

Press release

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Strengthening Bio-based Systems Through Concise Consumer Communication – The 3-CO Project

Starting in February 2023, the new Horizon Europe research project 3-CO aims to improve sustainable consumption, performance and competitiveness in Europe’s bio-based systems by focusing on consumer-oriented labelling and certification schemes for industrial bio-based products.

Consumers and their respective decisions play a crucial role in the successful transition to a circular bio-based economy, which holds a lot of potential for more environmental and climate protection. However, today, there is still a lot of confusion and misunderstanding when it comes to bio-based products (BBPs) – consumers often are not yet aware of their benefits. To make informed and conscious purchasing choices, consumers in general often rely on labelling and certification. Labels and certification schemes (LCS) should therefore reflect and anticipate the information needs of consumers and other stakeholders. The 3-CO project – ‘Consumer Communication through Robust Labels for Bio-based Systems’ – will focus on these needs in relation to bio-based products and materials. The solutions developed under 3-CO will actively engage consumers to conceptualise better labels and user-friendly digital tools, thereby actively supporting Europe’s green and digital transition.

Increased transparency through improved labelling guidelines and design

To increase the market share of sustainable and circular BBPs and support companies that produce and offer them, 3-CO will create a supportive multi-perspective framework. In a very interactive approach, the project will involve consumers, NGOs, policy makers, certification and standardization bodies as well as bio-based industries to optimise communication through the value chain. Based on a deep understanding of today’s certification and labelling schemes, the project will identify gaps in terms of sustainability requirements and consumers’ information needs. For example, it could be one problem that current LCS are based on indicators and criteria that were mainly developed for traditional feedstocks (e.g. wood) and their applications, which means that they rarely meet the demands of novel BBPs. In-depth consumer studies will identify a comprehensive set of issues. Combined with research on social innovation and development of user-friendly digital solutions that support communication with end consumers, the project will derive both design guidelines for bio-based product labels as well as policy recommendations on deploying social innovation. Ultimately, this will improve the transparency of BBP value chains and support sustainable consumption behaviour.

Multi-perspective approach for maximum impact

The 3-CO consortium combines expertise from the scientific community, certification associations and the bio-based industry. Under the lead of the Teknologian Tutkimuskeskus VTT Oy (FI), a consortium including B.T.G. Biomass Technology Group BV (NL), Ecologic Institut gemeinnützige GmbH (DE), ENIDE Solutions S.L (ES), Environmental Coalition on Standards (BE), and ISEAL Alliance (UK), nova-Institut für politische und ökologische Innovation GmbH (DE), Universiteit Utrecht (NL) and Uniwersytet Warszawski (PL) will develop guidelines and prototypes of digital tools for the urgently needed update of certification and labelling schemes to realise the full potential of the bio-based economy.

More project-information will soon be available at <http://www.3CO-project.eu>.

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