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Environmental labels and declarations — Principles, requirements and guidelines for communication of footprint information

Déclarations et étiquettes environnementales — Principes, exigences et lignes directrices pour la communication des informations d'empreinte

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Contents

Page

Foreword ..... **v**

Introduction ..... **vi**

1 Scope **1**

2 Normative references **1**

3 Terms and definitions **1**
3.1 Terms relating to footprint communication 2
3.2 Terms relating to life cycle assessment and data 2
3.3 Terms relating to organizations and products 4
3.4 Terms relating to data quality and verification 4

4 Objectives **5**

5 Principles **5**
5.1 Credibility and reliability 5
5.2 Life cycle perspective 6
5.3 Comparability 6
5.4 Transparency 6
5.5 Regionality 6

6 Communication requirements **6**
6.1 Relationship with ISO 14020 6
6.2 General requirements 6
6.3 Intended audience 7
6.4 Identification of area of concern 7
6.5 Information to be provided 7
6.5.1 General 7
6.5.2 Supporting information 8
6.5.3 Use of explanatory statements 9
6.6 Footprint graphics 9
6.7 Communication of more than one footprint 9
6.7.1 General 9
6.7.2 Graphics 9
6.8 Access to information 10
6.9 Comparative footprint communications 10
6.9.1 Types of comparative footprint communications 10
6.9.2 Requirements for all comparative footprint communications 10
6.9.3 Comparisons with the products of other organizations 10
6.9.4 Footprint communications suggesting overall superiority 11
6.9.5 Performance tracking 11

7 Requirements for the use of data to support the communication **11**
7.1 Acceptable footprint results 11
7.2 Assurance of data quality 12
7.3 Rules for data confidentiality 12
7.4 Data used in comparative footprint communications 12
7.4.1 General 12
7.4.2 PCR for comparative footprint communications 12

8 Footprint communication programme requirements **13**
8.1 Scope of the programme 13
8.2 Use of PCR 13
8.3 Footprint communication programme rules 13
8.3.1 Programme instructions 13
8.3.2 Declarations of conformity 13
8.3.3 Monitoring the footprint communication 13
8.4 Communication responsibilities of the footprint communication programme operator 14

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8.5 Establishing data quality requirements 14
9 Verification requirements **14**
9.1 Verification of footprint communication 14
9.2 Competence of footprint communication verifiers 14
9.3 Independence of verifiers 15
Annex A (informative) **Responsibilities of the footprint communication programme operator** **16**
Bibliography **17**

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Environmental labelling*.

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Introduction

This document belongs to a suite of standards dealing with environmental labels and declarations for products. It provides requirements and guidelines for how environmental aspects and potential environmental impacts of a product related to a specific area of concern can be communicated. The aim of this document is to ensure that only valid, science-based and comparable purchasing information is provided without any "greenwashing".

Footprint communication is intended solely to promote the dissemination of credible product information that is not misleading.

Footprint communications take into consideration the local or regional context relevant to the area where the potential environmental impacts might occur, including the production, use and end-of-life stages.

This document is intended to ensure that all footprint communications, regardless of the quantification methodology, follow the same principles and procedures.

This document provides principles, requirements and guidelines for an organization wishing to make a product footprint communication.

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Environmental labels and declarations — Principles, requirements and guidelines for communication of footprint information

1 Scope

This document provides principles, requirements and guidelines for footprint communications for products addressing areas of concern relating to the environment.

This document also provides requirements and guidelines for footprint communication programmes, as well as requirements for verification procedures.

This document does not address the quantification of a footprint, nor does it address the communication of footprints that are not related to the environment, e.g. footprints addressing social or economic issues. In particular, footprint communications relating to the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development are outside the scope of this document. Footprint communications relating to organizations are also outside the scope of this document.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 14020, *Environmental labels and declarations — General principles*

ISO 14025:2006, *Environmental labels and declarations — Type III environmental declarations — Principles and procedures*

ISO/TS 14027, *Environmental labels and declarations — Development of product category rules*

ISO 14044:2006, *Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Requirements and guidelines*

ISO 14046, *Environmental management — Water footprint — Principles, requirements and guidelines*

ISO/TS 14067, *Greenhouse gases — Carbon footprint of products — Requirements and guidelines for quantification and communication*

ISO/TS 14071, *Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Critical review processes and reviewer competencies: Additional requirements and guidelines to ISO 14044:2006*

ISO/IEC 17050-1, *Conformity assessment — Supplier's declaration of conformity — Part 1: General requirements*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at http://www.electropedia.org/

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3.1 Terms relating to footprint communication

3.1.1
footprint communication
result of preparation, provision and dissemination of the *footprint* (3.2.2), supporting information and *explanatory statement* (3.1.7)

3.1.2
comparative footprint communication
footprint communication (3.1.1) regarding the superiority or equivalence of one *product* (3.3.3) versus another product, or one product over time, with regard to a single *area of concern* (3.2.1)

3.1.3
footprint communication programme
programme for the development and use of a *footprint communication* (3.1.1) based on a set of operating rules

Note 1 to entry: The footprint communication programme can be voluntary or mandatory, international, regional, national, local or sectoral.

3.1.4
footprint information module
compilation of data to be used as a basis for a *footprint* (3.2.2), covering a unit process or a combination of unit processes that are part of the *life cycle* (3.2.3) of a *product* (3.3.3)

[SOURCE: ISO 14025:2006, 3.13, modified — The words "Type III environmental declaration" have been replaced with "footprint".]

3.1.5
footprint performance tracking report
report comparing the *footprint* (3.2.2) for a *product* (3.3.3) with the footprint for an original or previous product, or with the same product over time, where the product(s) are marketed by the same organization and have the same *functional unit* (3.2.5) or *declared unit* (3.2.6)

3.1.6
footprint graphic
images or pictograms used when communicating numerical information as part of *footprint communication* (3.1.1)

3.1.7
explanatory statement
explanation which is needed or given so that a *footprint communication* (3.1.1) can be properly understood by a purchaser, potential purchaser or user of the *product* (3.3.3)

[SOURCE: ISO 14021:2016, 3.1.7, modified — The words "environmental claim" have been replaced with "footprint communication".]

3.2 Terms relating to life cycle assessment and data

3.2.1
area of concern
aspect of the natural environment, human health or resources of interest to society

EXAMPLE Water, climate change, biodiversity.

3.2.2
footprint
metric(s) used to report *life cycle assessment* (3.2.4) results addressing an *area of concern* (3.2.1)

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3.2.3
life cycle
consecutive and interlinked stages of a product system, from raw material acquisition or generation from natural resources to final disposal

[SOURCE: ISO 14040:2006, 3.1]

3.2.4
life cycle assessment
LCA
compilation and evaluation of the inputs, outputs and the potential *environmental impacts* (3.2.10) of a product system throughout its *life cycle* (3.2.3)

[SOURCE: ISO 14040:2006, 3.2]

3.2.5
functional unit
quantified performance of a product system for use as a reference unit

[SOURCE: ISO 14040:2006, 3.20]

3.2.6
declared unit
quantity of a *product* (3.3.3) for use as a reference unit in a *footprint communication* (3.1.1) based on *life cycle assessment* (3.2.4), for the expression of environmental information in *footprint information modules* (3.1.4)

EXAMPLE 1 kg of primary steel, 1 m^3 of crude oil.

[SOURCE: ISO 21930:2017, 3.1.11, modified — The word "construction" has been deleted before "product", the abbreviated term "EPD" ("environmental product declaration") has been replaced with "footprint communication", the word "footprint" has been added before "information modules", the example has been modified and the note to entry has been deleted.]

3.2.7
product category rules
PCR
set of specific rules, requirements and guidelines for developing *footprint communications* (3.1.1) for one or more *product categories* (3.3.4)

[SOURCE: ISO 14025:2006, 3.5, modified — The words "Type III environmental declarations" have been replaced with "footprint communications".]

3.2.8
weighting
converting and possibly aggregating indicator results across impact categories using numerical factors based on value-choices

[SOURCE: ISO 14044:2006, 4.4.3.1, bullet c)]

3.2.9
environmental aspect
element of an organization's activities or *products* (3.3.3) or services that can interact with the environment

[SOURCE: ISO 14001:2015, 3.2.2, modified — The words "interacts or" and have been deleted before "can interact" and the notes to entry have been deleted.]

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3.2.10
environmental impact
change to the environment, whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from an organization's *environmental aspects* (3.2.9)

[SOURCE: ISO 14001:2015, 3.2.4]

3.3 Terms relating to organizations and products

3.3.1
consumer
individual member of the general public purchasing or using goods, property or services for private purposes

[SOURCE: ISO 14025:2006, 3.16]

3.3.2
interested party
person or organization that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity

EXAMPLE Customers, communities, suppliers, regulators, non-governmental organizations, investors and employees.

Note 1 to entry: To "perceive itself to be affected" means the perception has been made known to the organization.

[SOURCE: ISO 14001:2015, 3.1.6]

3.3.3
product
any goods or service

[SOURCE: ISO 14021:2016, 3.1.14]

3.3.4
product category
group of *products* (3.3.3) that can fulfil equivalent functions

[SOURCE: ISO 14025:2006, 3.12]

3.3.5
footprint communication programme operator
body that conducts a *footprint communication programme* (3.1.3)

Note 1 to entry: A *footprint communication* (3.1.1) programme operator can be a company or a group of companies, industrial sector or trade association, public authorities or agencies, or an independent scientific body or other organization. An organization that develops footprint communications solely relating to the organization's own *products* (3.3.3) is also considered to be a footprint communication programme operator.

3.4 Terms relating to data quality and verification

3.4.1
data quality
characteristics of data that relate to their ability to satisfy stated requirements

[SOURCE: ISO 14040:2006, 3.19]

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3.4.2
verification
confirmation, through the provision of objective evidence, that specified requirements have been fulfilled

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.8.12, modified — The notes to entry have been deleted.]

3.4.3
verifier
person or body that carries out *verification* (3.4.2)

Note 1 to entry: For the purposes of this document, a verifier is also a person or body that carries out an assessment of *data quality* (3.4.1) and other aspects of a *footprint* (3.2.2) study.

[SOURCE: ISO 14025:2006, 3.8, modified — The note to entry has been added.]

3.4.4
competence
ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.10.4, modified — The notes to entry have been deleted.]

4 Objectives

The overall goal of environmental labels and declarations is to encourage demand for, and supply of, those products that cause less stress on the environment through communication of verifiable, accurate information that is not misleading, based on a life cycle perspective of the environmental aspects of products, thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continual environmental improvement.

The objective of this document is to harmonize footprint communications addressing environmental areas of concern relating to products.

The potential benefits are:

a) increased communication of footprints that informs decision making and leads to increased beneficial or reduced adverse environmental impacts from consumption and production;

b) simplification of the process of footprint communication and lessening of the risks associated with misuse of a footprint communication;

c) increased comparability and reliability of footprint communications and fewer misleading footprint communications.

5 Principles

5.1 Credibility and reliability

Footprint communications convey information that is relevant and reliable in terms of addressing areas of concern. For footprint communications to be successful in improving environmental understanding of products, it is important that technical credibility is maintained while adaptability, practicality and cost-effectiveness are provided.

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