



LEONARDO ECOCOMPTE PROJECT

CONTENTO TRADE SRL

Technological innovation for the environment

95 - 1414

01.12.95–28.02.97

Information and eco-accountancy tools for the training of new environmental minded professionals in the building and food farming industries



BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Partners:

AISCRIS, Rome, Italy
R.S. & F., Catanzaro, Italy
Team, Genova, Italy
Contento Trade, Campoformido (UD), Italy
Amici Della Terra, Rome, Italy
Les Amis de la Terre de Cornuallie, Quimper, France
Freunde der Erde, Vienna, Austria
Franci Interproduction, Rome, Italy
Università di Pavia, Pavia, Italy
Greek Industrial Federation, Athens, Greece
WTD, Pinerolo (TO), Italy

Objectives:

The project aims to offer a formative experience which could be introduced in Internet, to spread the knowledge about a new instrument for the environmental evaluation of consumption products: the eco-balance.

It includes:

Three operating phases which are linked to the formative data processing; the following evaluation of the final result; then, the project concerns the training of new professional figures in the environmental sector, who could be able to use the eco-balance to test the endurableness of productive activities of the firms in building and agricultural industry.

OBJECTIVES:

Ecocompte main objective is the propagation, through the implementation of a multimedia training/action system, of an innovative professional profile: Expert in Environmental Auditing and Balance for job-placement in consulting companies as well as directly employed by enterprises in the building and agricultural industries.



The Ecoconte project was divided into three operative phases:

- ✓ preparation of formative data;
- ✓ transformation of the data in a informatics support;
- ✓ evaluation of the final product.

The potential users have been involved in the project at different levels:

- ✓ in the starting phase as "conductors" of the project towards specific products;
- ✓ in the middle phase as evaluators of the project through Internet;
- ✓ in the final phase as users of an optimized service.

The obtained results, considering the recorded visits on the site and the e-mails received by the partners, are without doubt really flattering.

Special importance has been given to enhancing awareness of the Italian enterprises working in the industrial sector more involved in the project (building and food farming sectors) through contacts with the Trade Association.

STATE OF THE ART

The interactions between economic activities and environment can cause the following problems:

- ✓ deep changes in local ecosystems
- ✓ changes in global ecosystems (climate, sea, air quality, forests, etc)
- ✓ excessive use of non-renewable natural resources
- ✓ excessive use of toxic and harmful materials
- ✓ lack of homogeneous policies among different countries
- ✓ increased socio-economic gap among north and south

This situation raised public consciousness of the risks for the quality of life and human health deriving from an ill-planned development; companies are then required to implement correct environmental policies.

Recently the concept "sustainable development" has been imposed; it should meet the needs of all population, without compromising the future of the rising generations. This concept is backed in the action plan adopted at Rio Earth Summit (1992) held on environment and development. The 5th Political and Action Program for the Environment and Sustainable Development (1993) promoted by EU falls in the same context.



The new approach to the environment/industry relationship is based on some fundamental points:

- ✓ improvement of resources management;
- ✓ development of technical regulation by the EU that are more specifically focused on production processes and products, based on environmental impact reduction;
- ✓ increased information to the consumers;
- ✓ raising public trust in production activities transparent about environmental issues

A valuable guideline for the industries is offered by the European Group of Friends of Earth, which has identified a medium/long term scenario for reducing the use of natural resources and have indicated the change needed for the production system: at present the implementation of this guideline is almost exclusively voluntary.

MAIN INNOVATIONS

The main innovation of the project consists on the training of new environmental minded professionals, able to utilize the eco-balance to verify the sustainability of the production activities of the building and food farming industry.

The eco-balance is an essential tool to reach the above mentioned objectives as well as a first tool to check the company will to tackle environmental issues both internally (change in company organization processes and systems) and with regard to its relationship with the society and the global environment.

The eco-balance is a structured method to define input and output flows of resources, raw materials, energy, final products and wastes used and needed during a specific process and for a specific period of time.

It is based on three fundamental elements of the company organization, as:

- ✓ overall organization (company eco-balance)
- ✓ process organization (process eco-balance)
- ✓ product organization (product eco-balance).



RESULTS OBTAINED

The general aim of the project has been achieved implementing an educational "exercise" to be put in an Internet site, to spread out the knowledge of new instrument for the evaluation of consumables: the eco-balance.

The educational "exercise" has been at first developed by computer and then made available with a divulgation Internet site. The Ecocompte site (http://www.fita.it/eco_dida.html) contains several pages html, documents Word and Excel and some links.

The first part of the site consists on a theoretical excursus and some guidelines to understand the eco-balance management and its usefulness for companies and environment.

The second part give some theory and practice elements necessary to carry out an eco-balance. This part has been enclosed with a bibliographic section and some links. This part has been enclosed with a bibliographic section and some links.

The third part, the most important, shows some case studies of eco-balances carried out on some products. The documents regarding building (brick) or food farming industry (beer, pears, apples, peaches). There is also a summary of an eco-balance developed on the peach processing industry.

MARKET PERSPECTIVES

Since the product of this project is for free distribution there is no need for any study for its marketing. The product is free for environmental operators, willing to acquire knowledge about the eco-balance, for the evaluation of the environmental impact linked to the whole life cycle of a product.

The treated case studies concern mainly the food farming and building sector so also the people employed in these fields are potentially interested in the product proposed as a way for the evaluation of their own producing processes.

Possible users of the product are Internet users too, who through the educational exercise developed can verify the potential environmental improvement deriving from the exploitation of this new instruments.