

Three reasons for eco-label failure

The fisheries industry promotes third-party eco-labels that signify sustainability, similar to those used in forestry and tourism (see *Nature* <http://doi.org/nb5>; 2013). In my view, these fail for three reasons.

First, consumers care strongly that labels for health and quality standards are accurate because they affect individuals, but care much less about eco-labels because their effects are spread across society.

Second, industries tend to use weak eco-labels in political games to avoid strong regulation.

Third, ineffective eco-labels closely mimic accurate ones. Because there are no adverse consequences for consumers who cannot tell them apart, a high proportion of mimics persists.

Eco-labels are thus no substitute for eco-laws.

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