halogenated organic flame retardants).
- Ozone depleting substances.
- The phthalates DEHP, DBP, BBP or DAP.
- Polybrominated biphenyl ethers (e.g., flame retardants).
- Persistent environmental pollutants, heavy metals or radionuclides at levels greater than half the allowable limit set by relevant national standards or legislation.

3.4 Post-Consumer Recycling

Certified products must not be impregnated, coated or otherwise treated in a manner that would prevent recycling in South Africa or in the country to which the product is exported. Exceptions may be made where a coating imparts a very long life-span to the product that cannot be achieved in any other way.

3.5 Packaging Requirements

- 3.5.1** Chlorinated or halogenated plastics must not be used in product packaging.
- 3.5.2** Used packaging shall be able to be recycled by local recycling systems.
- 3.5.3** The manufacturer must provide written information to the consumer, either on the product packaging or in a separate document supplied with the product, clearly stating:
 - The intended use of the product.
 - Instructions for correct installation, use and storage so as to maximise the product lifetime and energy efficiency.
 - Maintenance instructions, if applicable. Maintenance instructions must not specify the use of any chemical or coating limited by any part of this standard.
 - Product stewardship arrangements, recycling or preferred disposal instructions for the product end-of-life.

4 COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

The applicant is required to comply with all relevant environmental legislation at the Local, Regional and International levels, if these have been issued. An applicant's compliance with these criteria may be established by undertaking a series of random checks; and/or by gathering samples of applicant operational procedures and documents from approved assessors as evidence to support compliance during the verification.

Where an applicant is from an overseas jurisdiction, that jurisdiction's environmental regulations shall apply. Where the applicant is subject to a guilty verdict by a legally constituted court in the last 24 months on the basis of a breach of any environmental legislation or permits, there must be evidence of corrective action.

5 COMPLIANCE TO LABOUR, ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

The applicant shall demonstrate that all employees are protected in terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Act 75; 1997) and Amendments (2002).

The applicant shall demonstrate general compliance to the terms of the Labour Relations Act (Act 66; 1995); the Occupational, Health and Safety Act (Act 85; 1993) and any other legislation related to anti-discrimination; sexism; child labour or applicable labour standards. Where the applicant is subject to a breach order by a government agency, or a guilty verdict by a South African Court within the last 24 months, there must be evidence of corrective action.

Where the applicant is from a foreign jurisdiction, the applicant shall demonstrate compliance to that jurisdiction's anti-discrimination, occupational health and safety, and workers' compensations regulations. Where the applicant is subject to a breach order by a government agency, or a guilty verdict by a legal court in their respective country within the last 24 months on the basis of a the breach of anti-discrimination, occupational health and safety, and workers' compensation regulations, there must be evidence of corrective action.

The applicant's compliance with these criteria may be established by undertaking a series of random checks; gathering samples of applicant operational procedures and documents from approved assessors; and/or by providing a self-declaration document signed by an executive officer of the applicant organisation as evidence to support compliance during verification.

6 COMPLIANCE

TESTING

6.1 Audit Methodology

Conformance with this standard shall be demonstrated by undertaking an assessment under the above criteria by an approved assessor, following the certification and verification procedures detailed in the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Programme Quality Management System, which is based upon the environmental auditing requirements of ISO 14011 and 14012.

6.2 Assessor Competency

The Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program classifies approved assessors as:

- a. Assessors registered by Eco-Choice Africa as environmental professionals that hold expertise relevant for an assessment, and who have undertaken training in the procedures of the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program; or
- b. Environmental auditors accredited with SANAS.

6.3 Suitable Sources

Audit evidence should be of such a quality and quantity that competent environmental auditors, working independently of each other, will reach similar audit findings from evaluation of the same audit evidence against the same audit criteria.

Suitable sources of information to establish compliance may be, but are not limited to:

- a. Technical specification of the product.
- b. Obvious characteristics of the product under examination.
- c. Scientific test results and reports.
- d. Environmental management system and audit reports and results.
- e. Life-cycle assessment of each stage of the product life-cycle via a physical audit and examination.

- f. Life-cycle assessment via scientific testing.
- g. A statement of confirmation by an executive officer.
- h. An assessment of company or government records.
- i. Other material that can be considered objective evidence.

6.4 Laboratory Testing

Testing shall be undertaken by a laboratory accredited by SANAS, or similar overseas accreditation agents who can conduct the relevant tests and/or provide documentation detailing environmental performance against the criteria of the applicable international standard on an annual basis. The test results should be presented in a prescribed manner or from a laboratory acceptable to Eco-Choice Ecolabel Programme.

If test results or environmental auditing results are not available, and/or there is insufficient data to establish full compliance with the criteria required by this standard, then certification cannot be awarded.