

# BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF ECOLABELLING SCHEMES

In recent years, questions have been raised on the effectiveness of ecolabels in terms of achieving the defined environmental goals and targets. Ecolabelling schemes worldwide face the uphill task of delivering empirical evidence to political decision-makers and society proving their positive impact. However, there is a lack of general agreement on how the performance of ecolabel programmes can be evaluated and what constitutes success of ecolabelling. As a result, programmes have been using various indicators to monitor and evaluate the performance of their ecolabels.

To tackle this challenge, the German Environment Agency (UBA) commissioned the Öko-Institut with the project “*Methodological challenges for eco-labels in the Global Ecolabelling Network – Evaluation and traceability of critical raw materials and determination of quantitative environmental relief potentials*” in 2017 as part of the Environmental Research Plan (research code 3717 37 316 0) and financed with federal funds. Upon analysis of possible approaches and indicators for the performance measurement of Type 1 ecolabels, and the results of a survey and interviews with several ecolabelling schemes, it was concluded that calculation of the environmental savings through ecolabelled

products could be a promising approach for measuring the performance of ecolabels.

A participatory, practice-oriented and ownership-based project design was developed where ecolabelling schemes took the lead in measuring the performance of ecolabels. The core of this exercise was a working group that was initiated in 2017 in Stockholm. The working group consisted of seven ecolabelling schemes - Environmental Choice New Zealand, GreenPro India, Green Mark Program Chinese Taipei, Green Label: Thailand, The Blue Angel Eco-Label Germany, Vitality Leaf Russia and China Environmental Labelling.

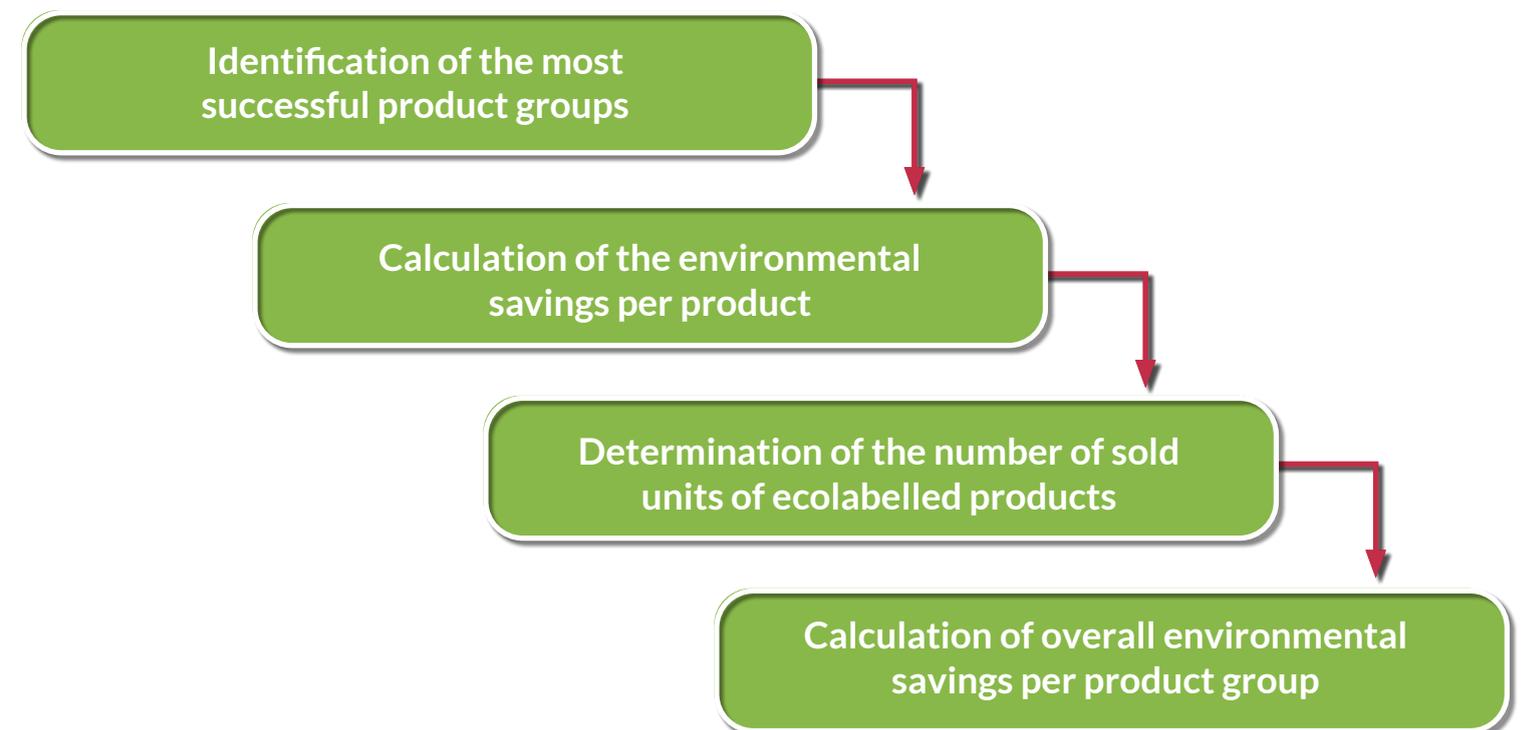
Öko-Institut organised the working group and provided technical guidance to the ecolabelling schemes. The basis of calculating environmental relief potentials of ecolabelled products was a guidance document developed by the Öko-Institut. The guidance document was designed primarily for the practitioners in ecolabelling institutions and considered their limitations in terms of financial and personnel resources. It sought to help the practitioners to understand and interpret existing life cycle assessment studies, collect important primary data and calculate environmental savings.

The results, which were also presented at the GEN Annual General Meeting in Suzhou, China in 2019, show that ecolabels play an important role in reducing the environmental impact of our consumption patterns. In the project exercise it was shown that it is possible to calculate these savings even for ecolabelling schemes

with limited resources if they are provided with some assistance on methodological and technical aspects.

GEN intends to continue the important work of performance measurement of ecolabelling schemes and promoting the results within the GEN network.

## WORK STEPS FOR QUANTIFYING THE BENEFITS THROUGH ECOLABELLED PRODUCTS



## ECNZ MEASURED CO<sub>2</sub> REDUCTIONS



Environmental Choice New Zealand (ECNZ) measured the greenhouse gas impact during the production phase of toilet tissue certified under ECNZ EC-13-15 Sanitary Paper Products standard. ECNZ estimated that at least 720,000,000 rolls of ECNZ licensed toilet tissue was sold to New Zealand consumers in 2018. It concluded that a savings of 21,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually can be attributed to the sale of ECNZ licensed toilet paper in New Zealand.

ECNZ staff noted there “were learnings gained during this rather costly and time-consuming exercise,” such as choosing the environmental impacts to focus on weren’t straight forward and not all requirements of the ECNZ specifications include numeric limits. However, the benefits were that the compelling results provide a new way of communicating the overall benefits of the ECNZ label.



Savings of **21,000 tonnes** of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually can be attributed to the sale of ECNZ licenced toilet paper in New Zealand.

## VITALITY LEAF, RUSSIA MEASURED WASTE AND VOCS



The Ecological Union, manager of the Vitality Leaf scheme, chose to measure water-based paints certified under standard CTO-56171713-006-2019 because of the high number of license holders and certified products in the product group. Over 7 million litres of paint were sold in 2018. EcoUnion measured the waste during manufacturing and the VOC emissions during the life-cycle stage when the paint is applied by the end user.

The challenge that EcoUnion saw in this process was getting information about the CO<sub>2</sub> emission factor of titanium dioxide manufacturing and titanium dioxide content in reference products. Therefore, that impact category is excluded and they assessed more important impact categories for this group of products.



Over **5 million litres** of paint and about **332 tons** of VOC content have been saved through the sale of paints with Vitality Leaf in Russia in 2018.

## CEC, CHINA MEASURED ELECTRICITY SAVINGS



The China Environmental Labelling (CEC) chose to measure energy savings in printers as they are a significant product for public procurement and consumers. The printers are multi-functional devices (MFDs) certified under the national standard GB 21521-2014 and the biggest impact is the energy consumed during use. CEC had nearly 3 million MFDs licensed and saw a savings of nearly 10 billion kWh in 2018.

A lesson learned from the project was the importance of systematic work. From methodology design and category choosing, to data collection, each step needs to be considered carefully. The biggest difficulty was collecting complete and accurate data from licensees. If the data submitted was significantly different from what is normally expected, then it was double-checked by contacting the enterprise.



Almost **10 billion kWh** of electricity was saved in 2018 in China through the sale and use of printer-based multifunctional devices certified by the China Environmental Labelling.

## GEENPRO, INDIA MEASURED GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTIONS



India is the second largest producer of cement in the world and over 70% of Pozzolana and Portland Slag cement produced in India is GreenPro ecolabelled. They focused on the greenhouse gas impact during the raw material and manufacturing phase of the cement life cycle. GreenPro saw a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 6.5 million tonnes in 2018.

The challenge that GreenPro faced while measuring the impact was in setting up the baseline for the measurement. Various options such as national standards and industrial data for the past three years were considered for measurement. After a series of deliberations, industrial data from the year 2010 was considered as a baseline for measurement of impacts.

The learning gained during this process was that “fixing a baseline is critical and tricky”. It can have significant impact on quantifying the environmental benefits, in addition to the perception it can create in the industry and hence the acceptance of the ecolabel.



GreenPro labelled cement and concrete result in a reduction of almost **8 million tonnes** of greenhouse gas emissions annually