



LCA Forum

# Can LCA enhance Sustainable Consumption?

## Consumer organisation point of view

*19<sup>th</sup> March 2009, LCA Forum*

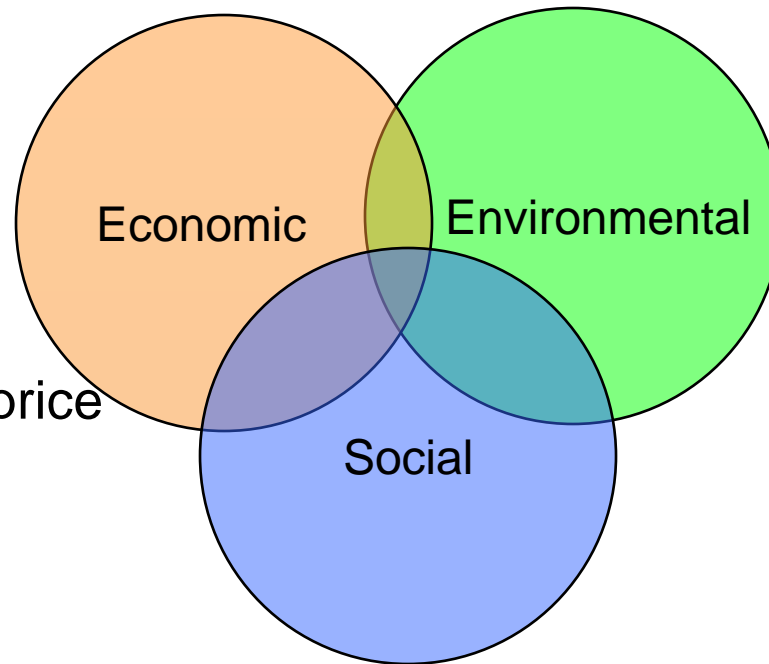
Aline Clerc, Huma Khamis,  
French Speaking Swiss Consumer Federation



LCA forum

Questions  
Needs  
Labels  
chaos  
Issues  
Interest  
Role  
Importance  
of LCA

## Questions that consumers raise...



- Price
- Quality-price ratio
- ...

- Workers' wages
- Workers' health and safety
- Workers' rights
- ...

- Waste
- Energy and water consumption
- Pollutants
- Life cycle analysis
- Global warming
- ...

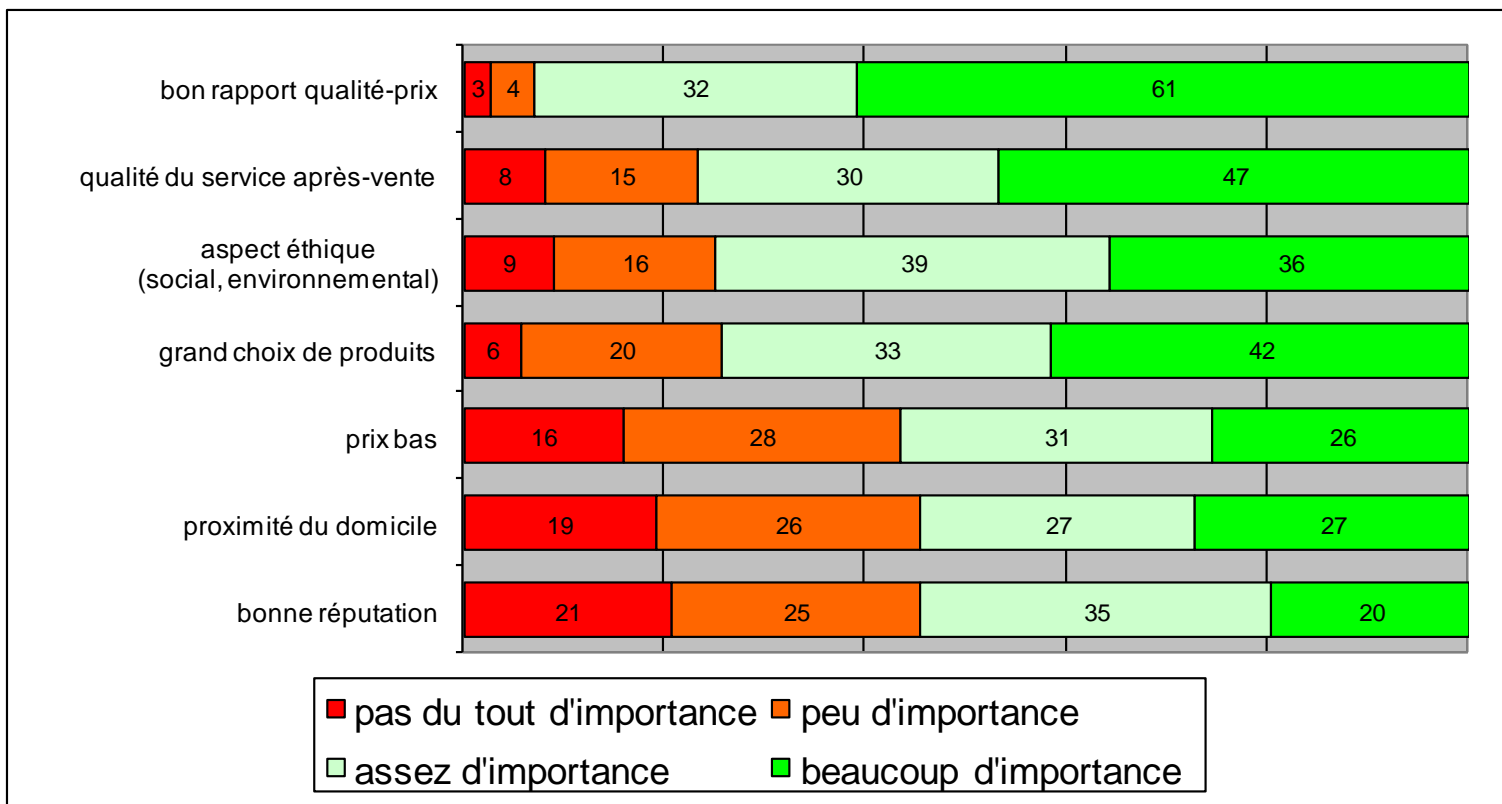


# ...are hard to answer

- Because
  - consumers are not experts in every field
  - time and money for buying is limited
  - education and information levels are disparate
- And they buy goods and services as diverse as :
  - Oil
  - Travel
  - Food
  - Hi-tech devices
  - Insurances...



## Consumer criteria for Christmas gifts



Sondage réalisé en septembre 2006, 502 personnes (Suisse romande)



# Consumers' needs

To move toward a more sustainable consumption, consumers need :

- **information** – about environmental and social issues
- **time** – to find the information, the «good» products or, for instance, to wait for the right season
- **money** – because some products are more expensive when sustainable

=> The **labels** are a good way to summarise the information.

# Environmental or CSR labels FOOD

(Swiss market, without organic products)



Pro Montagna+



## Environmental labels NON-FOOD (Europe)



FRC





# Issues of Labels Chaos (I)

Multiplicity of labels, brands, signs and logos

- Consumers are not able remember and identify every quality signs (logos, labels etc.)
- Criteria of these labels are not always comparable
- For very similar specifications, several label and logos are available.
- Some labels have a global specifications that include environmental and social issues while others have specification only on one aspect or one step of the production.





## Issues of Labels Chaos (II)

Multiplicity of labels, brands, signs and logos

- Distributors tend to take possession of the labels
- Discrepancies between communication/marketing and the real content of the specifications is confusing for the consumer (cars).
- The consumer have no way to make the difference between a simple logo or a credible label.



# The dilemma of choosing...

Choices, choices, choices....



# Labels

No legal definition of the label, but three criteria seems important:

- A collective symbol or sign
- Specifications that are known and available to the public
- An independent certification from a third party.



# Consumer interest for labels

**Eco-Labels are interesting for the consumers when they :**

- Are trustworthy
- Are transparent
- Go beyond than the simple legal compliance
- Are credible with minimum common requirements that are understandable and sufficiently harmonised
- **Labelled goods and services are considered during their whole life cycle and have a good global environmental impact (transportation, packaging, production, elimination..)**



## Consumers organisations' role

**Provide independent information to the consumer about :**

- their rights and duties
- products and services
- how to achieve sustainable consumption

**Challenge the companies** about their social and environmental responsibilities

**Make laws change** to promote sustainable development

Our **tools**:

- Comparative testing, CSR Studies, LCA ...



# Comparative testing

**Comparative testing provides information to the consumer and may influence the buying behaviour.**

**Environmental aspects are taken in account in almost every tests:**

- Hi-tech: power consumption, power supply
- Cosmetics: harmful substances
- Food: LCA, including (over-)packaging...

**CSR aspects are often developed separately**

**Labels and claims are always studied during these testing.**

**Since 2006, LCA aspects are often integrated in the tests (Cailler chocolate, nappies, food packaging...)**



## LCA – an important role

LCA enables environmental aspects to be integrated in products and services in a global approach.

For labelled products and services (production, transportation, packaging, elimination) : ***LCA must be integrated in all environmental labels as a tool.***

***No more LCAs chaos =>*** Different LCA/carbonfootprints have to be comparable and a minimal standard harmonisation should be put in place

***Environment is not only the climate change; LCA have to integrate all environmental issues.***



# Thank you for your attention

*Aline Clerc, environmental specialist*

*Huma Khamis, comparative testing*

*FRC, [www.frc.ch](http://www.frc.ch)*