Seventh Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Law and Policy
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Roundtable:
Consumer protection and the transition to clean energy

Presentation

Ms. Julie Hunter
COPOLCO Advisory Group
Committee on Consumer Policy
ISO Committee (COPOLCO)

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The role of standards in protecting and empowering consumers for a sustainable future

Julie Hunter
ISO’s Consumer Policy Committee (COPOLCO)

Monday 3rd July 2023
We all recognize the need for swift action and meaningful changes in behaviour

- Global challenges require global solutions
- Implementation of all three is essential to ensure a sustainable future for all world citizens

All world citizens have a right to a healthy, equitable and sustainable future, including those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.
Who’s responsible for driving change?

Research shows that consumers want to be more sustainable BUT cannot make meaningful changes to behaviour without the right help, support and protection.

UNGCP recognize important role of:

- Governments
- Legal systems
- National policies
- Regulatory frameworks
- Good business practices
- Voluntary standards

**Consumer protection ‘toolkit’**

Together these tools can build foundations, set rules and define best practice to empower and protect consumers.

Need to choose the right tool for the job – each has strengths and limitations.
Standards promote responsible business practices, which are critical to delivery of UNGCP and SDG goals

Voluntary standards can set good practice for responsible businesses to:

• Think about sustainability at all stages of product lifecycle and consumer journeys
• Adopt ethical behaviour and sustainable patterns of production and consumption
• Enable consumers to make informed choices about ‘green’ products/services
• Protect consumers/society from negative impacts of organizational behaviour

Can be certified by independent third party
Advantages of standards over other ‘tools’

**Multi-stakeholder approach** - obligation to include all relevant stakeholders, including consumer and societal (WTO and NSB)

**Consensus** – content developed by working groups, which must reach shared agreement on content

**Sustained opposition** – formal process for objection

**Detailed requirements/guidance** - to improve quality, safety, accessibility and SUSTAINABILITY – PROVIDING THE ‘HOW’

**Defined process** – opportunity for public comment and regular review – quicker/easier to amend than legislation

Consumer stakeholders have a right to:

- Participate
- Be heard
- Formally ‘object’
- Input at key stages
Standards response to climate crisis

The London Declaration 2021

- ISO’s Climate Commitment - 165 countries
- Promise to: ‘embed key climate considerations into every new and revised standard’

Actions to date...

- ISO/IEC mapping of standards related to SDGs
- Top 100 sustainability standards with greatest impact
- ISO online SDG search tool
- COPOLCO Plenary May 2023 - Focus on Sustainability
Standards relevant to clean energy.....some examples

• Organizational management - governance, procurement, operation
• Buildings - design, construction, materials
• Transport - electric vehicles, emissions
• Renewable Energy - solar, wind power
• Services - sustainable events, finance, tourism
• Products - use of energy in manufacturing process and energy efficiency of appliances

And many more.....
1) ‘Big picture’ overarching standards

Standards can:

• Help organizations manage their impact on the environment and meet sustainability goals e.g. by giving detail about how to reduce emissions, waste, energy and water consumption.

• IWA 42: 2022 - NetZero Guidelines #COP27
• ISO 26000: 2010 - Social Responsibility
• ISO 50001: 2018 – Energy Management Systems
• ISO 14001: 2015 – Environmental Management Systems
2) Sustainable production and consumption

Standards can:

• Improve consumer access to clean energy alternatives for homes and transport
• Help organizations improve sustainability of everyday consumer goods/services, making green choices easier.

For example.....

• Energy smart appliances
• Electric vehicles
• Clean cookstoves

Need more standards that focus on sustainable consumption
3) Green claims, information and labelling (1/2)

“We must have zero tolerance for net-zero greenwashing”
António Guterres, UN Secretary General

40%

Online green claims from companies across sectors found to be exaggerated, false or deceptive, and potentially unfair commercial practices

Data: International Consumer Protection Enforcement Network (2021)

Multiple marks and logos lead to consumer confusion?!!??
3. Green claims, information and labelling (2/2)

Standards can:

- Set requirements for clear, consistent, comparable, trustworthy information
- Reduce risk of consumer harm from false and misleading green claims
- Help consumers to make informed choices e.g. about energy use and performance

Existing standards

- ISO 14020 series - Environmental labels and declarations
- ISO/TS 17033 - Ethical claims and supporting information

New proposal for ISO standard for online green claims

- ‘Born in’ COPOLCO – consumer focus
- How to substantiate and communicate green claims used in e-commerce
- Based on One Planet Network guidelines
Effective consumer participation in standards is vital

Consumer and societal stakeholders must be at the heart of standards.

Consumer participation creates standards that:

- **Benefit consumers** by reflecting priorities, needs, behaviour, experiences of real people
- **Help organizations** deliver safer, fairer, more sustainable goods and services
- **Help governments, regulators, policy makers** achieve consumer protection and sustainability goals

**COPOLCO** – link between grassroots consumer voice and ISO standards

**COPOLCO Chairs Advisory Group**
consumer policy, direct influence to ISO governance and agenda – link with IGE

Valuable international collaboration and coordination of consumer interests must be supported and strengthened at NATIONAL level
Looking to the future

Consumer experts – please get involved with COPOLCO and your National Standards Body to help shape sustainability standards of the future!

• Identify gaps in standardization
• Propose standards solutions and ideas for new work
• Advocate for consumer interests
• Strengthen consumer voice – national and global
• Deliver standards that genuinely empower and protect consumers

Find out more about COPOLCO: www.iso.org/copolco
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copolco@iso.org