

## DRAFT

### HOW MANY ISSUES SHOULD/CAN A SUSTAINABILITY LABEL COVER?

(and is anyone measuring them and/or putting them on a label yet? *Possibilities from Third Sector, and government, in italics – not a comprehensive list – and haven't put in commercial bodies yet.*)

#### A “health” warning!

This is a very brief, draft paper to stimulate discussion and by no means covers all the issues about developing and using a sustainability label on food. The issues have been grouped – roughly - under the “classic” sustainable development headings of economic, environmental and social. The underlined headings are the ones that might appear on a label, and they are not in any order of priority.

The terms “local” and “organic” do not appear, as such, because we have tried to itemise the elements of these terms that make them important for sustainable development e.g. greenhouse gases, biodiversity and soil quality. This means they would be “counted” several times on a label, rather than just once.

Comments are very welcome and should be sent to [jeanette@sustainweb.org](mailto:jeanette@sustainweb.org).

Sustain  
May 2007

#### Economic

- Fair trade/human rights
  - o UK (*Soil Association ethical trade mark?*)
  - o Poor countries (*Government Ethical Trade Initiative, Fairtrade Foundation*)
    - Fair prices
    - Fair wages
    - Good working conditions
    - Freedom to join a trade union or other association
- Local economic development (*East Anglia Food Link's certificate of provenance?*)
  - o money flows (*New Economics Foundation*)
  - o jobs - number and quality/type (*Soil Association*)
  - o businesses – number and diversity of types (*New Economics Foundation*)

#### Environmental

- Greenhouse gases (*Food Climate Research Network*)
  - o Carbon dioxide (*Carbon Trust et al.*)
  - o Methane
  - o Nitrous oxide
  - o Refrigerant gases
  - o Ozone depletion?
  - o Other? E.g. methyl bromide (fumigant)
- Biodiversity
  - o Seafood
    - Wild (*Marine Stewardship Council, Marine Conservation Society, Seafood Choices Alliance*)
    - Farmed (*Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Soil Association*)
  - o Genetic diversity (*Exeter University Eating Biodiversity programme*)
    - Wildlife e.g. effect of pesticides, habitat loss/damage (*Plantlife, Butterfly Conservation, Natural England, Pesticide Action Network-UK, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Soil Association, World Wildlife Fund*)
    - Farmed animals (*Rare Breeds Survival Trust*)

## DRAFT

- Natural resources
  - o Land
    - Area and type used (*Natural England, Campaign to Protect Rural England, University of Wales Institute in Cardiff*)
    - Soil - fertility and erosion (*Elm Farm Research Centre, Soil Association*)
    - Natural features - e.g. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (*Natural England*)
    - Architecture - e.g. monuments, agricultural buildings, archeological features (*Campaign to Protect Rural England, Defra*)
  - o Water
    - Use/embedded water (*Waterwise, World Wildlife Fund*)
    - Pollution -including eutrophication (*Environment Agency*)
  - o Air pollution - including acidification (*Environment Agency*)
  - o Other natural resources
    - Use of non-renewable materials in packaging (*Friends of the Earth?*)
    - Disposal/waste of packaging and food (*Wastewatch, Waste Resources Action Programme, Composting Association*)

### Social

- Nutrition (*Food Standards Agency*)
  - o Macro-nutrients
    - Fat, fat type (sat, unsat, omega3/6...), sugar (cariogenicity/dental erosion), salt, fibre
  - o Micro-nutrients
    - Vitamins, minerals, trace elements (e.g. phytochemicals, flavonoids)
- Safety risk\*
  - o Residues
    - Pesticides (*Pesticides Action Network – UK*)
    - Anti-biotics (*Soil Association*)
    - Hormones
  - o Additives (*Hyperactive Children's Support Group*)
    - Sweeteners, colours, flavourings, preservatives etc.
  - o Processes e.g. genetic modification, irradiation (*GM Freeze, Food Commission?*)
- Animal Welfare (*Bristol University EU research programme, Compassion in World Farming, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Soil Association*)
  - o Five freedoms? Freedom from
    - Hunger and thirst
    - Discomfort
    - Pain, injury or disease
    - Fear and distress
  - o Freedom to
    - Express normal behaviour
- Culture# (*Common Ground*)
  - o Local distinctiveness
  - o Unique/special skills

\* Not anything covered by basic food safety legislation, like salmonella, e.coli etc. or required by labelling laws e.g. on allergy labelling, or on whether product is pasteurised

# We recognise the problems inherent in measuring this quality!