



PRODUCT SUSTAINABILITY INFORMATION

*State of Play and
Way Forward*

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

1 098879 345796

Copyright © United Nations Environment Programme, 2015

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part and in any form for educational or non-profit purposes without special permission from the copyright holder, provided acknowledgement of the source is made. UNEP would appreciate receiving a copy of any publication that uses this publication as a source.

No use of this publication may be made for resale or for any other commercial purpose whatsoever without prior permission in writing from the United Nations Environment Programme.

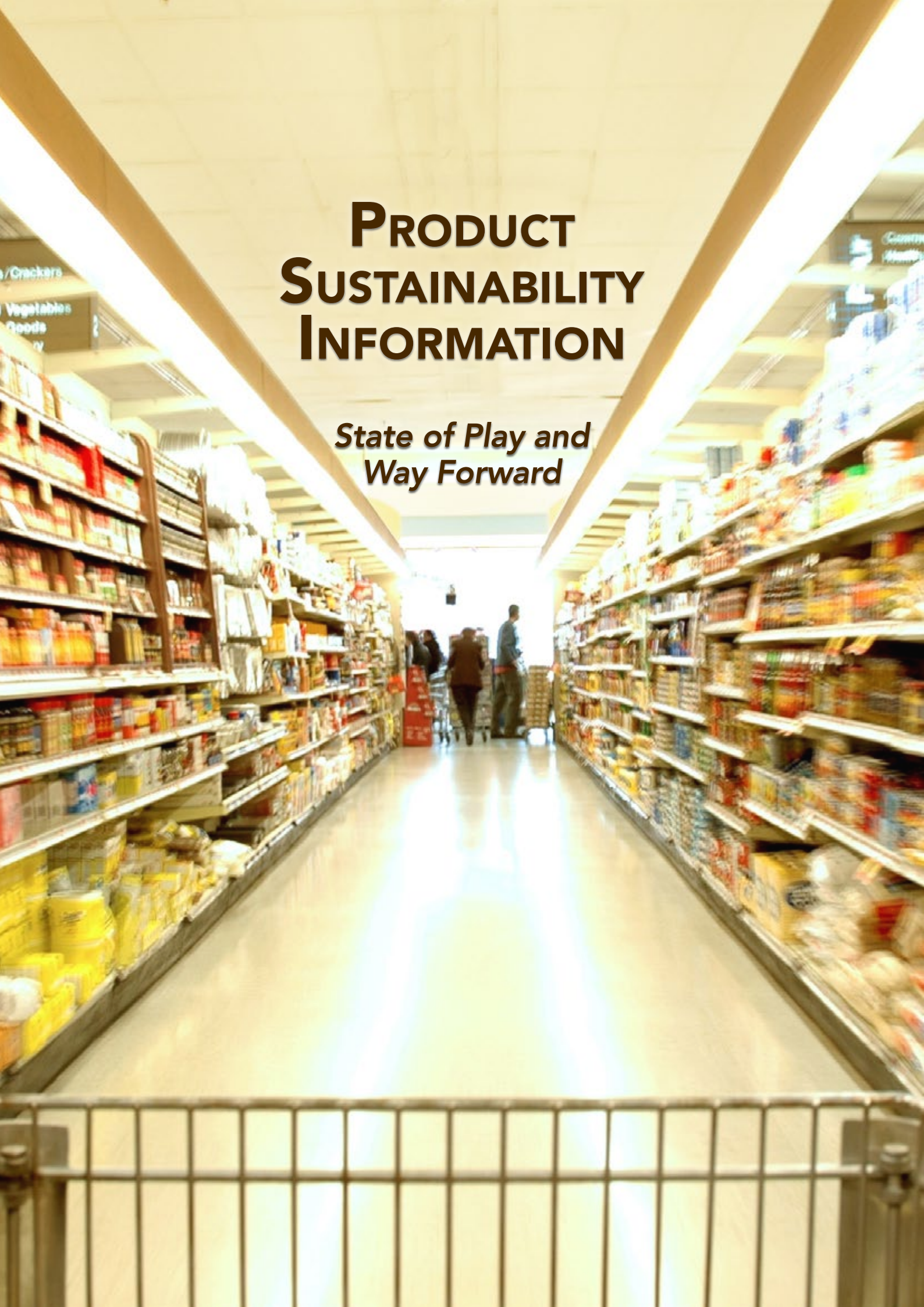
Disclaimer

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Moreover, the views expressed do not necessarily represent the decision or the stated policy of the United Nations Environment Programme, nor does citing of trade names or commercial processes constitute endorsement.

ISBN: 978-92-807-3478-2

Cover photo: ©Graphicstock
Design / layout: Thad Mermer

UNEP
promotes environ-
mentally sound practices
globally and in its own activities.
This publication is printed on 100%
recycled paper, using vegetable-based
inks and other eco-friendly practices.
Our distribution policy aims to reduce
UNEP's carbon footprint.



PRODUCT SUSTAINABILITY INFORMATION

*State of Play and
Way Forward*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Producer

This document has been produced by the UNEP DTIE.

Supervision, technical editing and support

- Liazzat Rabbiosi, UNEP DTIE
- Sonia Valdivia, UNEP DTIE

Authors

Mark Goedkoop, Vairavan Subramanian, Renée Morin

Reviewers (in alphabetical order)

- Anastasia O'Rourke (Big Room, Canada)
- Chaiyod Bunyagidj (Thailand Environment Institute, TEI)
- Fiona Tokple (UNEP DTIE, France)
- Guido Sonnemann (University of Bordeaux, France)
- Guillaume Gruère (OECD, France)
- Ines Freier (UNEP ROLAC, Panama)
- Janina Berkenmeyer (UNEP DTIE, France)
- Jim Fava (PE International, USA)
- Julie Godin (UNEP DTIE, France)
- Llorenç Milà i Canals (UNEP DTIE, France)
- Nydia Suppen (CADIS, Mexico)
- Shabbir Gheewhala (Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand)
- Sylvain Chevassus (French Ministry of Sustainable Development)
- Sven-Olof Ryding (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency)
- Tracey Colley (UNEP DTIE, France)

Design and lay-out

Thad Mermer

Contributions

The authors would like to thank Anastasia O'Rourke for her initial draft of this report and valuable comments, Liazzat Rabbiosi (UNEP DTIE) and Sonia Valdivia (UNEP DTIE) for their contribution to specific chapters of this report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
Terminology.....	4
Executive Summary	5
1. Introduction	7
1.1 Objectives and scope	8
1.2 Methodology	9
2. The Complexities of Product Sustainability Information.....	10
2.1 The science behind product sustainability information	10
2.2 The credibility issue and the role of ISO standardisation	13
3. Stakeholders	15
3.1 Short description of the major stakeholder groups	15
4. The Drivers of and Barriers to Sustainability Information	22
4.1 The perceived demand side of the tool landscape.....	22
4.2 Supply side drivers	23
5. The Landscape of Tools and Initiatives	25
5.1 Framework for categorising the sustainability of information tools.....	25
5.2 Review of tools and initiatives	26
5.3 Tools and their Implications.....	31
6. Discussion and Recommendations	33
6.1 Developing an aligned global vision among stakeholders	36
6.2 Concluding remarks	37
7. References and Bibliography	38
8. Appendices	45
Appendix I: Launch Dates of Product Sustainability Tools and Initiatives	45
Appendix II: List of organisations interviewed	54

TERMINOLOGY

Acronym	Expansion
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
B2B	Business-to-business
BIER	Beverage Industry Environmental Roundtable
C2C	Cradle-to-cradle
CD	Committee draft
DIS	Draft international standard
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
EPD	Environmental product declaration
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GEDNET	Global Environmental Declarations Network
GEN	Global Ecolabelling Network
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GPP	Green Public Procurement
ISEAL	International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LCA	Life Cycle Assessment
LCC	Life Cycle Costing
LCT	Life Cycle Thinking
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OEF	Organisation Environmental Footprint
PAS	Publicly Available Standard
PCR	Product Category Rule
PEF	Product Environmental Footprint
PSI	Product Sustainability Information
PVC	Polyvinyl chloride
QR Code	Quick Response Code
RFID	Radio-frequency identification
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SETAC	Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry
SME	Small and medium enterprises
SPP	Sustainable Public Procurement
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UPC	Universal Product Code
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WRI	World Resources Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production threaten global development and environmental well-being. Ensuring sustainable consumption and production should take a life cycle approach, and central to this is the development of product sustainability information (PSI).

An overview of the current state of PSI begins with an acknowledgement of the complexities in assessing the sustainability aspects of a product. Given this reality, the need to determine the social, health and environmental impact of the millions of different products demonstrates that the ambitions of any sustainability metric or tool are high. The only way to deal with this complexity is to simplify reality into an appropriate model—but one that reduces complexity, while minimising distortion and uncertainty. In the late 1980s, this insight resulted in the development of an approach, known as Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). Yet, the ambiguity and uncertainty of LCA results and the difficulty of communicating them in a meaningful way have led to a flurry of tools and approaches either to simplify or to standardise the assessment.

Complicating the process are various stakeholders in the field of products sustainability that have unique, and sometimes overlapping vested interests. They can have differing influences with varying levels of intensity on the process of creating and communicating information.

The drivers of and barriers to PSI are varied. On the demand side, there is a growing interest in buying products that are considerate of the environment and/or social concerns. Consequently, an increasing number of countries, local authorities, businesses and organisations are gradually embarking on sustainable procurement and translating their purchasing power into active sustainability policies. Yet, with the plethora of PSI tools, consumers can become confused and move from an attitude of interest to one of scepticism

and even outright cynicism or mistrust. The over-abundance of labels and standards in this field is further exacerbated by the launch of new tools, methodologies and standards that do not have sufficient support for their efforts to address the existing problems of quality, accuracy and consistency.

On the supply side, the drivers for the development and use of tools and initiatives for the sustainability of products vary temporally and geographically based on social and institutional structures, cultural and traditional influences, access to technology, and other factors. These drivers are: business decisions, technology enablers, market pull and policy push.

The growing complexity and inter-relationship between the drivers of tools and initiatives has led to the creation of a wide variety of tools that provide information on the sustainability of products to consumers. At least 600 tools are estimated to be on the market. However, the number of tools is not an indication of importance. The best way to interpret a high number of tools in a certain area is that the landscape is fragmented, not mature, and that there is no consensus on what the tool should do.



© Shutterstock

The landscape of tools and initiatives reveals some important implications and gaps in the current state of PSI. Some of the tools are not available in all countries, while accessibility of quality information is a prerequisite. Moreover, most tools provide information on the sustainability attributes of products, as opposed to actually rating the product's sustainability. Thus, a majority of the tools do not provide value judgments on the sustainability attributes, but rather leave it to the users to draw their own conclusions. With this in mind, rethinking the PSI in terms of its accessibility is essential.

In light of the lack of a common PSI standard, efforts should be made to have an inclusive dialogue among nations that enjoys equal representation from developing and emerging economies so that they can ensure consensus and inter-operability. Since there are too many tools, which are not always co-ordinated and aligned, this creates confusion and inefficiency. To counter this, the procedures and inter-operability of systems should be aligned. This would allow for different and competing tools, thereby making room for innovation and increased effectiveness.



Because PSI labels generally address only the key impact or life cycle stage of a product and do not always take a life cycle perspective, they can be misleading and create confusion and doubt in consumers. An agreed vision is needed to understand what consumer information needs to be within a given context. This perspective may result in more success stories.

This publication provides the following four recommendations to advance in this direction:

- Provide a global guidance for inter-operability of PSI tools (their development and use), and manage concerns over trade barriers while reducing uncertainty in the information that the tools produce. This can be done under the umbrella of the Consumer Information Programme under the 10 Year Framework of Programmes.
- Encourage major PSI actors, i.e. label and tools associations to use life cycle-based principles as criteria for the alignment of their work.
- Facilitate the inclusion and engagement of representatives of developing and emerging economies in international efforts on PSI.
- Create an international dialogue between brand owners, retailers, consumer organisations and policy-makers in order to acknowledge the different cultures and contexts to develop a better understanding of what consumers will recognise to be

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_16442

