

The US ENERGY STAR[®] Label: Lessons for India

The ENERGY STAR label is a national, voluntary, energy efficiency label that makes it easy for consumers to identify high-quality, energy-efficient products for their homes and offices. Products such as clothes washers, Digital Video Disc (DVD) players, computers, and printers, that will save them money on their energy bills and help protect the environment. The ENERGY STAR label is managed by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Department of Energy (DOE)

Energy Star works differently than the label being used in India. (See The BEE, Vol I, Issue 4, Energy Labelling Initiative in India). The presence of the Energy Star label identifies high-quality, energy-efficient products, but unlike the Indian label, the Energy Star label does not carry any explicit information about the absolute or relative energy consumption of the labeled product.

EPA gained acceptance of the label in the following ways:

- EPA worked closely with manufacturers to understand energy efficient technologies. The first products to achieve the Energy Star label were computers. Before introducing the Energy Star label, EPA met with most of the major US computer manufacturers to understand how computers could be modified to save the most energy while minimising any increase in production costs. It was the manufacturers that first identified the “sleep” option as the most cost effective way to make computers save energy. Since the manufacturers had identified the options, they were more willing to produce computers with the Energy Star label once it was introduced. EPA has used this methodology of close cooperation with manufacturers to develop specifications for each new Energy Star labeled product type.
- EPA worked to promote sales of labeled products as follows:

Executive Order: EPA began by securing a President’s Executive Order that instructed all federal government agencies to purchase Energy Star Qualified equipment when it performed as well as, and cost no more than, unlabeled products. Since the US government is the largest single purchaser of computers in the world (see box: Environmentally Preferable Purchasing), the manufacturers were quite willing to make sure their products received the label.

Label Promotional Campaign. EPA works continuously to educate consumers about the label and about the benefits of labeled products. EPA has been most successful with a promotional strategy which reaches consumers through a variety of channels – for example, by working with journalists, advertising through print and electronic media, and by working with retailers to train sales staff and promote the label in stores.

Electric Utilities. In 1997, EPA began to work extensively with electric utilities around the country to promote Energy Star-labelled products in their service territories. The utilities that had access to “public benefits funding” for energy efficiency had been developing and implementing ad hoc programmes around the country. EPA worked to unify these initiatives under the Energy Star label wherever possible.

EPA Continued to Increase Criteria over Time. As technical opportunities to improve energy efficiency become available, EPA continues to increase the criteria to achieve an Energy Star label. Therefore, consumers will start to recognize that looking for the Energy Star label means that they will always be purchasing the latest energy-efficient technologies available. Manufacturers have sometimes resisted. However, this has been overcome by utility rebate programmes, which require ever increasing energy efficiency levels.

For example, when the Energy Star criteria for dishwashers lagged behind the latest technology, the California rebate programmes ceased offering rebates for Energy Star dishwashers. Manufacturers

quickly began supporting a higher Energy Star criteria. Again, working closely with manufacturers to implement changes on a reasonable time schedule is important.

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP)

The United States consumes approximately 25 per cent of the world's resources with only 5 per cent of the world's population. Moreover, the US federal government is the single largest consumer of goods and services in the US, and probably, in the world – spending more than \$200 billion annually. It also spends an additional \$240 billion a year, indirectly, through grant disbursements.

Recognizing the influence the US has on what products and services are produced due to its tremendous purchasing power, EPP works to leverage that influence to minimise environmental burdens. All federal procurement officials are required by Executive Order 13101 and Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) to assess and give preference to those products and services that are environmentally preferable – these include the range of Energy Star labeled products.

Labeling Programmes Worldwide

The US and the European Union have entered into an agreement intended to unify the voluntary energy efficiency labeling programmes. The agreement, initially for five years, but extendable, and covering a full range of energy-efficient office equipment and products, will establish Energy Star as the international symbol for energy efficiency promoted with a market focus.

Jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), EPA has developed a publication, Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The role of voluntary programmes, which makes specific recommendations on application and design of voluntary programmes, including voluntary energy-efficiency labels. Copies of this book can be ordered from SMI (Distribution Services) Ltd. E-mail: Enquire@SMIBooks.com

For information on energy-efficiency labeling programmes worldwide, see www.clasponline.org

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Reference book:

The Bulletin on Energy Efficiency
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