

From: newsletter@terrainfirma.co.uk
Subject: The Low Carbon Agenda #17, June 2009: Low Carbon Labels
Date: 24 June 2009 09:40:41 BST
To: gareth@terrainfirma.co.uk
Reply-To: newsletter@terrainfirma.co.uk
8 Attachments, 80.6 KB

The Low Carbon Agenda

No.17 / June 2009

Eco-Labels and Carbon

Last month we considered low carbon marketing, this month we're looking at a specific element of this which is using third party eco-labels. Even if you're not selling a product, this will still be of interest for procurement as you need to know what you are buying.

We've put some new free resources on the website - read on for more details. And next month we'll be moving on to Low Carbon Leadership.

All the very best,

Gareth

Gareth Kane, Terra Infirma Ltd

gareth@terrainfirma.co.uk



What does a (good) label do?

A good low carbon label should allow you to:

- Easily identify low carbon products;
- Be confident in that choice;
- Compare like with like.

The labels below are all recognised third party accreditations. I always advise that you avoid trying to create a new label (or using a manufacturer's own label to choose a product) as the buyer has no confidence in the measurement process.

Eco-labels - the good the bad and the ugly



Simple energy labels such as the international EnergyStar and the UK's Energy Saving Trust label tell you whether a product has met a single threshold of requirements, eg an EnergyStar TV is 30% more efficient than average. The standards are set periodically by panels of experts and they tighten up each time they are reviewed. Very simple, but this simplicity makes it impossible to compare two compliant products to determine which has better performance.

The new Carbon Trust label in the UK gives a very precise



carbon footprint for a product, following a prescribed method. It is appearing on a wide range of consumer products from potato snacks to shampoo. It is certainly the most precise label around, but I cannot see someone standing in a supermarket making a distinction between two bottles of hair conditioner on this basis. Its strength lies in making the manufacturer carry out the footprint exercise and commit to cutting this footprint to keep the label - "reduce it or lose it".

Energy		Washing machine
Manufacturer Model		
More efficient		
A		
B		B
C		
D		
E		
F		
G		
Less efficient		
Energy consumption kWh/cycle <small>(based on standard test results for 60°C cotton cycle) Actual energy consumption will depend on how the appliance is used</small>		1.75
Washing performance <small>A: higher G: lower</small>		A B C D E F G
Spin drying performance <small>A: higher G: lower Spin speed (rpm)</small>		A B C D E F G 1400
Capacity (cotton) kg		5.0
Water consumption		5.5
Noise (dB(A) re 1 pW)	Washing	5.2
	Spinning	7.5
Further information contained in product brochure		

By far the most effective energy label in my view is the EU energy label which appears on white goods, public buildings, lightbulbs and, in voluntary form, windows, cars and even aeroplanes. It combines simplicity with a graded approach - A is the most efficient, G the least. The small print gives the precise details. As labels go, this is close to perfection.

It has been credited with transforming the white goods market in a decade - 76% of products sold are now A-rated - who would want a D-rated anything?



More general labelling systems such as the EU Eco-label have a wide range of criteria, not just carbon, but the user would need to do background research into the standard to find out what this means in practice. Not very effective.



Certain industries have their own labels, such as the Soil Association's Organic label for agricultural products. If you know what the carbon implications of such a label are, then these can be useful. But most users would not associate organic food with being low carbon.

Summary

Use these third party labels to either back up your green claims for your product or to help you choose the lowest carbon product. The EU Energy Label is the best and will appear on more and more products in the future. Manufacturers' own labels generally aren't worth the sticky paper they are written on.

Free Low Carbon Resources

There are three new [free downloads on the Terra Infirma website](#):

1. 101 Carbon-busting Tips for Your Business
2. Climate Change FAQs for Executives

3. The Terra Infirma Brainstorming Tool (for instructions see [LCA#5](#))

Low Carbon News

Barack Obama appears to have got his [Climate Change Bill](#) through Congress, but in a watered down form - the 20% cut commitment has been reduced to 17%. An estimated \$45m was spent by lobbyists opposing the Bill.

We're less than a year away from the UK's Carbon Reduction Commitment which will affect many larger private and public sector organisations (as a rough guide if your electricity bill is £500k or more then you need to check whether you are affected). DEFRA's user guide is [here](#).

In 2008 wind, solar and other clean technologies attracted \$140bn (£85bn) compared with \$110bn for gas and coal for electrical power generation (source: [Guardian](#)). This is the first time in living memory that investment in renewables has exceeded that into fossil fuels.

Tip of the Month

Put physical space between heating and cooling systems eg refrigeration and ovens in food processing or catering or positioning cool air intakes away from hot exhaust gases.

The small print:

© 2009 [Terra Infirma Ltd](#). All rights reserved.

Contact us: newsletter@terrainfirma.co.uk

Please feel free to pass this newsletter to your friends, colleagues and clients.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, [click here](#).



terrainfirma
bringing sustainability to life