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## Sustainability Labels for Food Products: A Literature Review on Consumer’s Behaviour, Challenges, and Opportunities

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### Abstract

Sustainability labels first burst between the 1980s and the early 1990s as a method to increase transparency along the food chain and provide consumers with information in order to encourage sustainable consumption. Since then, a proliferation of sustainability labels has occurred, with around 465 Eco labels registered nowadays, among which 148 belong to the food production sector. Nevertheless, even if sustainability labels are commonly believed to be an appealing initiative to foster sustainability in agriculture, they face a number of challenges. The different perceptions of the definition of sustainability, the absence of a common framework, and the recent increase of new labels might limit their understanding and use among consumers and, therefore, the ability to enhance food security and food safety.

The objective of this study is to analyse through a literature review how consumers behave towards sustainability labels from an economic approach and to identify which are the factors that influence consumers’ decisions. The analysis shows that understanding and concern about sustainability are critical to determining the consumer’s use of labels. Additionally, the use of these labels seems to face challenges from different sources, which might be overcome with new strategies, such as creating a common framework and implanting labels that are easier to understand and incorporate several dimensions of sustainability. The study is divided into three main sections. The first one deals with a general overview of the origin, scope, and classification of sustainability labels for food products. The second section aims to analyse from an economic perspective the consumers’ behaviour towards sustainability labels for food products. In the third section, the main challenges of sustainability labels are discussed and one alternative for integrating the framework and scope of sustainability labels is briefly introduced.

**Keywords:** Consumer behaviour, food production, sustainability labels