



Automercado

Sector: Grocery Store



Region: Costa Rica

Automercado is the name of a supermarket chain how owns more than 21 grocery stores located at Costa Rica. Automercado claim is the slogan “La major experiencia al comprar ” (“The best experience when you buy”) that they are positioned as the best supermarket chain in the Costa Rican market since they get the environmental friendly products, which appears on different brands (most of them are certified products). The logo of Automercado will appear on a variety of products that are processed within their facilities as its own brand. The grocery store has an environmental department that want to establish rows for the environmental certified products. The goal of the supermarket is to establish an environmental certified line of products, so 116 products have an environmental label were analysed; however, not all of them with certified logos at the label. The products were chosen by the Environmental Department of Automercado. The analysis of the products was made through an equation were the 10 principles of the label program were considered. Each one with a different proportion, since some of them are only desirables and other are more likely to be at the label for all the products (6 to 2 points for the mandatory principles and 1 point to the desirable principles).

Mindset

Life Cycle Thinking: It is desirable that must of the products have analysis the plantation or industry process Food systems critically contribute to our collective sustainability outcomes. Improving food system sustainability requires life cycle thinking, measurement and management strategies. Considering that more than 15% in Latin America of our products are wasted. New strategist at the grocery label must be considered, and Automercado is planning to stablsh hallways to stand out those products that have a important actions in the environment protection.

Mainstreaming sustainability: Automercado was the first grocery store in Costa Rica that considers to introduce products with green labels ant to stand out them. Automercado is betting to Sustainable Development in order to differentiate its products through the label. The company have a social program to help women that suffer from cancer.

Principle 1: Reliability



To verify the reliability principle logos and labels were analysed for 116 products. Some of them worked with independent third party verifiers, as it is stablished at the label, so this type of companies are responsible for measuring the progress on the ground by conducting farmer, farmer household and community studies. These studies are designed to evaluate performance of those companies. Experts, researchers and development team are involved and provide evidence to generate specific recommendations, which improve the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of the project interventions. Form the labels analyzed, only 36% of the products analyzed meet the criteria. All products that meet this criteria will have 6 points within the analysis.

The message and the logo conveyed on products follows and reflects the evidence these companies have on what has been developed on the field ground. Third party verifiers confirm such evidence.

Principle 2: Relevance



The claim highlights elements that make a difference to the overall sustainability performance of the products. There is not information that each company has made a hotspots analysis, but there is evidence of improved agricultural practices to enhance productivity, good industrial practices and community development that supports creation of additional livelihoods. 44% of the analyzed products meet this criteria.

The claim is based on a voluntary initiative that exceeds regulatory requirements of the production countries and the consumption countries. It helps to maintain the best farm, industry and community environment which is crucial to improve productivity over time.

Principle 3: Clarity



The logo of different products are applied only to the brands that has establish a commitment with the sustainability, so they proof it in the label. Next to the logo there is a text that explains the context in which the commitment is taking place, such as "Together for the Environment". Also, there is a link to the product website, where consumers can find more detailed information. A QR code is also a possibility, however must of the products do not have such information. At this principle, 37% of the analyzed products meet this criteria

The connection between the claim and the product is clear for some of the products and additional details are available online to support a better understanding of the claim. Consumers can access detailed information in progress reports, executive summaries, infographics and fact sheets available online. Only 37% of the products meet the criteria.



Principle 4: Transparency



The transparency principle is the answer that some customers' demands, since the information must be available. The point is that consumers must be able to evaluate environmental products, and its information directly through the label, linked to a web page, where the most relevant information is located. This additional information is available on the website which is written in plain and non-technical language. It is also possible to access progress reports and information on the development of the claim. For this claim 29% of the analyzed products meet this criteria.

Consumers can trace the information behind the claim, and how it was generated and verified. It is clear how, and by whom, the sustainability claim was developed; and who provided the evidence behind the claim, and how.

Principle 5: Accessibility



For the analyzed products the logo is, in general, placed front and/or back of pack with appropriate size and the use of colorful fonts. This principle refers that the environmental information must be available for the customers, not that the customer must look for it to satisfy expectations. Only 7% of the analyzed products meet this criteria, it means there is a link to a web page with more information.

The information is available on-pack, website and social media. Only 7% of the products meet the criteria. Must of the analyzed products are green ones but they do not demonstrate the environmental commitment.

Principle 6: Three Dimensions of Sustainability



Environmental: Maintenance of the products ecosystems and protecting the land. Investment in farmer training on good agricultural practices, planting of shade trees and rehabilitation of farms, good industry practices to conserve water, energy, reduce solid waste, mobilizing communities to prioritize forest protection and more.

Social: Multi-stakeholder collaborative program design and oversight, facilitating the development and implementation of Community Action Plans, youth engagement program, improved access to education and acting against child labor, support for women with cancer, among other programs .

Economic: Assurance of fair wages for farmers and employees. Training in good agricultural practices and additional sources of income. Access to finance, scholarships, financial literacy training as well as business management training to improve livelihoods.

For this claim, 8% of the analyzed products meet this criteria. Some industries made big efforts on sustainability. However the label do not demonstrate it.

Principle 7: Behaviour Change and Long-Term Impact



This is a desirable criteria; however, Automercado has identified that child labor, deforestation and climate change, gender equality and sustainable livelihoods for farmers, ocean protection, and good industry practices are topics that also matter to conscious consumers. Products Life addresses these. So for the analyzed products, 7% of the analyzed products meet this criteria.

The topics which matter to consumers are referenced in the product packaging, but the language and the pictures used on packaging vary nationally according to local contexts. Automercado could improve its action towards this principle by asking consumers to be actively involved.

Principle 8: Multi-Channel and Innovative Approach



Automercado wants to be the first grocery store to innovate about ecolabels in the appropriate sense, so consumers, can buy in a responsible way. Brands such as ECOS and Biofilm have started to communicate to their consumers and further action is already planned. In this way, 13% of the analyzed products meet this criteria. Automercado has a commitment, as example, with MARVIVA, a NGO that helps to safe oceans and aquatic life through a responsible fishing.

The on-pack claim is the first stage of consumer communications. Different additional communication channels are used to communicate the results and progress made by the product such as websites, social media, blogs, newsletters, and a Youtube channel. However, it is the customer that have to look for the information since it is not available at the label.

Principle 9: Collaboration



This principle looks for acceptance and credibility by collaborative work. So partnes such a NGO and Universities are desirable. In this way, credibility will grow up. Automercado involves a wider group of actors to jointly develop the basis for the sustainability claim. The selection of products that go through a certification process, a third party analysis, etc, are the ones that must be promoted. Only, 3% of the analyzed products meet this criteria.

The supermarket creates partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations, supply chain partners and communities to further support local communities. Automercado welcomes other stakeholders to participate and thereby improve the overall public acceptance of the claim by consumers.

Principle 10: Comparability



This principle states that product comparisons should be used only where it really helps the consumer to make sustainable choices. In this claim, the Costa Rican government consumer office addressed this claim. Sometimes the government consumer office made comparison among different products. Only, 8% of the analyzed products meet this criteria.