

10YFP Consumer Information Programme (CIFP)

Concept Note for comments and feedback

Executive Summary

Consumer Information was identified as one of the five initial programmes of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP), adopted at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) (cf. Annex 2). The 10YFP is a global framework of action to enhance international cooperation to accelerate the shift towards Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in both developed and developing countries. Programmes are at the core of the framework. They will bring together existing initiatives and partnerships in the area of SCP, building synergies and cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, and allow scaling up and replication of policies and good practices on SCP, engaging governments and all major groups.

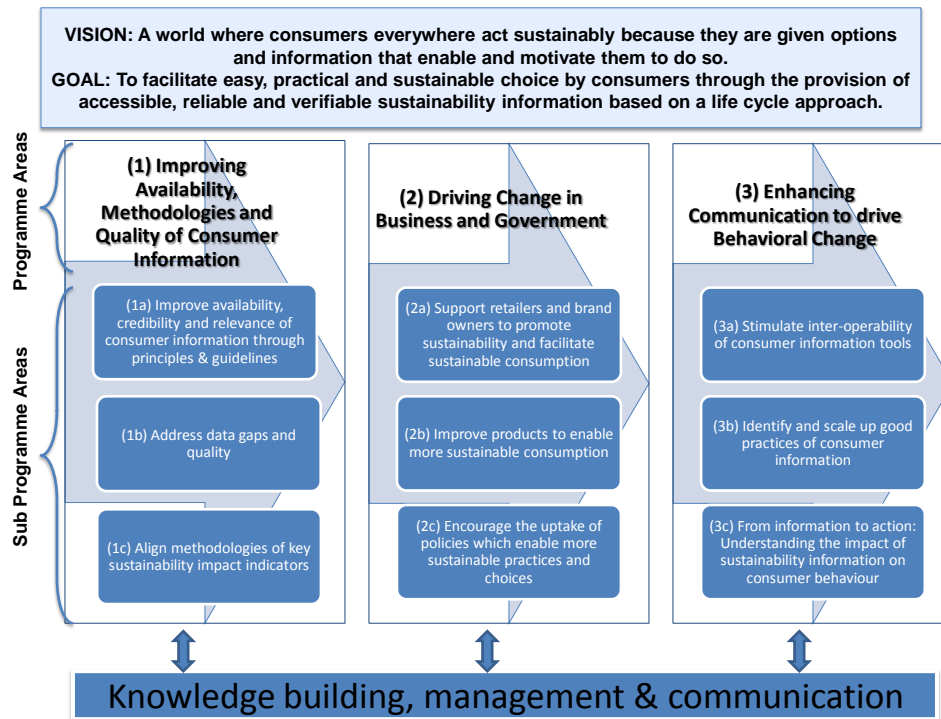
This concept note for the development of the 10YFP Programme on Consumer Information (CIFP) is the result of an extensive global multi-stakeholder consultation process (cf. Annex 3). It provides a general definition of consumer information, an overview of the consumer information landscape and its key stakeholders and summarizes the challenges and opportunities credible consumer information is facing today. Further, the concept note outlines a vision and the goal of the Consumer Information Programme as well as the proposed programme areas and activities. It is complemented by a document (cf. Annex 1), which provides an overview of the proposed sub programme areas outlining their respective objective, associated challenges and opportunities, tentative projects, implementation pathway, indicators of progress, and target audience. These documents will provide the basis for completing the 10YFP programme template, which will be officially submitted to the 10YFP Secretariat for approval by the 10YFP Board and official launch after final public consultation.

Main elements of the Programme

Within the scope of the CIFP, consumer information is defined as **a range of tools and systems that seek to enable consumers to make more sustainable choices about services and products, including in their use and end-of-life phases**. The programme focuses on information that is presented 'to the consumer' (understood as individual or end-use consumer), which includes information and communication from government and business to consumers, as well as consumer-to-consumer communication. The information can be both directly (e.g. through labels) or indirectly (e.g. through the design of products) presented to consumers. Generally, through direct and indirect information both informed and less informed consumers should find it easier to choose sustainable products and services.

The CIFP will be run by lead actors and guided by a multi-stakeholder advisory committee, to be defined initially during the pre-launch consultation process. The programme partners will commit to participate actively in one or more of the programme areas.

To achieve the vision and goal of the CIFP, the following programme and sub programme areas are proposed (cf. Annex 1 for a more detailed description of proposed programme and sub programme areas):



Programme Area 1: Improving Availability, Methodologies and Quality of Consumer Information

This programme area’s objective is to create a basis for the provision of credible information to consumers. It will look at developing principles and guidelines for the communication of sustainability information, supporting stakeholders in identifying and addressing negative impacts on sustainability focusing their activities through hotspots analysis. It will also seek to improve the availability and quality of data as well as the methodologies to assess the sustainability impacts of products and services based on a life cycle approach.

Programme Area 2: Driving Change in Business and Government

This programme area focuses on the framework conditions provided by business and government for consumers to act on sustainability information. As the quality of information improves, it must then be useful in driving change. This programme area will, therefore, work with retailers and brand owners to harmonize their requirements for their suppliers and to provide sustainability information to consumers. It will also provide guidance for business on improving their products’ design towards more sustainable choices in the use and end-of-life phase of products. Additionally, it will identify enabling policy conditions for governments to support sustainable consumption.

Programme Area 3: Enhancing Communication to drive Behavioural Change

This programme area emphasizes identification, development and use of tools that convey information to the consumer and which address associated challenges, such as the ineffectiveness and proliferation of tools. It will also aim to identify and scale up good practices of consumer information and better understand the factors that influence the transition from being informed to taking action.

Added value of the Consumer Information Programme of the 10YFP

As a 10YFP programme, the CIFP will build on past and existing work related to consumer information from a wide variety of stakeholders. It will empower and raise the profile of these existing initiatives, projects and partnerships, building synergies and cooperation between stakeholders to leverage resources towards mutual objectives. It will help assemble these stakeholders and focus their work on priorities and needs in a manner which enhances their “collective impact” in accurately informing consumers. The CIFP will also stimulate the emergence of new initiatives where gaps exist. As a result, activities under the CIFP’s umbrella will engage additional networks and communities of practice, and access additional technical and potential financial resources for implementation of this programme.

In terms of concrete activities and outputs, the CIFP will provide practical guidance for different categories of stakeholders to meet specific needs and challenges on consumer information. The programme will also contribute to trainings and capacity building workshops as well as to the piloting, implementation, scaling up and replication of methodologies and tools at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels.

Next steps

As a next step, all interested stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on the concept note and the more detailed description of programme areas and sub programme areas (cf. Annex 1). It will then be further expanded into a full-fledged programme proposal that will be submitted to the 10YFP Secretariat (cf. attached form for feedback).

The objective is to launch the programme in the first quarter of 2014.

All interested stakeholders are invited to become a partner of the programme and indicate their interest in becoming a lead actor or in taking part in the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee (MAC) that will guide the programme (cf. attached form for expression of interest).

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1. Introduction & Purpose of the Document

This document presents the main proposed elements of the Consumer Information Programme (CIFP) of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP). It aims at gathering feedback from all interested stakeholders before submission of the full-fledged programme proposal to the secretariat of the 10YFP.

This working document is the result of a broad consultation process, including a global survey, an expert meeting and bilateral consultations with key stakeholders, under the guidance of an advisory group established to provide strategic oversight over the programme's development process.¹

Key stakeholders engaged in the process so far support the vision, goal and programme areas and have informally expressed their interest in contributing to the success of the programme. This provides a promising basis for the CIFP's ambition of achieving measureable progress towards more sustainable consumption and production (SCP) within the next decade.

As a 10YFP programme, the CIFP will build on past and existing work related to consumer information from a wide variety of stakeholders. It will empower and raise the profile of these existing initiatives, projects and partnerships, building synergies and cooperation between stakeholders to leverage resources towards mutual objectives. It will help assemble these stakeholders and focus their work on priorities and needs in a manner which enhances their "collective impact" in accurately informing consumers. The CIFP will also stimulate the emergence of new initiatives where gaps exist. As a result, activities under the CIFP's umbrella will engage additional networks and communities of practice, and access additional technical and potential financial resources for implementation of this programme.

2. Consumer Information

2.1 Defining "Consumer Information"

Credible information about or based upon the sustainability impacts of products and services helps to identify, interpret, and address critical areas for improvement along the entire value chain of goods and services. It is therefore key for the market transformation towards more sustainable consumption and production. In order to achieve an overall improvement:

- i) such information needs to be based on a life cycle approach with the aim of avoiding burden shifting, i.e. minimizing impacts at one stage of the life cycle, while helping to avoid increases elsewhere;
- ii) the three pillars of 'sustainability' need to be reflected in the information that is provided: It is key to take into account social impacts in addition to environmental and economic ones and to focus on the highest impact areas within the three pillars;
- iii) the information needs to be properly and consistently communicated to the relevant users, i.e. the consumers. For this, adequate tools or channels need to be applied to inform users about the sustainability performance of products and services, including advising them on how best to store, use or dispose of a product;
- iv) it is particularly important to ensure the credibility of information given the complexities of increasingly globalized value chains of products that stretch across national boundaries and connect fragmented markets, different production systems, regulatory frameworks, and consumers.

¹ For more information on the 10YFP and the consultation process, see Annex 2 and 3.

Within the scope of the CIFP, “consumer information” can therefore be defined as:

“A range of tools and systems that seek to enable consumers to make more sustainable choices about services and products, including in their use and end-of-life phases.”

The CIFP aims for “the sustainable choice to become the obvious and easy choice”:

- On the one hand, the CIFP aims to capture **direct information** that is associated with helping consumers make more sustainable choices on products and services (e.g. through labels).
- On the other hand, it looks at **indirect information** communicated to consumers through the product itself, which has an eco-friendly component (e.g. a washing machine with cold water button), or through other channels (e.g. the brand, general guidance on sustainable products or lifestyles such as those provided by NGOs and new media).

Generally, through direct and indirect information both informed and less informed consumers should find it easier to choose sustainable products and services.

2.2 Complexity of the Consumer Information Landscape

Consumer information is the result of a complex supply chain of information, from data, quantification and assessment to sharing and communicating (see Figure 1).

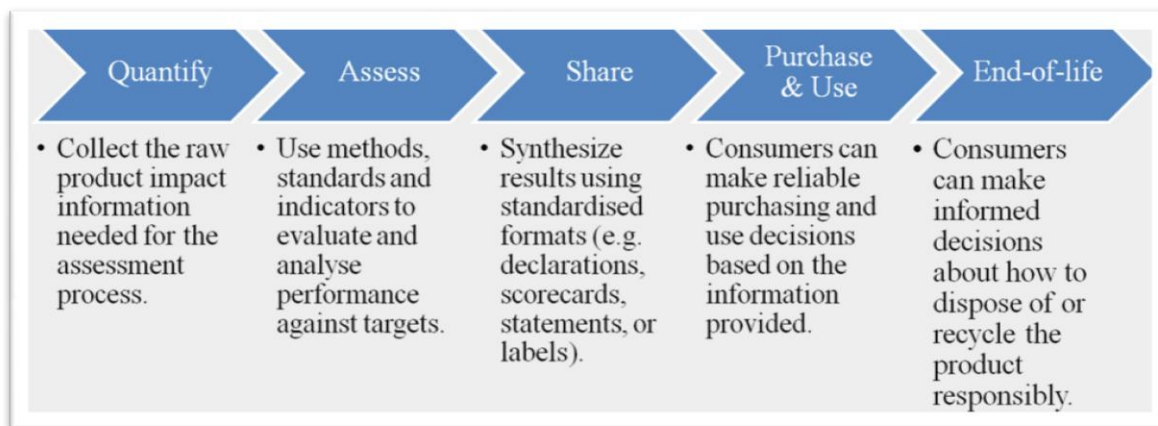


Figure 1: The consumer information supply chain

Consumer information is an all-encompassing and integrative concept that combines many existing initiatives, including hotspots analysis, ecolabels, product declarations, ratings, advertising and marketing claims, foot printing, corporate reporting and life cycle assessments / analysis. All of them aim at guiding consumers towards more sustainable choices. These information tools interact with various phases of a product’s life cycle (see Figure 2).

Mapping information tools

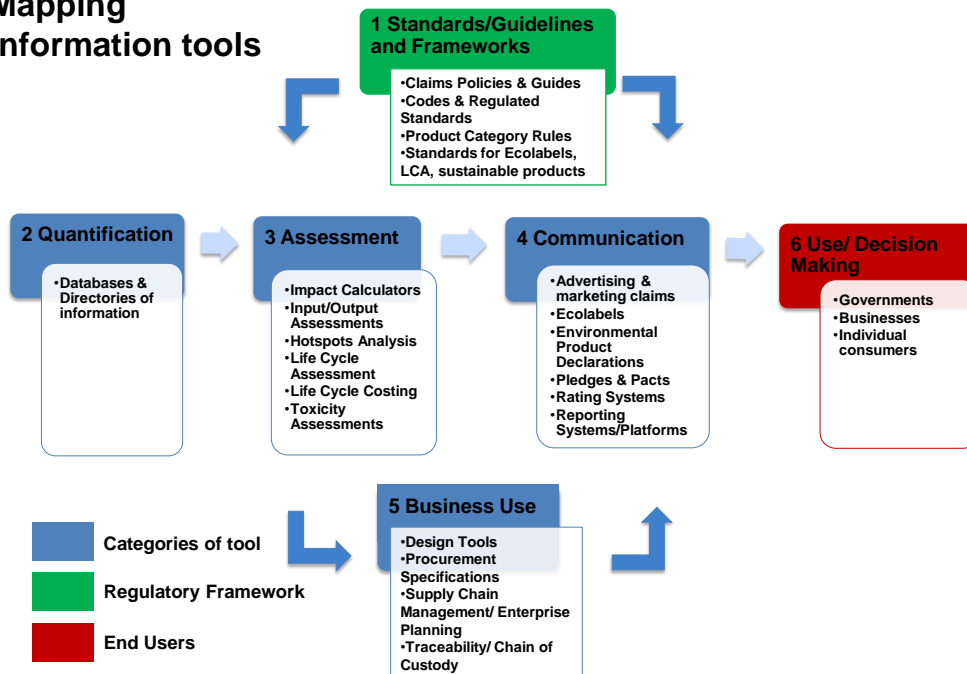


Figure 2: Consumer Information tools

2.3 Key Stakeholders

Within the scope of the CIFP, the **receivers** of the information are understood as individual or end-use consumers.

In order to make high quality information available, those that produce the information and those that communicate it to consumers, i.e. the **facilitators and providers** of that information need to be engaged, as well. They include:

1. Businesses (including retailers, producers and others) communicate on the sustainability attributes of their products or of their companies and brands. By incorporating this information in their internal processes, they can improve the management of their supply chains, adopt good sustainability practices that are reflected in the way their products and services are designed, manufactured and sourced; and develop marketing strategies to differentiate their products and explore new markets;
2. Governments develop policies and approaches (e.g. product policy, sustainable advertising rules) to enhance consumer information as well as measure and monitor the progress of that implementation. In addition, as the biggest consumers in the market, they use the information to purchase products in compliance with sustainable public procurement related specifications.

Non-governmental organizations, such as consumers associations, can also perform an important role on information sharing and giving “voice” to consumers. In addition, the concept of consumer-to-consumer (C2C) information (e.g. web-based information sharing platforms) has in recent years emerged as a crucial element of consumer information, although still rather informal. Leveraging C2C channels to advance SCP can be a key quick win for the CIFP. It also enables the programme to encompass broader aspects, such as reuse and non-consumption where appropriate.

The programme thus focuses on the information that is provided to the consumer, which implies that business to consumer ('B2C'), government to consumer ('G2C') and consumer to consumer ('C2C') information are included in the CIFP (see Figure 3). Although the individual consumer is the target audience of the CIFP, business and governments can also benefit from improved access to product or service sustainability information.

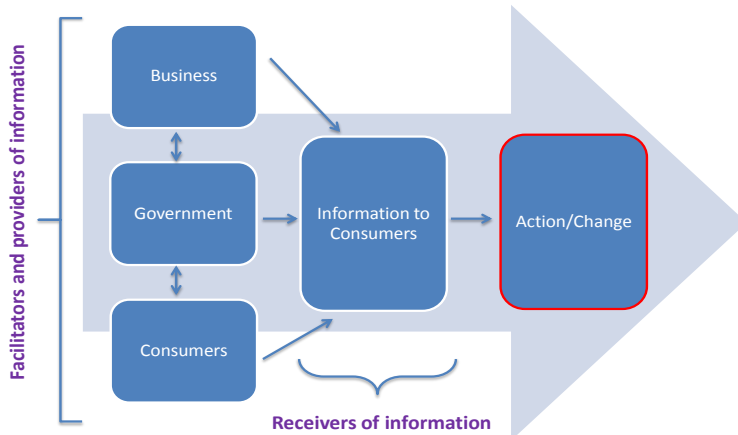


Figure 3: Key stakeholders of the CIFP

3. Challenges and Opportunities

3.1 Challenges

At each stage of the information supply chain, several challenges must be taken into consideration. Some of the most pressing challenges are:

- Proliferation and ineffectiveness of information tools,
- Confusion and mistrust in the available information,
- Lack of interest in sustainability information on products and services,
- Unsubstantiated claims and greenwashing,
- Lack of harmonized standards and definitions,
- Lack of credible and available data and information,
- Lack of availability of sustainable products, especially in developing countries, but not only, and
- Lack of understanding of where to focus efforts to maximize impact of information on behavioural change.

The underlying causes of these problems include:

- No consistent, internationally agreed ways of measuring the impacts of products and services,
- No consistent global approach to prioritizing products and services for action (e.g. through hotspots analysis), and
- No common agreed ways to communicate on product or service sustainability.

These challenges can also be viewed through the lens of the information supply chain (see Figure 4).

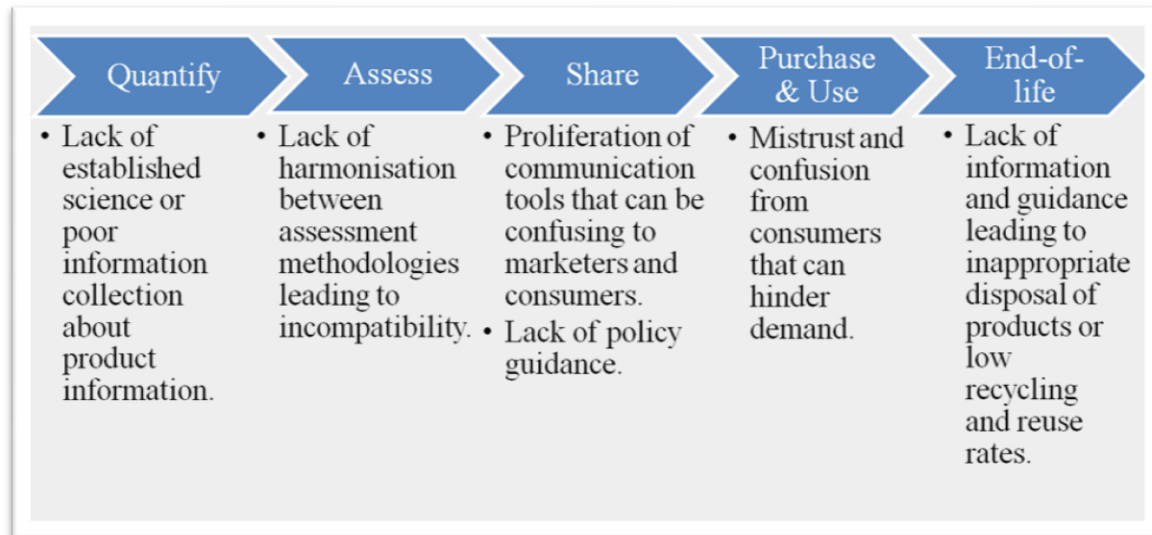


Figure 4: Challenges in the consumer information supply chain

Beyond that, **many information systems have been designed for consumers and businesses in industrialized countries and do not consider the diverging contexts in other parts of the world** that are increasingly included into globalized product value chains.

The CIFP will also address the fact that **providing information on the sustainability of products and services may not necessarily lead to sustainable behaviour on its own.** The provision of information will only lead to more sustainable behavior of consumers who are already aware about the importance of sustainability attributes. Therefore, it seeks to explore the hurdles and conditions for consumers to act upon information.

3.2 Opportunities

Given these challenges, a number of opportunities can be seized by the CIFP:

- Growing interest in product and services sustainability information and in buying eco-friendly and healthy products (in certain communities and countries),
- Technology developments, which are changing the landscape of information access and sharing (smart labels linked to sustainability information, e.g. Quick Response labels, smart phones, real-time verification systems, social media, etc.),

- Various already existing networks, initiatives and processes to harmonize consumer information (e.g. government policies and regulation, sector harmonization, multi-stakeholder initiatives) that can be incorporated into the CIFP,
- Available best practices improving the quality of information which can be scaled up,
- Broad interest in data generation and database initiatives, as well as in standards and quantification approaches for many environmental impacts.

4. Proposed Consumer Information Programme

4.1 Vision & Goal

The vision and the goal of the CIFP are aligned with the substantive basis on consumer information explained thus far as well as with the 10YFP policy background.

Vision: A world where consumers everywhere act sustainably because they are given options and information that enable and motivate them to do so.

Goal: To facilitate easy, practical and sustainable choice by consumers through the provision of accessible, reliable and verifiable sustainability information based on a life cycle approach.

The vision and goal are defined to take into account that:

- The CIFP targets ‘all’ consumers ‘everywhere’ (consumers in all countries and contexts);
- Consumers need to understand what consumption choices and/or options are available and understand the impact of consumption in order to be able to act;
- Information needs to be presented in a manner that enables those choices;
- Information is a mean to an end: consumers have to take action to achieve the vision and therefore governments and business need to create the environment to enable them to do so;
- Information needs to be provided to help consumers to maximize the benefits / reduce the impacts associated with using the product and to help consumers dispose of products responsibly or to recycle, repair or reuse them; and
- The impact of the CIFP can be monitored, evaluated and communicated to stakeholders.

4.2 Programme Areas

To achieve the vision and goals of the CIFP, the following programme and sub programme areas are proposed (cf. Annex 1 for a more detailed overview of the proposed sub programme areas):

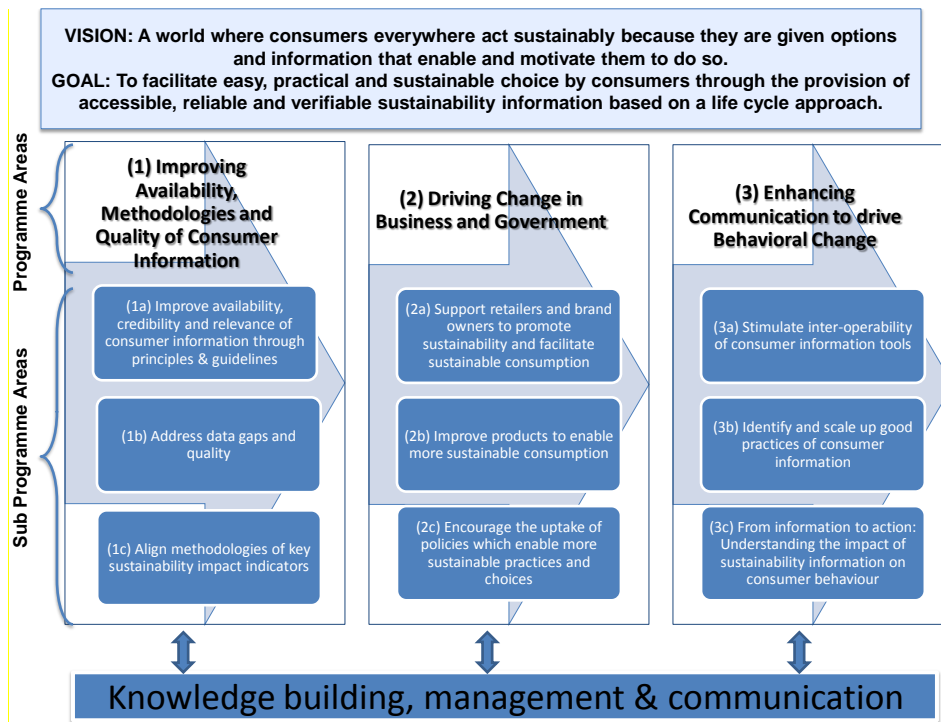


Table 1: CIFP Programme and Sub Programme Areas

These programme areas and sub programme areas represent initial proposals. Once the CIFP is launched, they will be customized according to the requirements of existing and new activities by the participants in the programme. The CIFP will, thus, remain flexible and responsive to new proposed areas. It will serve as an umbrella and platform for collaboration, joint implementation and fund-raising for activities that are aligned with the programme areas, and supportive of the overall vision and goals of the programme.

Activities under the CIFP's sub programme areas should have the following characteristics:

1. Consider high impact value chains (e.g. through hotspots analysis) and apply a phased approach and pilots where appropriate,
2. Identify the consumer groups with the strongest impact and the media to transport the information to them,
3. Have a social and economic, as well as environmental, benefit,
4. Encourage the involvement of relevant stakeholders,
5. Leverage existing good practice,
6. Integrate cultural, gender, regional, social and age-related issues as key components of how consumer information is conveyed and ultimately used in support of SCP.

Programme Area 1: Improving Availability, Methodologies and Quality of Consumer Information

This programme area's objective is to create a basis for the provision of credible information to consumers. It will look at developing principles and guidelines for the communication of sustainability information, supporting stakeholders in identifying and addressing negative impacts on sustainability focusing their activities through hotspots analysis. It will also seek to improve the availability and quality of data as well as the methodologies to assess the sustainability impacts of products and services based on a life cycle approach.

Sub Programme Area 1a: Improve availability, credibility and relevance of consumer information through principles & guidelines

This sub programme area will look at developing and agreeing on international principles and guidelines for credible, relevant and meaningful information to enable consumers to make more sustainable choices about services and products, including in their use and end-of-life phases. These principles will be tailored and operationalised as relevant for the different types of stakeholders with a view to support them in focusing on high sustainability impacts and hotspots.

Sub Programme Area 1b: Address data gaps and quality

This sub programme area will aim to address existing gaps in the availability of data on the sustainability impacts of goods and services. It will improve sharing existing information and knowledge on product sustainability to support stakeholders in understanding and communicating on their product's sustainability impact. It will also strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to collect, manage and use that information. The sub programme area will further look at enhancing product sustainability database inter-operability.

Sub Programme Area 1c: Align methodologies of key sustainability impact indicators

This sub programme area will bring together practitioners developing different methodologies for key impact indicators of products to encourage the exchange of information and mutual learning towards the alignment or compatibility of their respective methodologies, including hotspots analysis.

Programme Area 2: Driving Change in Business and Government

This programme area focuses on the framework conditions provided by business and government for consumers to act on sustainability information. As the quality of information improves, it must then be useful in driving change. This programme area will, therefore, work with retailers and brand owners to harmonize their requirements for their suppliers and to provide sustainability information to consumers. It will also provide guidance for business on improving their products' design towards more sustainable choices in the use and end-of-life phase of products. Additionally, it will identify enabling policy conditions for governments to support sustainable consumption.

Sub Programme Area 2a: Support retailers and brand owners to promote sustainability and facilitate sustainable consumption

This sub programme area will closely work with retailers and brand owners to promote sustainability through their supply chains and also enable consumers to make more sustainable choices.

On the supply side, the programme will be working with retailers and brand owners to harmonize the requirements for their suppliers and harmonize the way the sustainability information is generated and communicated throughout the supply chain. On the consumption side, the programme will work together with retailers and brand owners towards the provision of credible

information to consumers as well as how retailers can contribute to put into place facilities and infrastructure to enable consumers to act upon that information, e.g. recycling and take-back-facilities.

Sub Programme Area 2b: Improve products to enable more sustainable consumption

This sub programme area will look at the production side of the product life cycle and engage the business sector and related stakeholders to think about what is needed for a product to be used and disposed of sustainably – making sustainability the easy choice. This can include the design for recycling as well as additional features that enable sustainable choice in the use and disposal phase (e.g. cold water button for washing machines). The sub programme area will also look at the role of new business models (including the utility of products rather than their ownership, product services instead of product purchase) and new logistic solutions.

Sub Programme Area 2c: Encourage the uptake of policies which enable more sustainable practices and choices

This sub programme area will aim to identify both physical and non-physical infrastructure such as pricing, taxes, subsidies as well as product policy and other policy conditions that prevent consumers from acting on information and identify and promote enabling conditions that will support sustainable choices. This includes public policies at multiple levels of government. It will also look at trade measures and policies, including the market opportunities that information on the sustainability of products can provide for both developing and developed country producers, manufacturers and exporters.

Programme Area 3: Enhancing Communication to drive Behavioural Change

This programme area emphasizes identification, development and use of tools that convey information to the consumer and which address associated challenges, such as the ineffectiveness and proliferation of tools. It will also aim to identify and scale up good practices of consumer information and better understand the factors that influence the transition from being informed to taking action.

Sub Programme Area 3a: Stimulate inter-operability of consumer information tools

This sub programme area will focus on existing consumer information tools, such as ecolabelling, product declarations, carbon labels, smart labels, consumer websites and social media for peer to peer communication, and promote their inter-operability. The activities in this sub programme area will be guided by the principles and guidelines established in sub programme area 1a.

Sub Programme Area 3b: Identify and scale up good practices of consumer information

This sub programme area will look at existing good practices, such as consumer campaigns, type I labels, single issue labels and peer-to-peer models of information, as well as new information and communication channels that different consumer groups have proven to be receptive to. It aims at understanding the conditions for their success and replicate them, especially in high impact value chains.

Sub Programme Area 3c: From information to action: Understanding the impact of sustainability information on consumer behaviour

This sub programme area will aim to understand how consumers process and respond to information and the factors that influence the transition from being informed to taking action in different contexts. Based on that, new communication practices and channels to enable action leveraging on consumer values will be proposed and tested. This will also include collaborative consumption practices (e.g. sharing, re-use and non-consumption).

4.3 Expected Outcomes and Impact Measurements

As a 10YFP Programme, the CIFP can provide the umbrella to bring together different stakeholders to exchange on existing barriers and good practices. In terms of concrete activities and outputs, the CIFP will provide practical guidance for different categories of stakeholders to meet specific needs and challenges on consumer information. The programme will also contribute to trainings and capacity building workshops as well as to the piloting, implementation, scaling up and replication of methodologies and tools at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels.

Defining relevant, measurable and attributable indicators will be one of the first tasks for the programme once established. The indicators will be a mix of qualitative and quantitative as well as process and outcome/impact attempting to measure the real world impact of policies, tools and capacity building activities promoted by the CIFP. Care will also be taken that the impacts of similar activities are comparable through the same indicators. Potential partners will be asked to select from an array of relevant metrics on which they can report. Those metrics will be as simple and specific as possible to ensure information is collectable without undue burden.

The above mentioned indicators will be complemented by process indicators that will monitor results and successes of the programme, such as the number of organizations, which are partners of the CIFP.

4.4 Governance Structure

The CIFP will be run by lead actors and guided by a multi-stakeholder advisory committee (see Figure 5).

- **The lead actors** of the CIFP will support the overall coordination of the programme, represent the CIFP at regional and international meetings and report to the 10 YFP Secretariat on key activities, progress and impacts of the programme.
- **The Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee (MAC)** will be comprised of 15-20 members representing all regions as well as various types of organizations ensuring that the different realities in terms of data, information dissemination and capacity building needs of the various parts of the world and different actors are reflected. The MAC will advise and ensure that the programme brings together the different relevant actors to cooperate and that it achieves the goals of the 10YFP in a systemic and coherent way.
- **Coordinating partners** will commit to (co-)coordinate and participate actively in one or more of the programme work areas.
- **Partners** will participate in one or more of the programme work areas.

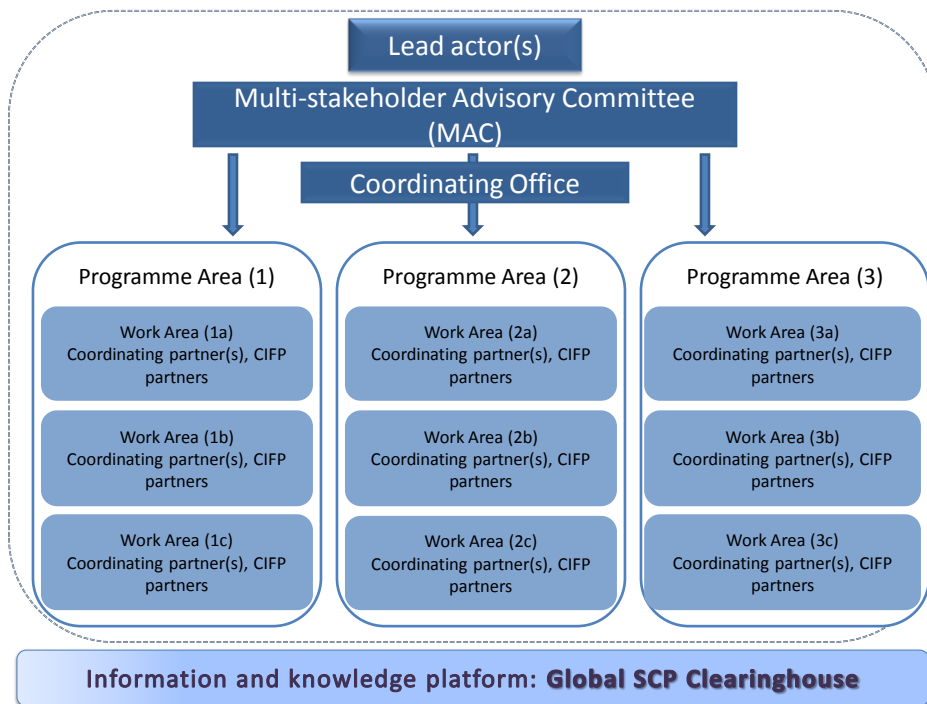


Figure 5: Proposed governance structure of the CIFP

5. Conclusion

Once the programme is launched, partners will continue to specify and build out the activities currently outlined into a more concrete programme of work, and develop a baseline and indicators to measure the CIFP's impacts. It is the intention to maintain the dynamism that this process has managed to encapsulate to date.

The CIFP provides a flexible and open platform for activities on consumer information that contribute to the overall goal of achieving SCP. The proposed “umbrella” approach of the programme has the potential to connect activities and coordinate reporting while remaining ‘bottom-up’ and action oriented. Rather than being prescriptive and rigid, the programme defines parameters for activities and projects to work collaboratively. Thus, the programme will not only address existing opportunities and gaps, but respond to new ones as they emerge.

The objective is to launch the programme in the first quarter of 2014.

As a next step, all interested stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on the concept note and the more detailed description of programme areas and sub programme areas (cf. Annex 1). It will then be further expanded into a full-fledged programme proposal that can be submitted to the 10YFP Secretariat (cf. attached form for feedback). At the same time, all interested stakeholders are already invited to become a partner of the programme and indicate their interest in becoming a lead actor or in taking part in the multi-stakeholder advisory committee that will guide the programme (cf. attached form for expression of interest).