



# GREEN INSIGHTS

ISSN 2349-5596

Newsletter on Eco-labelling and Eco-friendly Products

Volume 15 No. 4, January-March 2021



## ETHICAL & SUSTAINABLE FASHION FOR A SUSTAINABLE EARTH



Sponsored by:

**Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India**

ENVIS Resource Partner on:

**Environment Literacy - Eco-labelling and Eco-friendly Products**

**Editorial Team**

Uday Mawani  
Chief Executive Officer

Anindita Mehta  
ENVIS Project Coordinator

Divya Namboothiri  
Programme Officer

Apeksha Sharma  
Information Officer

Hiren Tank  
Design & Graphics

# Contents

Foreword		2
Sustainability and Fashion Industry		3
Consumer Behaviour and Fashion Industry		6
Sustainable Fashion: Eco-labelling Schemes and Certifications		8
Initiatives towards Sustainable Fashion		11

## FOREWORD

About 330 billion single use plastic bags are produced each year which is used for just a few hours before being thrown away. In all, some 4,900 million tonnes of plastics - over three quarters of the total amount ever produced has been discarded into landfills or in open and this is expected to grow to 12,000 million tonnes by 2050 unless action is taken. Some kinds of plastic take over 500 years to break down. Microplastics are also emerging as a threat to soils and drinking water, raising further health concerns. Microplastics are pieces of plastic that are smaller than 5mm in size and enter natural ecosystems through various sources like synthetic clothing fibres, paints and further breakdown of larger plastics. They are known to disrupt and degrade environments as they are not biodegradable. They are also known to have found in the human placenta which provides oxygen and nutrients to the growing foetus.

Traditionally plastic pollution has been tackled after it has happened, through clean-up efforts, but the only solution lies in addressing its root causes. These lie in the dominant “take, make, waste” linear economy, fuelled by large amounts of cheap, accessible energy and other resources, and producing things designed to be disposable.

The circular economy, by contrast, aims to use resources for as long as possible, extracting as much value from them as is practicable and then, when they do reach the end of their lives to recover and regenerate products and materials. It aims to design out waste and hazardous

materials in favour of such restoration and regeneration.

Nowadays more and more sustainable brands are developing that are committed to the well being of the planet. There are many global brands that are devoted to minimize the carbon footprint through the implementation of sustainable practices. Fashion Industries and brands have started to respond with corporate responsibility strategies and international commitments. In 2018, more than 90 brands signed the ***Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action*** created by the UN Climate Change, committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2030 and to drive the fashion industry to net-zero Greenhouse Gas emissions no later than 2050. In 2019, 32 companies representing 150 brands, signed the Fashion Pact, which includes commitments on climate, biodiversity and oceans. The pact recognizes “*that our living natural capital is in danger and that this needs to be remedied to have a foundation for a thriving society and business*”.

The present issues highlights the initiatives taken by the Fashion Industry to attain sustainability either by recycling, reusing and reducing the carbon footprint. It also gives information on certifications and schemes in Textile industry and innovations taking by some leading brands to curb pollution by recycling and up scaling plastics. It also shows the changing consumer behavior when it comes to Green Fashion.

# Sustainability and Fashion Industry



In terms of environmental pollution and social impact, fashion is one of the more demanding systems. The ethical and socially responsible aspect of the fashion movement is to respect workers, animals and natural environment. Sustainable fashion is thus about producing clothes, shoes and accessories in environmentally and socio-economically sustainable manners, and it is also about more sustainable patterns of consumption and use, which necessitate shifts in individual attitudes and behaviour.

The terms green fashion, ethical fashion, and sustainable fashion are frequently used interchangeably. Sustainable fashion envelops both the green and ethical dimensions of fashion. Green fashion fits into the environmental theme by promoting utilization of recycled materials and biodegradable fibers, while, ethical fashion focuses more on the fair trade principles and a production system free from 'sweatshop' labour conditions.

**Sustainable consumption** is defined as the use of services or products which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as emissions of waste and

pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations (Oslo Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption, 1994). At consumer level, it suggests a decision-making process whereby an individual takes his environmental and social responsibility into account in addition to personal needs and wants (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

**Green Fashion:** It refers clothing that uses environmentally friendly fabrics and production techniques. Green fashion clothes are made using organic raw materials like cotton grown without pesticides or clothes which are certified with eco-labelled mark. These can be made of recycled materials or second-hand clothes. People who make them should be working in good condition and should be paid fair price.

**Ethical Fashion:** Calling a fashion product ethical means clothing that incorporate fair trade principles which ensures that certain international standards are met like for labour rights (such as reasonable work hours and pay, no child labour, etc.), environmentalism and social policies.

**Ethical consumption** implies that consumers feel responsible towards the society and take social concerns into consideration in their

purchase behaviour (Browne, et al., 2000; Carrigan, et al., 2004). It does no longer only refer to classical 'fair trade' aspects, such as higher and more stable prices for farmers in developing countries. Instead, it covers issues like the reduction of Green house gases, protection of the tropical rainforest, animal welfare, prevention of child labour, labour working conditions, local buying, or employment of handicapped people (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Zander & Hamm, 2010).

Fashion industry operates in a highly competitive market dominated by the presence of global brands. In recent times, despite the deep financial crisis of the last decade, the fashion industry has attained fast growth and has experienced vast transformations. According to the market analysis provided by some of the main international consultancy companies (McKinsey, Deloitte Group, BCG), fashion companies today are operating in a very dynamic competitive environment, dominated by sudden changes and increasing uncertainty.

The fashion industry is valued at around \$2.4 trillion and employs over 75 million people worldwide. It loses about \$500 billion of value every year due to the lack of recycling and clothes that are thrown into landfill before ever being sold as stated by the UN Environment. The industry is the second- highest consumer of water, generating around 20 percent of the world's wastewater and releasing half a million tons of synthetic microfibers into the ocean annually. The average consumer buys 60 percent more pieces of clothing than 15 years ago. Each item is only kept for half as long.

The industry accounts for a staggering 8-10 per cent of global carbon emissions – more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined. Part of these emissions comes from pumping water to irrigate crops like cotton, oil-based pesticides, machinery for harvesting, and emissions from transport. The industry is responsible for 24 percent of insecticides and 11 percent of pesticides.

**SDGs for Better Fashion:** The environmental and social implications of fashion production and disposal make it of high relevance to integrate the targets of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into this industry, to make it fully sustainable and positive for people and the ecosystem. The aim of the commitment, is to integrate the UN SDGs in this industry, to tackle the environmental and social issues related to clothing production and consumption: Implementation of sustainable design strategies, promoting the use of sustainable technologies and appropriate resource management throughout the textile supply chain, proposing new business models and engaging with consumers for better consumption habits.

The increased production of clothes requires more natural resources to grow crops like cotton or for livestock to produce wool, cashmere or leather. This puts more stress on our forest, land and water resources. Chemicals used in dyes and processing are polluting rivers and harming ecosystems and people's health. Despite fashion being a trillion-dollar industry, workers still face low wages and unsafe working conditions. On the opposite side of production is waste. We are wearing clothes for a shorter time, resulting in millions of tons of cast-offs going to landfills each year.

The United Nation is committed to changing the path of fashion, reducing its negative social, economic and environmental impact and turning it into a driver for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ***“UN Partnership on Sustainable Fashion and the SDGs”*** held at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) on 10 July 2018, in New York, 10 different UN organizations agreed to establish a UN Alliance on Sustainable Fashion. With the help of the UN, more and more corporations are making the shift to sustainable business models which can help fight climate change and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. To celebrate fashion designers and international companies that promote sustainability, the UN Climate Change,

in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Environment and other partners, regularly hosts an alternative fashion show called the “**Green Fashion Week**”.

**UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion** launched on 14th March 2019 at the UN Environment Assembly, to halt the environmentally and socially destructive practices of fashion, and instead harness the industry as a driver for improving the world's ecosystems. “Sustainable Fashion” is an initiative of United Nations agencies and allied organisations designed to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals through coordinated action in the fashion sector. Specifically, the Alliance works to support coordination between UN bodies working in fashion and promoting projects and policies that ensure that the fashion value chain contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals' targets.

Sustainable fashion is a burgeoning sector of the apparel industry with the potential to grow exponentially as consumers become more informed of the unethical treatment of workers and ecologically depleting production practices of the fast fashion industry. By slowing down consumption and production patterns, the fashion industry can be made more sustainable for the future. In order to achieve the results, the movement desires, consumers must be faced with the realization that the non-transparent, fast fashion giants they actively subscribe to are not making a positive social or environmental impact. Along with more educated consumers, companies must develop multi-faceted marketing approaches that go beyond keywords like “Green” or “Eco-friendly” and entice customers towards their product quality, comfort, and brand name. Sustainable fashion could potentially change the way people consume and the way companies produce, with the correct balance of the two, incredibly positive socially and environmentally beneficial effects would occur.



Source: <https://sustainabilityx.co/sustainability-in-fashion-34a4852f0aab>

#### Sources:

- 1 Gazzola, P.; Pavione, E.; Pezzetti, R.; Grechi, D. Trends in the Fashion Industry. The Perception of Sustainability and Circular Economy: A Gender/Generation Quantitative Approach. *Sustainability* 2020, 12, 2809.
- 2 <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-alliance-sustainable-fashion-addresses-damage-fast-fashion>
- 3 <https://scholar.dominican.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=honors-theses>
- 4 <https://scholar.dominican.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=honors-theses>
- 5 <https://unece.org/forestry/press/un-alliance-aims-put-fashion-path-sustainability>
- 6 <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/lets-make-sustainability-fashion-statement>
- 7 <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/sectoral-engagement/global-climate-action-in-fashion/about-the-fashion-industry-charter-for-climate-action>

# Consumer Behaviour and Fashion Industry



Today fashion industry is a rapidly growing industry in the world. Consumers across the world have started demanding more of fashion. Demand has changed the business of industries. Clothes have become cheaper, trend cycles have sped up shopping for many of us. Fast Fashion, large global chains dominate the shopping malls and online world. As both suppliers and consumers become more reliant on speed and low-cost, fast fashion continues to grow with little concern towards the ethical and environmental issues it poses. It impacts people and the planet both. It has increased customer satisfaction due to low cost, latest designs and quick response time in meeting consumer demand. Along with higher profit margins, fast fashion chains are growing faster than retail fashion industries.

Today's consumers want to enjoy the latest fashions, but are not willing to pay the price tag. With this willingness to purchase replica and items of a lower standard, merchandiser of fashion retail saw an opportunity in the market. In an effort to match customer desires, the concept of 'fast fashion' was born.

Consumer behaviour is defined as: "The study of individuals, groups or organizations and the

processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society" (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010 pp. 6).

The global apparel market is valued at 3 trillion dollars and accounts for 2 percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The fashion industry seems to be less bothered on the impact it has on the environment and people. Fast fashion is also known as disposable fashion; the significant amount of waste associated with it. With consumers understanding and accepting the lesser quality of the garments in substitution for lower prices, they are quick to throw away the items and move on to the next trend. Although this is nothing new in the fashion industry as there have always been trends causing a large surplus; with fast fashion however, the amount of pollution has increased at a tremendous rate.

In order to facilitate a change in the global fashion market consumers need to be made more aware of the effects of their clothing purchases and the harsh realities of unethical brands. It is the increased awareness in consumers that creates a demand for ethical products and drives industries to adopt sustainable practices. The creation of

sustainable fashion has emerged as an alternative for fashion brands to stand out. The fashion industry has responded to the need to develop more sustainable fashion options and eco-friendly fashion production.

To reduce the social and environmental impacts of apparel throughout its life-cycle, now fashion industries have started to develop corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies and international standards. They are developing and using more eco-friendly manufacturing techniques, creating eco dyes and fabrics, proactively educating their customers on fashion sustainability and streamlining textile supply chains to reduce waste. They are providing consumers' high-end style at an affordable price.

There has been an emergence of successful 'ethical' brands such as People Tree, American Apparel and Edun (Joergens 2006). Mass-market retailers such as H&M, Nike, Levi's and Zara have introduced products that incorporate the use of environmentally friendly materials such as organic cotton, Tencel® and recycled polyester. Many companies have embraced a CSR framework and create awareness among consumers. To reduce the environmental and social impacts of apparel, fashion organisations are beginning to adopt, develop and implement CSR policies and programmes throughout their products' life-cycles (Madsen et al. 2007). Companies have sought a way to implement sustainability strategies (Henriques and Richardson 2004) while maintaining consumer appeal.

Sustainability has recently become an important new driver in consumers' purchasing decisions. Consumers are expecting transparency more and more across the entire value chain. They want to have more information about both the provenience of goods and the quality of materials used. Brands are responding to these challenges. For sustainable fashion, they are now using eco-labels. Now if a consumer looks for sustainably produced garments, it should be easy to identify these through an eco-label.

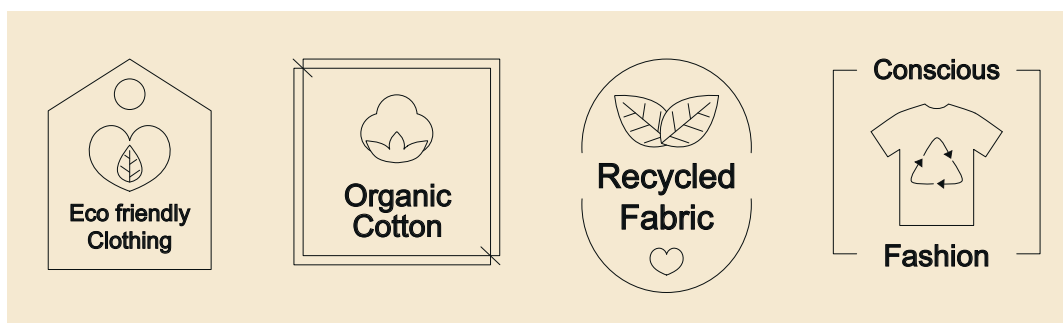
Eco-labels are market-based, cost-effective, flexible and consumer-driven instruments which includes the consumer and consumption patterns in the solution to environmental problems.

Being an informed consumer it is now our responsibility to ask questions about material and labour before buying. If we're not getting the responses we want from environmental, social and ethical perspectives, then demand better and look for alternatives.

#### Sources:

- 1 Joergens, C. (2006) 'Ethical Fashion: Myth or Future Trend?', Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management 10.3: 360-71
- 2 [http://researchgate.net/publication/272885988\\_Corporate\\_sustainability\\_reporting\\_in\\_the\\_apparel\\_industry](http://researchgate.net/publication/272885988_Corporate_sustainability_reporting_in_the_apparel_industry)  
[http://researchgate.net/publication/272885988\\_Corporate\\_sustainability\\_reporting\\_in\\_the\\_apparel\\_industry](http://researchgate.net/publication/272885988_Corporate_sustainability_reporting_in_the_apparel_industry)
- 3 Henriques, A., and J. Richardson (eds.) (2004) The Triple Bottom Line: Does It All Add Up? (London: Earthscan).
- 4 Madsen, J., B. Hartlin, S. Perumalpillai, S. Selby and S. Aumônier (2007) Mapping of Evidence on Sustainable Development Impacts that Occur in Life Cycles of Clothing: A Report to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (London: Environmental Resources Management (ERM) Ltd/Defra, [randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=EV02028\\_7073\\_FRP.pdf](http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=EV02028_7073_FRP.pdf), accessed 15 November 2011)
- 5 [http://www.globalstandard.org/media/com\\_acymaili\\_upload/ecolabels\\_2013\\_paper\\_es\\_194.pdf](http://www.globalstandard.org/media/com_acymaili_upload/ecolabels_2013_paper_es_194.pdf)
- 6 <http://fashionunited.com/global-fashion-industry-statistics/>
- 7 <http://edgexpo.com>
- 8 <http://scholar.dominican.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=honors-theses>

# Sustainable Fashion: Eco-labelling Schemes and Certifications



There are many schemes and certifications that focus on environment, social aspects and production process. The objective of these schemes and certification is to guarantee that end product meet certain criteria pertaining to social and environmental conditions. Here are few eco-labelling and certifications found in fashion supply chains.

## Better Cotton Initiative

A voluntary organisation, the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) helps millions of farmer to grow cotton in a way that is good for the environment and farmers and is more economical across the globe. It encourages farmers to adopt the better management practices in cultivation of cotton to achieve measurable reductions in main environmental impacts, while improving social and economic benefits for all cotton farmers across the world.

The big challenge in making cotton more sustainable are excessive use of pesticides (bad for human health and the environment), environmentally inefficient production methods (which create water shortages and degrade the soil) and poor working conditions. Adidas, Gap Inc., H&M, ICCO, IFAP, IFC, IKEA, Organic



Exchange, Oxfam, PAN UK, and WWF founded the Better Cotton Initiative in 2005 to take steps towards the sustainable and better management practices for the cultivation of cotton. Better Cotton was first harvested from farmers in Brazil, India, Mali, and Pakistan in 2010-11. BCI for other regions is regularly in touch with organisations and governments to bring the Better Cotton programme. At the end of 2019, BCI had more than 1,840 members, spanning the entire global cotton supply chain from farmer organisations through to retailers and brands.

Source: <https://bettercotton.org/>

## The Bluesign

To reduce the ecological footprint of textile industry, the The bluesign® standard brings together the entire textile manufacturing chain. The bluesign® standard analyses all input streams from raw materials to chemical components, to resources with a sophisticated “Input Stream Management” process rather than focusing on the finished product testing. Beginning from the



production, the components are assessed based on their eco toxicological impact. So the harmful substances can be eliminated from the starting. The key aspect of the bluesign® standard is never to compromise on product functionality, quality or design. By using “Best Available Technology” (BAT), the whole textile manufacturing chain ensures that products would meet the environmental standards without cutting back on performance requirements.

Source: <https://www.bluesign.com/en>

### Global Organic Textile Standards (GOTS)

The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) is the leading textile processing standard for organic fibres worldwide, including ecological and social criteria, backed by independent certification of the entire textile supply chain. The aim to develop the Standards was to combine the various existing and draft standards in the area of eco textile processing. It defines the requirements to ensure the organic status of textiles from harvesting of the raw material through responsible manufacturing of the product environmentally and socially to the labeling of the product. So it can provide a credible assurance to the end consumer. It covers the production, processing, manufacturing, packaging, labeling, exportation, importation and distribution of all natural fibres. Processors and manufacturers shall be enabled to supply their organic fabrics and garments with one certification accepted in all major selling markets. Version 3.0 was published on 1 March 2011, six years after the introduction of the initial version. High ecological and social requirements as well as global practicability and verifiability were taken into consideration in the revision work in order to achieve reliable and transparent criteria. The



International Working Group is comprised of four reputed members' organizations - Organic Trade Association (OTA, USA), Internationaler Verband der Naturtextilwirtschaft (IVN, Germany), The Soil Association (UK) and Japan Organic Cotton Association (JOCA, Japan), which contribute their respective expertise in organic farming and environmentally and socially responsible textile processing to GOTS together with other international stakeholder organizations and experts. Certification to GOTS helps to ensure compliance with each of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, and actively cooperating with all relevant stakeholders.

Source: <https://www.global-standard.org/>

### Textile Exchange

Previously known as Organic Exchange, Textile Exchange is a non-profit, member-based organisation dedicated to expanding the organic cotton market with a recent strategic shift to include other sustainable textiles. Working in the important areas of certification, organic farming engagement and public education, TE provides exclusive benefits to members who encompass the entire global textile supply chain. Textile Exchange has developed several standards for the textile industry to support specific claims. Textile Exchange is a full member of ISEAL and follows international best practices in standard-setting to ensure the quality of standards.



Source: <https://textileexchange.org/about-us/>  
<https://textileexchange.org/standards/>

# Initiatives towards Sustainable Fashion

## Ralph Lauren's plastic bottle shirt:

Iconic polo shirt made exclusively of plastic bottles and dyed using zero water was launched by Ralph Lauren. For every earth polo produced 12 fewer bottles end up in the ocean and landfills. They have committed to recycle 170 million plastic bottle by 2025.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/fashion-and-trends/sustainable-fashion-ralph-lauren-unveils-plastic-bottle-shirts/story9g9geabjTdNICbtCVMm8NJ.html>



## 30 million liters of water saved in the production of denim:

Mango, a Spain-based fashion group is launching a denim collection for this season whose finishing process will save 30 million litres of water. Mango has intended to reach its target by 2025, wherein it would use its 100 percent cotton from sustainable resources and 50 percent of recycled polyester.

Source: <https://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/fashion-news/mango-s-new-denim-collection-to-save-30-mn-litres-of-water-272379-newsdetails.htm>



## Poppy Barley's Cactus based Vegan Leather:

Cactus is a desert plant. It has deep roots and waxy steps that helps it to hang on every ounce of water that comes its way. Laguaro is a leather like material made from cactus spines. Poppy Barley spent 10 months working on products that flatter the material, which feels so much like leather. They have also stamped a plant medallion on the products so that they are easily identified as vegan.

Source: <https://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/local-arts/cactus-based-vegan-leather-is-poppy-barleys-latest-sustainable-fashion-offering>



## Upcycled Tire Bags and furniture:

Bags made of recycled rubber or vegan leather is water proof and sturdy. They are highly durable and shock and scratch proof. Furniture made from tires is a big hit. As rubber takes more than 50 years to decompose. Tiers could be used in making chairs, tables, washbasin, mirror supports etc.



### Sneakers out of Plastic Waste:

Alcis Sports is finding success in making sportswear out of plastic bottles. 50% of clothing from Paragon Apparels (its parent company) is made of recycled PET bottles. Based in India, the company is determined to make 90% of apparel out of recycled polyethylene terephthalate bottles (also known as PET bottles), in the next two years. Eight PET plastic bottles can be turned into one athletic T-shirt.

Source: <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/alcis-sports-paragon-apparels-plastic-bottles/#:~:text=Alcis%20Sports%20is%20finding%20success,in%20the%20next%20two%20years.>



CERC - ENVIS has dedicated a Green Insight Newsletter on “Eco and Sustainable Textile for Society” wherein you can find chapters on Organisations Supporting Sustainable Textile, Eco Friendly Natural Dyes, and Eco Labels for Textile. Visit the link for more information:

[https://cercenvis.nic.in/PDF/JUL\\_SEP\\_2016.pdf](https://cercenvis.nic.in/PDF/JUL_SEP_2016.pdf)



Sponsored by:  
Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India  
ENVIS Centre on:  
Eco-labelling and Eco-friendly Products




The Environmental Information System acronymed as ENVIS was implemented by the Ministry of Environment & Forests by end of 6th Five Year Plan as a Plan Scheme for environmental information collection, collation, storage, retrieval and dissemination to policy planners, decision makers, scientists and environmentalists, researchers, academicians and other stakeholders.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has identified Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC), Ahmedabad, as one of the Resource Partners to collect and disseminate information on "Environment Literacy - Eco-labelling and Eco-friendly Products". The main objective of this ENVIS Resource Partner is to disseminate information on Eco products, International, and National Eco labeling programmes.


#### Periodical Printed & Published By

**Project Coordinator, CERC-ENVIS Resource Partner  
On Behalf of Consumer Education & Research Centre,**  
507-8, 5th Floor Sakar II Building, End of Ellisbridge, B/H  
Ellisbridge ShoppingCentre, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad  
- 380 006, Gujarat, India. Phone : 079 68181600/28/29

 [cerc-env@nic.in](mailto:cerc-env@nic.in), [cerc@cercindia.org](mailto:cerc@cercindia.org)

 [www.cercenvis.nic.in](http://www.cercenvis.nic.in)

 @EcoProductsEcoLabeling

 @cerc\_envis

 @CERC - ENVIS

**Write to us: We value your views and suggestions. Please send your feedback on this issue. We would also like to invite your contributions on the Eco Product and Eco Labelling.**

#### Disclaimer

**The material used in this newsletter does not necessarily represent the views of CERC or ENVIS. The images provided in the publication are intended solely to provide information from secondary sources.**

#### Printing

Print Express, Ahmedabad.