



Evaluation of the environmental and cultural impacts resulting from the application of the eco-label Ecoacquisti Trentino

[December 2015] The environmental and cultural evaluation of the application in Trentino of the eco-label Ecoacquisti Trentino for shops and retail channels is part of a more comprehensive evaluation commissioned by the autonomous Province of Trento and carried out by APPA (Agenzia Provinciale per la Protezione dell’Ambiente - Provincial Environmental Protection Agency), which included other two eco-labels: “Ecoristorazione Trentino” (for restaurants) and the EU Ecolabel for tourist accommodation service.

The study was carried out using the mystery shopping (or mystery audit) methodology: 25 shops that obtained the Ecoacquisti Trentino label were assessed in disguise by an auditor to evaluate their performances against some of the the criteria listed in the Ecoacquisti Trentino’s agreement. The results were compared to those of a similar investigation carried out on 25 shops in Trentino which were not certified but shared similar type and location to those certified.

Along with the mystery shopping, two on-line surveys were completed by consumers and stakeholders in Trentino. The objective of the surveys was both to highlight the respondents’ awareness and opinion on the label Ecoacquisti Trentino, and to find out their expectations towards the efforts that retail channels should put into environmental sustainability.

The majority (52,5%) of the consumers in Trentino thinks it is very important for shops to have good sustainability practices, and almost half of the respondents (49,5%) state that their choice of a food store is heavy influenced by the sustainability practices adopted by the store itself.

Consumers expect an environmentally aware shop to sell organic agricultural products (49,5%) and unpackaged products (46,5%), and to apply discounts on products close to the expiry date (40,6%). Concerning organic products, Ecoacquisti shops are up to the expectations with 55,7 different products on average that have organic certification. The same cannot be said for unpackaged products, which are present in only 17% of the Ecoacquisti shops in the case of laundry detergents and 12% in the case of food groceries



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other than fruits and vegetables. However, it should be noted that these performances are much better than those of the standard shops: only 4% of them offers unpackaged products.

About half of the Ecoacquisti shops applies discounted prices on food products close to the expiry date, with the other half donating such products to charitable organisations. By contrast, only 8% of the standard shops promotes food products close to the expiry dates by offering discounted prices.

In general, 53,6% of the consumers shopping at Ecoacquisti stores much or very much appreciates the project.

With regards to the sustainability of the products on display in shops, the Ecoacquisti shops, when compared to standard shops, stand out thanks to the sale of four types of products with high environmental value: products from organic farming, those certified EU Ecolabel, those produced and sourced in Trentino and compostable cutlery.

Ecoacquisti stores distinguish themselves from standard shops in the adoption of good practices in waste reduction, specifically by selling refillable products, returnable bottles, rechargeable batteries, reusable shopping bags and the possibility for customers to use empty boxes to take home their items.

When looking at the packaging used for specialty food, cured meats and baking products, it can be observed that packaging in Ecoacquisti shops is on average made of materials that are less recyclable compared to those used in standard shops. However, the average weight of packaging for each item in Ecoacquisti shops is much less than that used in standard shops: -12% for specialty food, -30,9% for cured meats and -50% for baking products.

The commitment in waste reduction is especially important considering that 59,9% of the surveyed consumers thinks that retail and food stores much or very much contribute to the production of waste in Trentino. It should also be noticed that many of the consumers who visit Ecoacquisti shops (59%) are not very clear on the practices the shops use to promote waste reduction.

This result can be linked a less positive aspect of the performance of Ecoacquisti shops. Both in absolute terms and when compared standard shops, Ecoacquisti shops perform very poorly in the activities related to communication, promotion and information. On average, it was found that there is scarce promotion of the products included in the Ecoacquisti Trentino criteria and that little communication is in place to show the sustainability of the same products. There is poor information on the Ecoacquisti project, although 67% of the consumers stated that they learnt about the certification in their shop or store thanks to the informative material at the entrances or the exits.



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The label Ecoacquisti is known, albeit in a superficial way, by stakeholders present in the territories in which there are certified shops. However, the great majority of stakeholders (70%) do not know if there any Ecoacquisti shop or where it is located. In fact, only 4% of the surveyed stakeholders was directly informed by the shop, or by the retail chain, about the certification.

Study carried out by

Autonomous Province of Trento - Provincial Environmental Protection Agency

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