

## **Submission by Prime8 International to the Environmental Audit Committee on possible future inquiries: carbon labelling or environmental labelling**

### **Introduction**

Prime8 International's objective is to educate and encourage environmental understanding and awareness. Our focus is on promoting sensible environmental practices that can be adopted by business and on the education of young people through the written word, entertaining software, educational apps and other platforms.

The Prime8 ideology looks to develop a mindset in people and children of all ages by using simple fact-based learning that is easy to understand and explain to others and that is a benchmark of environmental excellence. We believe in 'protecting our tomorrows'.

In response to this inquiry, we have reflected on the UK Government's environmental focus being on the Year of Climate Action; reaching net zero by 2050; and hosting COP26. We believe it needs to show some 'real' activity which will be visible to all in the UK, and we think globally.

[www.prime8.info](http://www.prime8.info)

### **1. What are the key issues that the Committee should consider under a particular inquiry topic?**

The Committee has identified carbon labelling as a potential topic for a future inquiry. However, we believe that a wider definition of environmental labelling would be appropriate to ensure a range of impacts was considered. The objective of the environmental labelling would be for the consumer to be aware of the environmental impact to help them make informed decisions about their purchase. For companies to publicly report their environmental impact will drive operational and commercial choices in the company operations that will result in a reduction of their environmental impact.

We believe the key issues for the Committee would be:

How environmental labelling will help the UK meet its net zero by 2050 target. There is wide-spread recognition that critical to the achievement of this target is a change in consumer and business behaviour.

How to identify the critical categories for labelling, for example:

Broad and encompassing categories such as:

- Pollution, air, sea, land
- Transportation
- Product lifecycle
- Carbon neutrality
- Habitat sustainability

Or specific categories such as:

- CO2 impact
- Water use
- Virgin deforestation
- Palm oil

How the Government learns the lessons from other environmental labelling schemes and how they could be applied to a UK environmental labelling scheme for example:

- A simple format for the consumer to help them make informed choices based on the data and information available – in the form of a simple logo for each category. For example, carbon neutrality represented by a set of balanced scales on a red/amber/green background
- The labelling needs to have categories that are obvious and need little explanation to the general public
- The labelling must be prominent on the product to inform consumer choice and ideally colour coded (recommended to be front of packaging, like the nutrition labelling on food)
- The labelling will need to be developed between the Government and industry
- The labelling will need to be piloted to ensure success of roll-out

## **2. How effective is government policy in the policy area covered by each inquiry?**

As far as we are aware, there is no Government policy on environmental labelling. We see this idea being co-owned by the DEFRA and BEIS (to manage the business consultation and input).

Environment labelling could be a clear outcome to be globally launched at COP26 next year and so BEIS as Government sponsors of COP26 would have a roll in its adoption for COP26 agenda.

## **3. Why should the Committee consider a particular inquiry as a priority?**

This is topical. Consumers want to make informed choices about how they can help reduce their environmental impact.

This is relevant to making COP26 a success for the UK. A UK championed scheme that is rolled out globally would make the UK a thought leader in the environment and help the UK – and the world – meet its Paris agreement targets.

This has never been the subject of a UK Parliamentary inquiry before. The EAC would be the first to review this concept and could make clear recommendations to the Government.

There would be an interesting array of witnesses for oral evidence. These could range from developers and users of existing labelling schemes, through the behavioural insight experts and businesses that could be impacted by such a scheme.

There is a natural place for the UK to develop its own, more comprehensive labelling system to that generated by the EU. The EU eco-labelling system is not consumer facing and has had minimal market penetration <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/>

## **Conclusion**

We believe that the time is right for environmental labelling to become part of the way we all buy our goods and used across the consumer spectrum could have a significant impact on the UK's ability to meet its net zero target by 2050. The EAC would be seen as a thought leader by investigating this and now that COP26 has been delayed, the Committee's recommendations could influence the UK Government's priorities for COP26.

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