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MANAGEMENT

An inventory of communication good practices for sustainable products in the retail sector

Summary

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INTRODUCTION

Context of the work

The Walloon region is in the process of developing a new waste management plan. Prevention, as set out in the new European Union Waste Framework Directive, will be one of the key elements in this new plan. It is in this context, and with this objective, that this study has been undertaken. It is not simply a matter of considering the measures to take downstream ; when products become waste, but also to consider and to act upstream ; at the level of resources and products (in order to reduce the subsequent impacts downstream). Consequently, it is interesting to promote more sustainable products within the retail sector.

Objectives, coverage and limitations

The general objective is, on the one hand, to promote strategies for increasing awareness of sustainable consumption in the retail sector, on the basis of a detailed inventory of good practices in Europe, and also to launch a debate between the administration and stakeholders involved in both the retail sector and in sustainable consumption.

This report is the first phase of the project, including a comprehensive study of best practices from five retailers and five countries in the identification phase (see working paper¹), with the aim to identify strategies and actions relating to communications and outreach, together with collaborative arrangements.

Finally, the report will form the basis for organising a dialogue and the dissemination of results. To this end, it is foreseen that a roundtable discussion will take place during which the results of the study will be presented, and potential initiatives to be undertaken by the Walloon region in partnership with the retail sector will be discussed.

Summary

This document presents a summary of the report and provides a concise view of work which has been undertaken. This document summarises examples of actions taken by retailers or good practices carried in different countries. For more details, one should refer to the complete report.

¹ Stratégies de partenariat en vue d'améliorer la distribution de produits durables – document de travail – ACR+ Décembre 2009.

1 CHALLENGE AND THE IMPACTS OF THE RETAIL SECTOR

1.1 Changes in lifestyles and their consequences

In recent decades, lifestyles have changed considerably and private consumption has grown significantly. This has been due both to a growth in *materialism* leading to greater production of goods, and also of *individualism* leading to a segmentation of behaviour. Additionally, new technologies such as the internet and the mobile phone have been introduced to an increasingly prosperous population. Easy access to many types of products from around the world has become possible. These lifestyle changes - excessive consumption coupled with a growing population - have pushed natural resources to their limits, and have created difficult social conditions around the world.

The demand for these resources is greater than the capacity of the world to deliver them. In the same way, the relocation of manufacturing centres, the import of raw materials and the export of finished products all have significant impacts on the environment, in part through energy intensive transportation. The operation of these businesses also exerts social impacts. Indeed the socio-political systems within developing countries, where these companies based themselves, are not yet fully able to prevent completely child labour and the lack of decent wages.

In recent years, progress has been made in sustainable products both at the level of the manufacturer (green energy for example) or the level of the consumer (awareness raising). This growth is often considerable, but it still only amounts to a small market share. So there remains a deal of work to do. It is a similar situation for evaluating the environmental and social impacts of products and services, leading to improvement plans, using credible data and case studies such as carbon balance (France) or the carbon footprint (UK).

1.2 Retail sector, the link between production and consumption

The retail sector is the link between production and consumption. This sector plays an important role as a generator of economic development and jobs. By virtue of this unique position (the connection between production and consumption), the retail sector can play a leading role in sustainability in general, and in sustainable consumption in particular.

1.2.1 Sustainable businesses

Socio-economic changes and environmental trends in the modern world are reasons why companies are increasingly managing their operations according to the '*triple bottom line*' to :

- Increase prosperity
- Protect the environment
- Promote social justice.

A shift towards a policy of sustainable consumption and production can have major advantages for the retail sector :

- Retailers can make substantial savings by improving their environmental impacts and by managing natural resources better (through conservation of water and energy, waste reduction)
- While improving relationships with their upstream suppliers, retailers are increasingly able to favour environmentally friendly products, both in manufacture and in consumption
- Retailers reinforce their brand image among consumers

Consequently, efforts for sustainability in the retail sector can offer a win-win situation to all stakeholders - suppliers, vendors, consumers - and ultimately society in general.

1.2.2 What is the current situation

A number of major retailers have launched voluntary initiatives, and have reported on their policies, practices and economic performances, also addressing environmental and social issues. In most cases this is done through *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) reporting. In this respect there are two types of retailers :

- **Leaders**, often pioneers promoting the brand to attract aware consumers. These are usually major retailers (supermarket chains), which also possess the greatest potential for economic and environmental impacts
- **Followers**, who enter the market for sustainable products when it reaches maturity, i.e. when the market volume reaches a certain level.

The analysis of this technical report – the first phase, is primarily restricted to those national leaders. But even among these, there are clear differences. Retailers can influence strongly the purchasing decisions of consumers by the items that they offer for sale in their stores. Consequently, retailers can be a major force influencing sustainable consumption.

1.3 Consumers, a driving force for sustainable consumption

The success of any programme to promote sustainability in the retail sector depends largely on the response and participation of consumers. There are many reasons why consumers do not purchase sustainably, for example :

- Consumers are often inflexible in their routines, which makes behaviour change very difficult
- The information is often not available to permit an informed choice, or so few people have the time or intellectual capacity to process all available information
- Finally, people's behaviour is often irrational and emotional, the advertising world knows this and plays on people's feelings.

And there is a significant gap between the statements of consumers in their willingness to buy sustainably, and in their behaviour in practice within the stores. Several behaviours are used to characterise the eco-consumer (buying local, choosing the train as a means of transport, considering the ethical aspects...).

In general one can classify consumers into two groups :

GREEN CONSUMERS	BLUE CONSUMERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They consider that sustainability is an important value, but they don't compromise on quality • They are ready to pay more for a good product • They seek challenges through new products, and expected retailers to be constantly improving the range of sustainable products offered • They are sensitive to the location of products. When they enter their favourite stores, they prefer to do all of their sustainable shopping in one place • They buy more if the sustainable products are grouped together within the store (a shop within a shop). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will try a more sustainable product, so long as it is practical and not too different from the traditional product • They are unwilling to pay more for sustainable product - price is important • They will choose sustainable goods if they have other attractive features • They want to find sustainable products on the same shelves as traditional ones. They will not deliberately visit, for example, an organic or fairtrade area within the store.

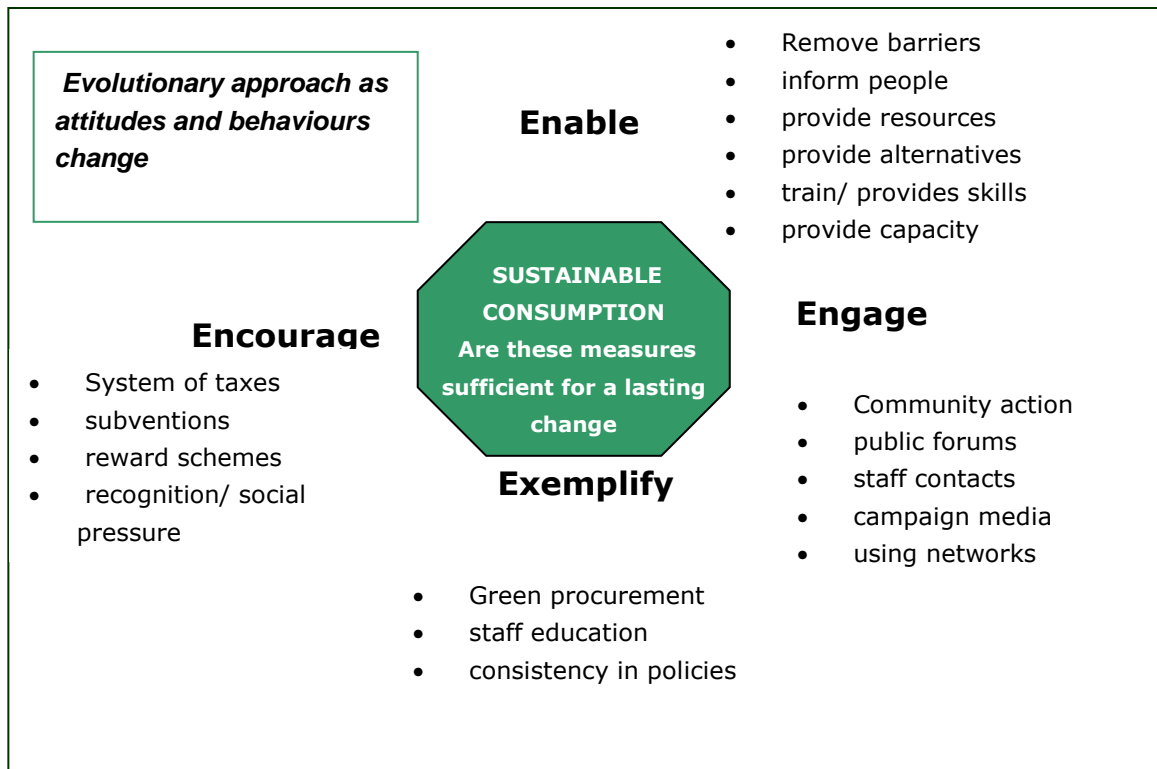
It should be noted that some consumers are 100% green, others are 100% blue, but many are a combination according to the type of products. Green consumers are important to the leading retailers (on sustainability), while blue consumers are the main target group for other retailers, who are mostly followers on these issues.

1.4 Key instruments for the retail sector - the 4Es principle

A strategy for sustainable consumption to promote behaviour change should be based upon a mix of complementary instruments. These instruments need to take account of different consumer motivations (attitudes, social background, habits, facilitating factors etc). It is interesting to consider the 4Es approach (**Enable**, **Encourage**, **Engage** And **Exemplify**) :

- **Enable** (*to make possible*) - a transition to sustainable behaviour and intelligent consumption must be made possible and easily accessible
- **Encourage** (*to encourage*) - sustainable consumption choices should be encouraged in several ways, including through price signals
- **Engage** (*commitment vis-à-vis consumers*) - retailers must involve consumers and other stakeholders in the process of change
- **Exemplify** (*leading by example*) - government agencies, policymakers, retailers and other actors must lead by example (ie 'practice what you preach')

The actions included within the 4Es approach, whether at the level of public authorities or the retailers, must necessarily be complimentary in order to reinforce each other.



1.5 Barriers and opportunities

This section presents some of the barriers and opportunities identified by retailers. The analysis is based on the information provided by the retailers themselves (during interviews or through responses to the survey questionnaires). The answers are presented and discussed below.

1.5.1 Policies

Financial incentives seem to be universally recognised by retailers as the most efficient agent to increase the market share of green products. For one thing green products are more expensive (due to more expensive supply chains) and, secondly, price is the driver to which the consumer is most sensitive. Thus any measure to reduce the cost of green products should increase sales. Relief from VAT for green products appears as the most popular measure among distributors.

The growing number of groups of products covered by official ecolabels has contributed to the greening of the retail sector. Effectively, retailers are now able to use environmental criteria to select their products. Of course, this requires further advertising campaigns to make consumers aware of the official eco-label (awareness is presently low). On the other hand, most retailers favour legislative initiatives to harmonise existing labels; because they believe that confusion exists regarding those labels currently on the market (and what they represent); this could discredit those achievements made so far.

Introduction of prizes to retailers of green products and for voluntary agreements in this area are regarded only as additional opportunities, rather than as genuine vehicles greening the retail sector.

1.5.2 Regulation

Regulations which impose restrictions on the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical equipment and food products are considered beneficial for the environment.

However, retailers are not particularly supportive of the proliferation of regulations because their implementation is usually expensive, especially where rules differ between regions or countries. Retailers view with more enthusiasm an obligation for eco-design, with the establishment of minimum environmental standards. They point out that social issues must also be taken into account and that, to be effective, any regulations must maintain a level playing field. However, it seems that regulations do not affect significantly those retailers who are already proactive in improving their own environmental performance.

1.5.3 Competition in the market and consumer demand

Free-market competition is generally seen as contributing to the greening of the retail sector, but only when the demand for green products is steady and real. Consumers do seem to be increasingly concerned about environmental issues, but retailers still perceive that the most important factor for consumer choice is price.

The cost of potential actions to reduce environmental impacts could be a major obstacle for their effective implementation, though retailers do seem to have adopted a longer term thinking. On this basis, for actions that may generate economic benefits through long-term resource savings, additional costs and lengthy periods for return on investments do not represent an obstacle. This general observation, however, could be adversely affected by a poor economic situation, which could significantly limit the ability to invest by retailers.

Demand for sustainable products is an important engine for growth in the market for these goods. This is because retailers generally adapt their sales to suit consumer preferences. However, current demand for this type of product is not yet large enough to significantly influence the environmental performance of the retail sector. Retailers believe that green public procurement is a good way to increase the market share for green products. These 'niche' products could well become cheaper as demand increases, and thus become more attractive to all consumers. However, increased consumer awareness and environmental concerns can also contribute very positively to the greening of this sector.

1.5.4 The image of the retailer

According to UNEP², improving the image of the company does not appear to be an important driver for the implementation of environmental initiatives for most retailers. Consequently, retailers say that while the application of environmental measures could be beneficial for the image, they do not implement such actions merely to improve their image.

However, the fact that the implementation of environmental actions could help improve the image of the retailer, is nonetheless an attractive opportunity in the current context of a growing awareness of environmental issues.

² *'Greening shops & saving costs, a practical guide for retailers'* UNEP, 2006

2 ANALYSIS OF GOOD PRACTICES IN THE RETAIL SECTOR

The choice of five retailers for study was based on the following criteria :

- Allowing access to information
- Presenting the information
- Robustness of the actions undertaken
- Diversity of the actions undertaken
- Innovative initiatives undertaken or planned

The retailers selected for this study after some changes were the following : Casino (F), Migros (S), COOP (S), Marks & Spencer (UK) et Tesco (UK).

The purpose of analysing the five retailers was not to compare the performances (according to the 4Es principle) of the different retailers, one against the other. It was rather to identify the good practices in the promotion of sustainable consumption as identified through interviews, site visits and through reference to reports, the retailers' websites etc.

2.1 Retailers' environmental strategies

Each of the retailers studied has implemented pro-environmental actions. These vary according to the countries in which the retailers were operating. In Britain, the initiatives have been based rather on aspects of carbon and upon food waste, whereas in Sweden and Switzerland there was a preference towards the introduction of labels (fairtrade, MSC, FSC), together with packaging and aspects of recycling. For the most part, there were agreements implemented between public authorities at the national level and the retailers.

Each retailer has its own environmental policy approaches and priorities, even though the challenges that they all face are similar. The most popular actions are :

- Energy efficiency
- Waste management
- Environmental training for employees
- Availability of organic products, labelled products, wood products with the FSC label, and energy-efficient products
- Use of financial incentives to promote sustainable products
- Consumer awareness concerning the environmental impacts of products
- Availability of products bearing official ecolabels

The detailed analysis in this chapter focuses on what retailers are doing to promote sustainable consumption with particular emphasis on the communication aspects with measures such as : promotion of sustainable products ; information on the impacts of products, and ; financial incentives to encourage the purchase of sustainable products. All the retailers had developed a strategy to promote sustainable consumption. However the degree of detail, the use of quantified targets, monitoring achievements and how to communicate all differed considerably between retailers.

2.2 Actions to improve the environmental performance of products

Actions are linked to products can be divided into three types :

- Actions to improve the environmental qualities of all products sold by retailers (*ecodesign*)
- Actions to sell sustainable products, clearly labelled as ecological versions (*environmental labels*)
- Actions to exclude certain environmentally unfriendly products from the shelves (*choice editing*).

2.2.1 Actions to improve the environmental performance of products (engage)

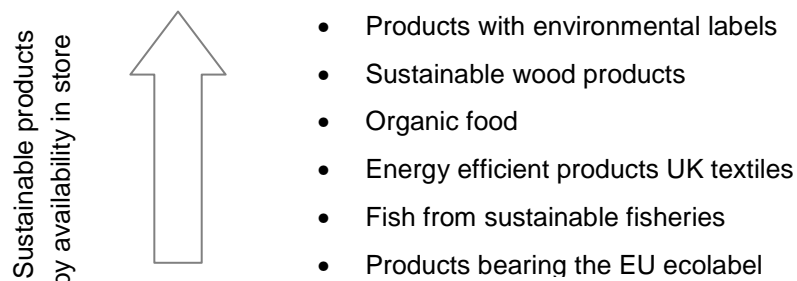
The scope from retailers to influence the design of products are much larger for those that carry their own brands than for other products. Several levels of actions can be distinguished amongst the activities of retailers, with respect to ecodesign :

- **Ecodesign of packaging** for products - reduce weight, optimise sizes, use materials which are recyclable and recycled, reuse....
- **Environmental assessment** of products to identify the ecologically impacts associated with different categories of products using life cycle assessment studies in collaboration with other organisations. This allows the consumer to make an informed choice and helps the retailers to reduce their emissions
- **Eco-design of products** (excluding packaging) - for example several stores have decided only to sell electrical items labelled A, A+ or A++ (so they decline to sell equipment with the labels B, C or D)

Some retailers are also using what might be called *eco-design selection*, creating a blacklist of chemicals that might be found within product components.

2.2.2 Actions in connection with sustainable products (enable)

All retailers offer a range of more or less sustainable products. These are presented below according to the degree of availability within the stores of the five retailers studied. These were observed during visits to the stores :



As mentioned above, most sustainable products are more expensive than their standard equivalents. The premium paid for sustainable products varies between 15% and 90% compared with the standard versions. However the external costs of the environmental impacts of standard products (which are higher than those of sustainable products) are **not** taken into account, which makes the comparison false.

2.2.3 Actions taken to exclude certain products or substances (engage)

All of the retailers studied had chosen to exclude certain products or substances from their shelves, for example genetically modified products.

2.3 Communications for sustainable consumption (engage)

Several types of actions can be taken by businesses to raise consumer awareness of subject of sustainable consumption and the environment these actions can relate to products or to the environment in general.

In principle, a series of complex factors influences the behaviour of consumers when purchasing sustainable products. In-store observations (2010) show that, at this stage, communicating special offers and pricing to encourage consumers to buy more are often much more important/visible than messages to encourage sustainable consumption, even if the stores visited were the most advanced in promoting sustainable consumption.

Marketing of sustainable products has a good deal in common with the marketing of the traditional counterparts. Yet there is a fundamental difference. Marketing for sustainable products is often based on information and arguments about values, while the marketing of traditional products is typically geared more towards the functional aspects and price of the product. This is seen both in advertisements, websites and in stores.

2.3.1 Promotional campaigns for sustainable consumption

Most of the retailers communicate on the subject of their sustainable products on the basis of specific promotional campaigns. Some go further and give advice on more responsible behaviour (an educational dimension).

Most retailers hold regular campaigns to promote sustainable products. These campaigns, which take place perhaps from two to six times each year, often organised during particular events, such as a Sustainable Development Week, World Environment Day etc. During these campaigns, financial incentives such as additional points on loyalty cards, or reductions in prices for sustainable goods, are put in place.

In raising awareness, retailers are not the only actor on the scene. Public authorities, NGOs and many other organisations play important roles. Increasingly, retailers are cooperating with these other actors in regular or specific campaigns to provide consumers with information on increasingly large numbers of sustainable goods. In some countries, fairtrade weeks and similar events have become established traditions, recurring each year. These campaigns help retailers undertake their long-term planning needed to achieve sales increases in these campaigns.

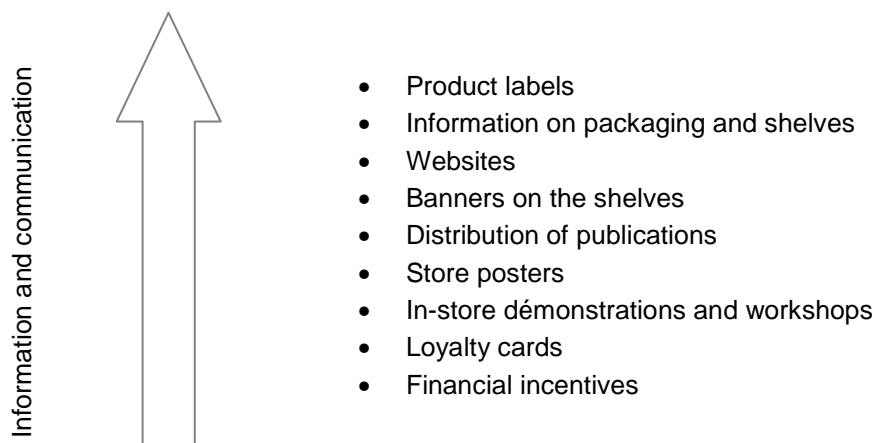
2.3.2 Communication Tools

There are many opportunities to retailers to inform and communicate on sustainable products or on the environmental impacts of other products. Several levels of action, often integrated, can be distinguished amongst the activities of retailers in informing and communicating :

- Information on products and packaging (labels and labelling)
- Information and communication in-store (other than the label)
- Information and communication through the media
- Financial incentives

The best method to observe the efforts made by retailers in this respect, at least for the first two points, is through observations during visits to the store. This was complemented by searching for information on the retailers' websites, in their sustainability reports, and of course during interviews. In this regard, even though the retailers studied were amongst the best in their class, they pursue some types of communications with less than total success.

Among the five retailers studied, the most frequently reported tools for information and communication to promote sustainable consumption were the following (by frequency of use) :



Without doubt the different practices of communication give better results when integrated within an effective communications strategy.

2.3.2.1 Information on products and packaging

Retailers communicate primarily using the product on the packaging, to inform consumers about the environmental characteristics of their products.

Labels

Labels provide opportunities to communicate and offer added value to consumers. Unfortunately, many labels and logos are vague ; they do not mean anything, they are not transparent, they do not have standards or certification and/or do not allow checking (by others).

Existing labels cover a selection of products, but do not cover in the. Each Producer or retailer has a tendency to establish their own evaluation system, based on unique criteria. This proliferation of systems has two problems, namely :

- Non-recognition (by other actors) of the selection criteria
- Consumer confusion due to a multiplicity of systems.

The definition of a common assessment framework that takes into account the criteria of existing schemes and simplified labels are essential steps in order to develop sustainable retailing.

Carbon metrics

Carbon metrics are increasingly used by retailers. This allows products to be compared by listing, for example, emissions of carbon for every 100 g of product. Supplementary information allows one to explain clearly ecological impacts and provide suggestions to consumers on how to diminish their own ecological footprint.

Packaging to attract attention

Retailers have chosen to make their sustainable products more visible. For example COOP Switzerland has designed a package with a green colour that is highly visible in stores and on the shelves. In addition, given the large number of products they have within this range, the consumer feels able to choose an ecological alternative for every product.

It is however important to note that the information listed on the packaging is often cumbersome and unreadable. With messages mixed at the front and the back of the packaging, brands labels, ecological claims, nutritional values, ingredients and opportunities for recycling the packaging. Instead of seeking solutions for each label or information, the EC and the country would be better advised to consider a comprehensive and integrated approach. The ultimate goal is to provide consumers with clear information.

2.3.2.2 Information and communications in-store (non-label)

If the information on the sustainability of the products themselves (see section above) is applied, even if imperfect and inconsistent, other types of in-store information to advise the consumer about sustainable products remain extremely modest (sometimes non-existent).

It should be noted that, despite commitments and strategies which some retailers provide in their annual sustainability reports, there is very little consistency in terms of in-store communications promoting sustainable consumption.

Types of communication identified include :

- **Placement of products in stores** – most distributors choose to mix together their sustainable and standard products. However, they sometimes decide to create a special section for sustainable products, including fruit and organic vegetables. During specific campaigns (e.g. the Sustainable Development Week) sustainable products are grouped together in a highly visible location to attract attention. It also helps attract attention to place produce at eye level

- **Unaware/aware purchasing** – consumers can choose a sustainable product without being aware of this. The retailer places the sustainable product in view and close to another special offer, linked in some way to sustainability
- **Posters in shop** - these posters inform consumers about certain of the retailers green intentions or information about sustainable products
- **Shelf markings** which clearly indicate where sustainable products are offered
- **In-store demonstrations and workshops** - for example the name of the farmer and the region of a product may be shown on the labels, and the farmer can visit the shop to participate in campaigns (M&S).

2.3.2.3 Information and communication through the media

Websites and magazines other forms of media are most frequently used by retailers. The retailer's own magazines and newspapers are used to inform customers in much more detail on particular environmental issues, sustainable consumption, new sustainable products, the retailer's sustainability report, campaigns on specific issues of sustainability.

The rapid development of websites have become a key item in the communications tool box, and offers valuable opportunities. Websites are used most often for more complex information for users most often visit websites actively seeking information, and they have made the choice to do so.

A retailer's website provides information on the product either by itself or on the traceability of the product. This transparency allows a greater share of consumer confidence and also provides increased awareness of the retailer and its supply chains.

2.3.2.4 Financial incentives

The promotion of sustainable products through the use of financial incentives to consumers provides another means to implement and sustain demand, and to encourage producers to expand their offerings. This can be achieved in several ways, such as obtaining discounts or loyalty points. Retailers presently use this mechanism only very rarely. An example would be the restriction on the use of plastic bags.

2.4 Engaging retailers in waste prevention and other initiatives

2.4.1 Waste

Many retailers provide systems for the recovery of certain materials, or they offer information on their efforts to improve the recyclability of materials as shown in the following examples :

- reusable bags
- printer toner cartridges
- plastic bottles
- batteries
- lamps and fluorescent tubes

2.4.2 Packaging

Packaging helps protect, preserve and promote products to ensure that they reach consumers in the best condition. In some countries the lack of packaging or inadequate packaging in distribution can

cause losses of up to 50% before the product reaches the consumer. Several of the shops visited avoid unnecessary packaging for products such as cardboard boxes for toothpaste, mustard etc.

2.4.3 Employee training in sustainable products

The active engagement of employees is considered very important. Retailers pay particular attention to this, providing at the very least a basic level of knowledge to provide motivation within the scope of relevant training.

2.4.4 Monitoring and reporting

Some retailers have signed up to the *UN Global Reporting Initiative* which guides participants on the reporting of such topics as economics and social aspects, as well as sustainable development performance. Guidance is offered on particular appropriate benchmarks. More information is available at :www.globalcompact.org and www.globalreporting.org.

2.4.5 E-commerce

E-commerce allows customers to place orders using the Internet (shopping online). This system can also be used to open an *ecological account* (Migros). Such an account compares the respective impacts of online purchases compared with those made by car. This approach focuses on energy consumption, CO2 emissions, time spent and transportation costs.

2.4.6 Loyalty cards

Loyalty cards allow companies to track customer behaviour and to contact them, to reward purchases of green products or improved recycling behaviour.

2.4.7 Promoting local and seasonal products

Many retailers encourage consumers to buy local products by increasing the range of these on sale, by undertaking specific campaigns and/or by providing a label or logo indicating locally produced items.

3 ANALYSIS OF GOOD PRACTICES UNDERTAKEN BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Five of the most advanced countries (in terms of their efforts to develop sustainable consumption strategies) were selected for further study. In order to synthesise the information gathered through each country during the literature search and interviews, programmes were established for the following countries :

- France
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- Germany
- Belgium (Flanders)

Records were collated to show the kinds of initiatives taken by countries in sustainable consumption. The information obtained was displayed according to the general philosophy of sustainable development, and more particularly to initiatives and activities relating to sustainable consumption (including communications on sustainable products).

A strategy to promote sustainable consumption behaviour change must necessarily establish a mix of complimentary instruments. These instruments reflect the different motivations for consumption (attitudes, social background, habits, drivers etc). This report addresses the 4Es principal (*enable, encourage, engage and exemplify*). Only public authorities have the means to tackle all of these measures within the methodology of the 4Es approach.

3.1 Environmental strategies for public authorities

Public authorities play a significant role in promoting sustainable consumption. Typically their strategies for sustainable consumption are part of a broader plan concerning sustainable development, or they fall within policies for sustainable consumption and production (SCP).

These strategies are usually underpinned by plans of action to promote sustainable consumption through initiatives such as : establishing a framework to define sustainable products ; harmonising and simplifying labelling ; introducing economic instruments to better inform and educate consumers, retailers and other stakeholders ; facilitating (or subsidising) research into sustainable products ; creating platforms for cooperation ; coordinating the activities of public and private sectors ; establishing targets (by voluntary agreements) ; introducing the carbon footprint approach ; undertaking campaigns etc.

3.2 Good practices according to the 4Es principle

The national profiles present the initiatives undertaken by the five authorities studied, aligned to the 4Es principle. For each 'E', different criteria or actions were identified and proposed. The actions adopted are often complimentary or additional to those undertaken by retailers. In the following chapters this report explains the key elements for success, and describes how relevant to these are to the Walloon region.

3.2.1 To make possible (enable)

Access to information is essential to make possible an effective transition to sustainable behaviour and intelligent consumption. The options for sustainable consumption should be both simple and natural. Authorities within the five countries are taking action in three specific areas

enabling



- Campaigns to promote sustainable consumption
- explaining the impacts of products
- advising on sustainability

3.2.1.1 Campaigns to promote sustainable consumption

Key elements of success in a promotional campaign for sustainable consumption are :

- Cooperation between the different stakeholders – producers, retailers, public authorities and others (NGOs) utilising normal channels of communication
- Planning campaigns sufficiently in advance (up to one year) and repeating these often enough to achieve lasting changes in behaviour
- Preferably focusing campaigns on a group of products (for example organic products during a week dedicated to organic farming)
- Applying a mix of communications instruments is the most efficient (in-store and using the wider media)
- Introducing temporary price reductions during the campaign is helpful to persuade consumers to buy particular products
- Tracking sales of products during the campaign and in the following months, to judge the lasting effects

Reproducibility : high. Applicable at all levels

3.2.1.2 Communications concerning the impact of products (eco-labels)

The key elements for successful communications on the impact of products are :

- Eco-labels should be clear, simple and verifiable and must not be confused with false or unclear environmental claims
- The instruments of mass communications should be used (TV, radio, newspapers), each time offering further references for those who need additional information
- Other media such as brochures, posters (with labels), and websites to provide additional background information. This information should clearly indicate that the eco-labels are attributed to particular international standards (EU flower label, MSC, FSC, fairtrade etc)
- All stakeholders (producers, distributors, authorities and others) should speak the same language (ie same terms, definitions etc)
- The price of labelled products should be reduced, or may not exceed a premium threshold (of, for example, more than 20%) compared with standard products
- Retailers have the means to provide information within their stores and can undertake campaigns. For example retailers can deploy posters or brochures in-store, to illustrate the different labels that consumers may find within the shop. They can also link their own websites to those established by public authorities.

Reproducibility : High. The assignment of labels is a national or pan-European matter, but the Walloon region can play an important role in communications and awareness raising.

3.2.1.3 Advice on sustainability

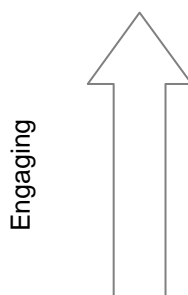
The key elements of successful communications with citizens and other groups, encouraging more sustainable lifestyles are :

- Initiating pilot products to test the indications instruments
- Giving clear messages which are easy to understand, which can be monitored and enforced, and which have a predictable result
- Making the link between changing lifestyles and an improved quality of life
- Showing that sustainable consumption and modern life can be combined
- Providing simple rules for and the difficult decisions, for example in the purchase of local and seasonal products
- Explaining that sustainable consumption lies within the reach of everyone
- Explain the environmental, social and economic benefits.

Reproducibility : High. Note that existing good practices will help avoid having to start from scratch.

3.2.2 Engagement (engage)

To engage all stakeholders in the process of real change, public authorities in the five selected countries are undertaking a series of actions, as listed in order of importance below :



- A strategy for sustainable consumption indicators and specific targets
- Reduce packaging
- Undertake research
- Build partnerships
- Prohibit certain products and substances
- Promote short supply chains and
- Promote e-commerce.

3.2.2.1 Cooperation agreements, objectives and indicators (quantified)

Key elements of success in the establishment of cooperation agreements, targets and indicators are :

- **Cooperation agreements (voluntarily)**
 - The agreement must be sufficiently concrete and translated to be understood and applied at the level of the store
 - Effective communications during the drafting of the agreement is essential
- **Objectives and indicators**
 - The level of ambition should be in proportion to the available knowledge and the willingness of stakeholders to participate
 - All stakeholders should be involved in developing targets indicators
 - The agreement should be progressive over time, that is to say start out with realistic goals and gradually become more ambitious
 - Develop indicators which are 'SMART' (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**e producible & **T**imely)
 - Measure progress made and communicate.

Reproducibility : High. Preferences should be determined jointly and in agreement with the other two regions of Belgium.

3.2.2.2 Packaging reduction

Key elements of successful initiatives to reduce packaging are :

- Preparing a list of accomplishments to date, including the amount of packaging used by product group
- Establishing an agreement between the retailers and the public authorities, including clear targets and indicators
- Establishing a clear hierarchy with respect to actions : prevention first of all, followed by reuse, refill, use of recycled material in packaging etc
- Recognising that the public authority is the catalyst between the retail sector, research centres, universities and the environmental organisations responsible for implementing the action plan
- Effective monitoring and reporting on results of packaging in stores, using websites, during media campaigns etc.

Reproducibility : Average. This is more of a federal matter.

3.2.2.3 Research

Key elements of successful research initiatives undertaken by public authorities are :

- Undertaking an inventory of available research underway within the country and abroad
- Identifying regional priorities, taking into account particular socio-economic characteristics of the region, progress achieved to date, the ability to undertake research etc
- Making sure that the research is multi-dimensional and takes into account technical aspects (for example packaging materials), environmental aspects (e.g. carbon footprint) and social aspects (e.g. attitudes, behaviours etc)
- Guiding and planning research so that effective measures which require the least effort should be taken into account first
- Integrating the results of the research into policy-making at local and national levels.

Reproducibility : average. Technical research is often complex and expensive if it is to be effective. This type of research is best done at a supra-national level. However, research on attitudes and behaviours is linked to regional aspects and is therefore more appropriate.

3.2.2.4 Partnership

Key elements in the success of partnerships are:

- The identification of the stakeholders, their skills, their interests, their target audiences, their achievements to date
- The creation of networks and partnerships based on common objectives
- The identification of objectives, deliverables, roles and responsibilities, mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on each partnership.

Reproducibility: High. Partnerships are essential to successful communications in terms of consumption and sustainable products.

3.2.2.5 Promoting short supply chains

The promotion of shorter supply chains has been an action undertaken in France, and which aims to :

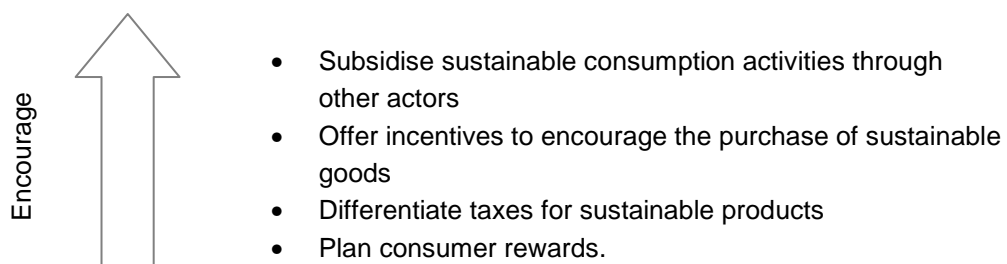
- Favour the consumption of seasonable products
- Encourage communal eating (ie outside the home) using quality local products. This includes giving local authorities the means to undertake these activities
- Encourage retailers, particularly the larger outlets, said the economic merits of marketing quality local products supported with local consumer education.

To achieve these objectives, some guidance has been given :

- Undertaking life cycle assessments of certain products or sectors
- Establishing (in 2012) within each county general protocols or agreements between local communities, councils and the farming sector (in ways which remain compatible with the actions of the state)
- Developing retail outlets in urban areas, in partnership with local farmers
- Establishing a direct incentive for consumers (loyalty cards etc)
- Developing a national fairtrade approach
- Supporting the creation or maintenance of local processing plants in rural areas.

3.2.3 Encouragement (encourage)

Choices for sustainable consumption should be encouraged in diverse ways, including through price signals. To encourage consumers and other stakeholders in a real process of behaviour change, local authorities within the five countries studied are undertaking a series of actions as listed in order of importance below.



Key elements for success for public authorities to encourage stakeholders to favour sustainable consumption and the purchase of sustainable products are :

- Provide subsidies for NGOs and consumer associations undertaking information and awareness raising activities
- Launch saving cards involving all stakeholders (producers, retailers, public authorities, NGOs). Citizens receive points from purchases of green products and can redeem these in exchange for travel tickets, cultural event tickets, sustainable products that are
 - Intensive campaigns of communications are required
 - Instrument needs to involve all stakeholders
 - Campaigns must be regularly repeated in order to keep consumers motivated and engage those who are not yet involved.

- There are many motives for participation :
- to safeguard the environment
 - to save money
 - support local business etc
- Discount coupons to the purchase of sustainable products can be offered by public authorities (similar to the campaign to encourage the purchase of energy-saving light bulbs)
 - Ensure the discounts are applicable to a wide range of sustainable products and services
 - Ensure that vouchers are redeemable at the greatest number of locations
 - Price reductions must be large enough to encourage consumers to purchase the particular sustainable products.

Reproducibility : High. Applicable at all levels : municipalities, retailers and others. The higher the level, the greater the cost effectiveness. Taxes are a federal matter, even European. France and the United Kingdom have committed to placing on the EU agenda the principle of differentiated taxes for sustainable products.

3.2.4 Leading by example (exemplify)

Ministries, agencies, retailers and other stakeholders must lead by example (ie 'practice what you preach'). The public sector is a major consumer in the economy and can lead by example, by integrating environmental management within their administrations and public institutions, purchasing sustainable products and services, and by training staff and other measures.

Key elements of success in maximising these effects are :

- Put in place the necessary tools to encourage public establishments to introduce initiatives for sustainable consumption :
 - Administrative rules on procurement
 - Creating a centre of expertise on sustainable procurement
 - Developing indicators and a calculation model to measure the performance of public organisations in the field of sustainable consumption
- Establish voluntary agreements, including the possibility for public institutions to participate (and obtain financial assistance according to their degree of commitment)
- Choose locations visited frequently by the general public (such as schools, universities, hospitals, communal dwellings) to inform and raise awareness of initiatives relating to sustainable products (the multiplier effect)
- Inform the public of these initiatives and their results, using communication tools already employed by public institutions, such as monthly newsletters, websites, posters etc.

Reproducibility : high. The regional and local authorities have at their disposal great potential to influence the markets are sustainable products, by committing themselves to buy the greenest products possible for their own administrations and other public institutions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has highlighted the good practices of five distributors (Casino, Migros, COOP, Marks & Spencer et Tesco) across five countries (France, Sweden, United Kingdom, Germany and the Belgian region of Flanders). This has helped identify strategies and actions for communications and awareness-raising relating to sustainable consumption.

This inventory aims to promote awareness strategies for sustainable consumption in the retail sector, and also to initiate a dialogue between the Walloon region, retailers and those organisations involved in sustainable consumption. The purpose of this section is particularly to provide recommendations to the region, drawing inspiration from the countries studied.

Guidelines to promote the communications strategy concerning sustainable consumption and sustainable products :

The major questions addressed by these recommendations are:

- what can the Walloon region do to promote sustainable consumption and sustainable products to retailers and other players in this field, whilst taking account of the Belgian administrative division of powers, the legal framework and other existing initiatives at national and international levels (as well as in the other two regions) ?
- How best to collaborate with the retail sector and how can the Walloon region draw on initiatives implemented abroad ?
- What framework will best help the average consumer to being courage to make sustainable choices ?

Concrete actions to promote sustainable consumption-alternatives for the Walloon region

The Walloon region can play an important role in stimulating sales of sustainable products within the retail sector. Initiatives which could be implemented include :

- taking into account the views of different stakeholders (in the process of negotiation)
- applying pressure to producers (and retailers, perhaps)
- taking a long-term view (to 2020)
- adopting a clear position which is coherent and lasting, to lead by example.

The Walloon region plans to establish, within its new waste strategy, actions for sustainable consumption with stakeholders, based on the 4Es principle. It should be noted that the actions to be undertaken are not limited to the field of communications. Nevertheless the actions listed below are for the most part centred around communications activities.

As mentioned previously, during the study special attention was paid to the following themes : waste prevention, packaging, food waste and supply chains.

Communications actions for retailers relating to sustainable consumption and the promotion of sustainable products

It would be useful to conduct a preliminary review of existing initiatives on communications activities relating to sustainable consumption and sustainable products, which have already been introduced by Belgian retailers. This study would gather information on :

- Communications concerning sustainable products
- financial incentives
- existing tools available for raising consumer awareness concerning the environmental impacts of products.

Some activities listed below are beyond those included in the framework agreement concerning Belgium's communication on sustainable consumption and sustainable products. These could be negotiated and implemented with the assistance of the retail sector. While these actions may seem ambitious, some already operate abroad and those retailers responsible for their implementation are ready to do more.

Finally, these actions must be considered as part of a long-term strategy.

List of actions

Enable (enable)

1. Application of new information and communication technologies in store
2. Education in schools on the environment and health
3. Campaigns for sustainable consumption on specific days or weeks dedicated to environmental topics (European or global)
4. Promote (on a permanent basis) local produce in store
5. Communicate and promote local fruit and vegetables in season throughout the year
6. Campaign against food waste
7. Offer clear, concise and verifiable labels in store
8. Improved guidance for consumers on in-store sustainable products
9. Inform consumers of the environmental benefits of e-commerce
10. Promote sustainable products within the media
11. Communicate (in stores and via media) on the environmental impacts of the consumption and disposal of products.

Engage

1. Raise consumers' awareness and promote shorter supply chains
2. Use eco-labels for businesses and retailers
3. A strategy to increase availability of sustainable products and to reduce waste
4. Reduce packaging
5. Identify the Walloon region as an actor within the wider European strategy for sustainable consumption in the retail sector
6. The Walloon region should provide training in the field of education for sustainable assumption among social groups

7. Undertake benchmarking performance studies in the retail sector (relating to sustainable consumption and goods)
8. Action on availability and accessibility of food which is in season, local and organic (see above)
9. Increase the share of sustainable products in stores - retailers to be engaged
10. Address the management of biowaste by retailers
11. Eco-design instruments
12. The retailers voluntary global compact initiative
13. Communicating strategic directions - and their consequences in accordance with the principles of the **global reporting initiative** (GRI, www.globalreporting.org - version G3)
14. Training retail staff in sustainable products and sustainable consumption
15. Study and undertake analysis (bottom-up) of the environmental impacts of the retail sector.

Encourage

1. Provide grants or subsidies to other stakeholders involved in sustainable consumption
2. Introduce financial incentives to promote sustainable products
3. Apply differential taxes

Exemplify (lead by example)

1. Provide sustainable goods in public establishments across the Walloon region
2. Promote vegetarianism and organic products in public institutions
3. Define the terms 'sustainable product', 'green products', 'more environmentally friendly', etc.

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