

# Attitudes to environmental labelling of food products in the nordic Agri-food sector

Sanna Hietala, Luke [sanna.hietala@luke.fi](mailto:sanna.hietala@luke.fi)

Anna Woodhouse, RISE



AARHUS  
UNIVERSITY



Østfoldforskning

# Approach

Interviews with Agrifood stakeholders  
in the 4 nordic countries

Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, 17 in total



# Approach- questions



## Communication towards producers

An idea is to develop communication materials about PEF to producers, as small easy to read leaflet.

Would this be effective to communicate the benefits with PEF?

If yes/no, please explain further

## Labelling

What is your opinion about environmental labelling?

Which one do you prefer for your consumers? Why? (EG traffic light, factsheet, spider diagram etc)

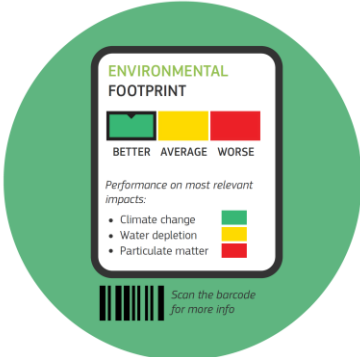
Other ideas of communication vehicles?

# Labels for communication- examples provided by the EC

PERFORMANCE LABEL



TRAFFIC LIGHT LABEL



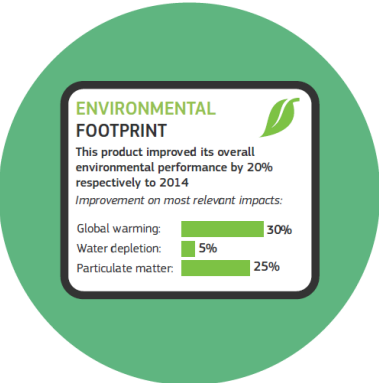
WEBSITES



MOBILE APPS



IMPROVEMENT LABEL



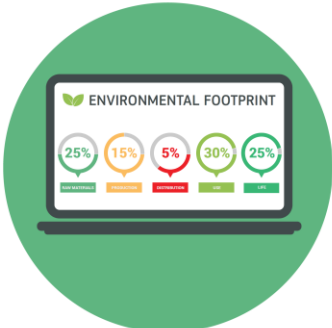
FACTSHEETS



ONLINE SHOPS



INFOGRAPHICS



# Why environmental label?- from EU perspective

- Reaction to complaints from the business sector about difficulties due to the proliferation of environmental labels/certification schemes
- Some companies making unsubstantiated or unverifiable 'green' claims

# An effective environmental label

- an instrument that indirectly reduces the environmental impact of food

## Can be done by:

influencing consumer choices to stimulate a move away from products with high environmental impact to less environmentally damaging products

and/or

by encouraging producers to identify efficiencies in GHG/environmental reduction throughout the supply chain

An effective environmental label

Has a low implementation cost

Is trustworthy for the consumer-third party verification necessary

Introduced carefully to attract consumer attention in competition with other information



# As identified in the background reports on communication vehicles

- Strong authority and stakeholder commitment
- Dedicated long term campaign
- Label limited effect hence need retail campaigns, individual consumer advice



# Proven effect of environmental labels?

Studies have shown that labels can increase sales of the branded products but to a limited extent

The main obstacle for a success of a climate labels is that strong habits are governing food consumption decisions

Currently price, quality, brand and availability are more relevant considerations in many product categories

# Attitudes to environmental labelling on food products

- Interview results

# Communicating environmental information

The majority of respondents communicate environmental information to their customers

- self improvements e..g less packaging material, decrease CF with 20%, wind powered bakeries

Other types of labels, MSC, Organic, "From Sweden", Eco label

# Attitudes to labelling

Most respondents were positive to a label but emphasized that it needs to be simple yet accurately reflecting the environmental impact

e.g. Finnish meat company was curious how the baseline is established for different labels and which products will establish the baseline. Also if comparison to own previous performance was done, it would give an excellent result to those which performed bad in the first run.

Organic Denmark does not think a new label will benefit their products

# Attitudes to labelling

Norwegian Seafood Association cannot say what kind of information or label that will work best, but it is very challenging to give information about something that is so complex and comprehensive

Two Swedish companies asked for more consumer studies on what is the best label- not to ask companies what they think

# Difficulty with the PEF label

Several respondents shared a concern about comparing products between product categories

Lets say a consumer wants to make a sauce..What product shall he/she choose? Product X has a "Best in Class" PEF label and Product Y also has a "Best in Class" PEF label...but product X may have a higher environmental impact than Product Y

# Communication vehicle-which one?

We found that for B2C communication:

*More work is needed to find the most suitable label*

- But most respondents moderately positive to a label
- The majority of respondents wanted a simple label, just a logo
- Lantmannen Sweden- a three tiered label to rough (traffic light) better with 5 tiers (Energy label), don't think single score can work

We found that:

Finnish meat company: Similarity to already known scales in labels can help consumer acceptance of new labels such as the 5 tier energy label

The majority of respondents thought traffic light was the best





We found that:

We found that for B2B communication:

The majority of respondents thought fact sheet was the most useful

B2B can communicate more and more complex info

From the respondents replies we can also conclude that:

Trust, understanding and acceptance (support the label and the products with high scores) is important

Willingness to pay vs actually paying is important

Consumers are irrational, decisions are based on emotions rather than logic

So label needs to appeal to emotions rather than logic!

# Cont.

Massive information campaign needed when releasing label to complement and make consumer aware and gain trust

Retailer responsibility- huge responsibility for displaying best PEF products as the labelling per se is not enough for consumer to choose that product

B2B has more chance of success as it is easier to communicate in that way and PEF can have an impact and results in less environmental impact from products

Thank you!



# Identified benefits of a label

- Improving brand values
- Opportunity to compare products on their environmental performance
- Driving up the quality of products in terms of their environmental performance
- Higher quality of products

# Drawbacks of a PEF label

European Dairy Association is positive to PEF but thinks “is not ready to allow for meaningful and quantitative comparability between products, nor on-pack labelling;

- Further improvement is needed to allow for a further detailed use of the methodology: significant uncertainties persist, primary data gaps (esp. on farming level) are huge, and assessment of environmentally important processes as carbon sequestration, and biodiversity in more detail, still need to be covered”

Limited impact- eg Swedish Board of Agriculture thinks that labelling can be a complement to other more powerful instruments, e.g regulations (Panorama, SEPA, SCPC, SEA, 2019)