



UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

ANALYTICAL STUDIES ON TRADE, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

PROFITING FROM GREEN CONSUMERISM IN GERMANY

Opportunities for Developing Countries
in Three Sectors:
Leather and Footwear, Textiles and Clothing,
and Furniture



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although at a somewhat slower pace in recent years, “green consumerism” has been on the rise in Germany and is increasingly bearing upon markets of key export interest to developing countries. The present report reviews the consequences of this phenomenon in Germany for the export opportunities of developing countries in three sectors: textiles and clothing; leather and footwear; and timber and furniture. It aims at providing information for exporters in developing countries on the main manifestations of “green consumerism”, such as eco-labelling initiatives and environment-related standards and regulations, and suggests market-oriented strategies for suppliers in developing countries which may help them take advantage of “green consumerism”.

The report consists of six chapters. After a brief introductory chapter, chapter 2 analyses the greening of the demand side in Germany, and reviews the environmental awareness and purchasing behaviour of German consumers. It also analyses the willingness-to-pay more for environmentally preferable products in the three target sectors. Chapter 3 provides an overview of eco-labelling and environment-related standards and regulations in those sectors. Chapter 4 analyses the greening of the supply side in Germany. It describes the latest eco-trends in the three sectors and gives examples of the development of “green” markets and associated cost effects. It also analyses specific government support policies and autonomous initiatives of the private sector. Chapter 5 reviews promising export strategies for developing countries. Finally, chapter 6 sets out a number of general conclusions and possible follow-up activities. An appendix lists the addresses of relevant public and private authorities, organizations and associations in order to facilitate contacts between exporters and importers.

The report concludes that export-oriented firms in developing countries should be encouraged to pursue a pro-active strategy that not only relies on short-term exploitation of comparative cost advantages, but also attempts to narrow the technological gap between developed and developing countries. For this purpose, suppliers in developing countries should closely assess the existing and emerging environmental requirements of export markets and investigate, with the assistance of German partners, new technological opportunities. Since a central body for collection and distribution of relevant information does not exist in Germany, forms of continuous exchange of information and experts should be established with organizations, such as the Federal Environmental Agency (UBA), the Association for Technological Cooperation (GTZ), the German Standardization Institute (DIN) and central and regional chambers of commerce. Another way of intensifying cooperation could be the establishment of “company partnerships” between eco-pioneers in Germany and exporting firms

in developing countries through, for instance, company visits, exchange of personnel or regular on-line communication. Such partnerships could also be instrumental in the training of managers in cleaner production methods.

As a first practical step in the above direction, the report proposes intensive networking among producers, retailers, industrial associations, and government agencies of developed and developing countries which, in addition to providing a regular exchange of information and experience, identifies suitable ways of cooperation and alliances along the product chain, including marketing. With this objective, the report encourages the holding of sector-specific, bilateral workshops bringing together actors from a source developing country and from a target developed nation, based on a background paper like this study on Germany. Such workshops, with the participation of experts from government institutions, consumer organizations and the private sector, can review export opportunities and simultaneously take a first step towards the creation of specific partnerships among the actors involved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| | Executive Summary | i |
| 1. | Introduction | 1 |
| 2. | The Greening of the Demand Side in Germany ... | 3 |
| 2.1. | Consumer awareness and consumer behaviour | 3 |
| 2.1.1. | Environmental awareness in Germany | 3 |
| 2.1.2. | Environmentally sound behaviour and willingness to pay | 3 |
| 2.1.3. | The relevance of ecolabels for environmentally conscious purchasing | 4 |
| 2.1.4. | Ecolabelling and the selected product groups | 6 |
| 2.2. | A brief market survey of textiles, leather, and timber | 9 |
| 2.3. | Price-related characteristics of “green products” | 11 |
| 3. | Ecolabelling and Eco-standards in Germany | 12 |
| 3.1. | Description of labelling initiatives | 12 |
| 3.1.1. | Official labels | 12 |
| 3.1.2. | Labels developed by NGOs | 17 |
| 3.1.3. | Labels developed by different stakeholders | 19 |
| 3.1.4. | Labels developed by industrial associations and groups of enterprises..... | 21 |
| 3.1.5. | Labels created by individual firms | 25 |
| 3.1.6. | “Green” public procurement | 29 |
| 3.2. | Overview of labelled products | 30 |
| 3.3. | Standards and general regulation of textiles and clothing, leather and footwear, and timber and furniture | 30 |
| 3.3.1. | Standards and regulations on textiles and clothing in Germany | 30 |
| 3.3.1.1. | Regulation | 32 |
| 3.3.1.2. | Standards | 33 |
| 3.3.1.3. | Other voluntary activities and observable trends | 34 |
| 3.3.2. | Standards and regulations for leather and footwear in Germany | 35 |
| 3.3.2.1. | Regulation | 35 |
| 3.3.2.2. | Standards | 36 |
| 3.3.2.3. | Other voluntary activities and observable trends | 37 |
| 3.3.3. | Standards and regulations for timber and furniture in Germany | 37 |
| 3.3.3.1. | Regulations | 37 |
| 3.3.3.2. | Standards | 37 |
| 3.3.3.3. | Other voluntary activities and observable trends | 38 |
| 3.4. | The potential role of the ISO 14000 series | 39 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| 4. | The “Greening” of the Supply-side in Germany ... | 40 |
| 4.1. | Suppliers’ attitude towards environmental problems and “green consumerism” | 40 |
| 4.1.1. | Preliminary remarks | 40 |
| 4.1.2. | The textiles and clothing sector | 43 |
| 4.1.3. | The leather and footwear sector | 47 |
| 4.1.4. | The tropical timber and furniture sector | 49 |
| 4.2. | More examples for the development of “green” markets | 50 |
| 4.3. | Examples of cost and price effects of “green” production | 51 |
| 5. | Promising Market Strategies for Developing Countries | 53 |
| 5.1. | General recommendations | 53 |
| 5.2. | Market strategies for textiles and clothing | 54 |
| 5.3. | Market strategies for leather and footwear | 55 |
| 5.4. | Market strategies for tropical timber and furniture ... | 56 |
| 6. | Outlook | 56 |
| 6.1. | General conclusions | 56 |
| 6.2. | Recommendations for follow-up activities | 57 |
| | Appendix | 59 |
| 1. | General addresses | 59 |
| 2. | Relevant addresses in the area of textiles and clothing | 60 |
| 3. | Relevant addresses in the area of leather and footwear | 61 |
| 4. | Relevant addresses in the area of tropical timber and furniture | 61 |
| | References | 62 |
| | Notes | 64 |