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The Eco-Choice Ecolabel Programme

Product Standard

Internationally Eco-Labelled 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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Acknowledgement:

This standard has been reproduced with permission from **Good Environmental Choice Australia** and seeks to set the benchmark for International Eco-Labelled Products in southern Africa. Modifications to the source document have been made to maintain relevancy to the southern African environment. The principal difference between the source document and the modified adopted GECA standard is the replacement of GECA terminology with terminology relevant to southern Africa. A list of changes to the source document along with the justification can be seen, upon request to Eco-Choice Africa.

Eco-Choice Ecolabel Programme

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ECO-CHOICE ECOLABEL PROGRAMME STANDARD FOR INTERNATIONALLY ECOLABELLED PRODUCTS

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Abstract

This Standard specifies requirements for products which have been certified by select GEN member and other ISO 14024-based programs in order to establish compliance to the requirements of the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program using the eco-labelling standard they have been assessed under. The Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program complies in general terms with ISO 14024: "Environmental labels and declarations - Type 1 environmental labelling - Principals and procedures" which requires environmental labelling specifications to include criteria that are objective, reasonable and verifiable.

Where products are traded internationally and are of a similar form and function, it is desirable that similar standards are used between countries. GEN members and those subscribing to the GEN principles seek to meet the requirements of the *WTO Technical Barriers to Trade Guidelines* by allowing equity of access to overseas manufacturers as a desirable objective.

This standard outlines the procedure for the use of eco-labelling standards by select GEN member programs for compliance to the overseas recognition requirements of the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program. In order to meet this standard, the product must be currently certified under a recognized GEN standard by a GEN Member.

Where alternate Eco-Choice Africa standards exist for any category of product, Eco-Choice Africa may disallow certification under this standard if in the opinion of the Administrator, such certification may undermine the integrity of its published standards; may be certified by an organization that has not fully divulged its evaluation procedures or is regarded as a means to circumvent more stringent Eco-Choice certification standards.

Definitions

Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program is the Type 2, ISO 14024 compliant eco-labelling program operated by Eco-Choice South Africa.

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 define requirements for the case by case use of standards by select GEN member programs where no similar standards have been developed in South Africa and for the acceptance of products with overseas GEN member eco-labelling certification for the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program.

This voluntary environmental labelling standard specifies criteria for the assessment of these products allowing them to be assessed for the Eco- Choice Label under the overseas standard that they have been accredited to by a GEN member program This standard stipulates requirements for overseas certified products only and does not extend to a mechanism for automatic introduction of South African eco-labelling standards based on overseas standards.

1.2 Background

Eco-Choice South Africa is currently pursuing membership of the Global Ecolabel Network (GEN). GEN seeks to enhance the use of life cycle based environmental declarations throughout world markets. GEN member programs undertake substantial investments in technical and scientific research and stakeholder consultation in order to establish minimum environmental performance criteria for products as the basis of environmental performance measurement.

In some cases, where Eco-Choice has confidence in the environmental stringency, accuracy and procedures used by overseas GEN member environmental labelling organizations, there are efficiencies to be gained by accepting these standards as a useful interim measure until a South African standard is created on a product by product basis. Eco-Choice extends this recognition approach with other GEN member programs demonstrating confidence in these programs.

This standard has been developed to allow an agreed methodology for acceptance of overseas products certified by select GEN member countries, prior to the establishment of a South African environmental labelling standard under the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program.

It is envisaged that this standard will deliver a greater selection of environmentally preferable products in the African market, enhance the range of products that are available for assessment under the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program, achieve environmental benefits by allowing environmentally preferable products to be recognised by the African market and encourage greater investment in the development of comprehensive local eco-labelling standards in the future by demonstrating a market demand.

2 STANDARD CATEGORY SCOPE

This standard is applicable to products and services seeking accreditation by the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program which have already been accredited by an overseas GEN Member eco-labelling organisation subject to all of the following restrictions:

2.1 No South African Standard

The product must fall into a product or service category that is currently not covered by an existing voluntary environmental labelling standard by Eco- Choice or by an existing national standard in South Africa. Acceptance of applications for this category of certification shall be made by the Administrator of the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Programme in conjunction with the CEO of Eco-Choice South Africa.

2.2 ISO 14 024 based and GEN Member

The overseas eco-labelling organisation that has provided the accreditation must be a current member of the Global Eco-labelling Network and its program must conform to the principles of ISO 14024.

2.3 Mutual Recognition

Any certification awarded under this category may not necessarily be recognized by other eco-labelling organisations and an Eco-Choice certification on an existing international certificate may not be used to motivate or apply for any other international certificate for the same product or category of products. .

2.4 Intent for Sale in South Africa

Unless the product for which Certification is being applied is already being offered for sale, the product must have established plans for sale in South Africa within 12 months of registration.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

3.1 Fitness for Purpose

Certified products should be good performers in their intended application. The manufacturer of the product must ensure that the product is fit for its intended purpose.

3.1.1 South African Standards

The product must meet the performance requirements of the relevant National Standard or the South African Bureau of Standards requirement for its intended application; or

The product must meet the performance requirements of the relevant internationally accepted standard if it is to be exported; or

The product should demonstrate sufficient quality by providing testing reports from an independent organisation or case studies that demonstrate market suitability and quality.

3.1.2 Commercial Guarantee

The manufacturer shall offer a commercial guarantee of five years on the quality of the product, provided the product is used for its intended purpose. The guarantee shall be valid from the date of delivery to the consumer.

3.2 Evidence of Overseas Current Application

Manufacturers of certified products shall fill in an application form for the Eco-Choice label and attach a copy of the current overseas eco-labelling certificate and the most recent eco-labelling body test report (in English).

3.3 Additional Environmental Considerations

The overseas environmental labelling standard - and the body awarding the ecolabel under which the product was assessed, shall be provided in order for an assessment to be made as to the suitability of the standard on the basis of the following criteria:

- a. Comprehensiveness from an LCA perspective.
- b. Performance criteria that are in general conformance to the objectives of the Eco-Choice Ecolabel Program.

Where emission or material tests benchmarks differ between the overseas country and South African national standard - and the product appears not to meet South African standards, additional tests shall be undertaken by the applicant to establish conformance to South African testing procedures and performance requirements.

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.