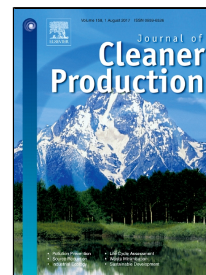


Accepted Manuscript

The Environmental Labelling Rollout of Consumer Goods by Public Authorities:
Analysis of and Lessons Learned from the French Case



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PII: S0959-6526(17)31131-9
DOI: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.05.179
Reference: JCLP 9719
To appear in: *Journal of Cleaner Production*

Received Date: 13 September 2016
Revised Date: 24 May 2017
Accepted Date: 28 May 2017

Please cite this article as: Agnès François-Lecompte, Laurent Bertrandias, Yohan Bernard, The Environmental Labelling Rollout of Consumer Goods by Public Authorities: Analysis of and Lessons Learned from the French Case, *Journal of Cleaner Production* (2017), doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.05.179

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The Environmental Labelling Rollout of Consumer Goods by Public Authorities: Analysis of and Lessons Learned from the French Case

Abstract

Several countries or groups of countries, such as the European Union, have set up or are setting up Environmental Labelling (EL) systems for consumer products to guide consumers towards environmentally friendly products and to incite industrial producers to adopt sustainable practices. Ten years ago, France attempted to set up such a system, originally designed to be generalised, namely used in all business sectors and for all consumer products. Public authorities, however, finally decided on a voluntary, supervised EL rollout because of the reactions of the established stakeholders. The purpose of this article is to examine the institutionalisation of this system in France through a historical approach. A longitudinal analysis over the period from September 2007 to June 2016 was carried out. Various data sources were used: articles in national newspapers, presentation materials used during the meetings on the topic, documentation from companies and public-sector actors, parliamentary reports, etc. In addition, 16 interviews were held with key informants who were often directly involved in the EL rollout. Concepts of legitimacy and institutional work are used to drive an interpretation of the difficulties the public authorities encountered when trying to impose Generalised Environmental Labelling (GEL). The results highlight a combination of factors such as the absence of supporters and the presence of active opponents, an overly ambitious scheduling, and a goal-related drift. Several recommendations for public authorities willing to promote GEL are formulated.

Keywords: Legitimacy, Institution, State, Institutional work

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