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BSI Standards Publication

Ethical claims and supporting information — Principles and requirements

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National foreword

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents) or the IEC list of patent declarations received (see <http://patents.iec.ch>).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by the ISO Committee on Conformity Assessment (CASCO), in collaboration with the ISO Committee on Consumer Policy (COPOLCO).

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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Introduction

Ethical claims are being made increasingly often in the marketplace. They cover a wide range of issues relating to environmental sustainability, social and economic justice and animal welfare, among others. This corresponds to increased societal interest in the ethical aspects of organizations, their products and services and supply chains.

Ethical claims can be declared by manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers or anyone else likely to benefit from such claims. These claims can take the form of statements, symbols or graphics on product or package labels, or in product literature, technical bulletins, advertising, publicity, telemarketing, as well as digital or electronic media, such as the Internet.

The situation is complex — ethical claims vary in scope as they can be single-issue or cover a variety of topics. Some ethical claims are declared individually outside specified programmes whereas others are declared according to a programme, which is overseen by an operating entity. There are also many different communication channels and variations in geographical coverage and types of recognition.

An increasing number of relevant standards and assessment methodologies exist. However, the subject is complicated by there being different individual views about what is ethical and therefore this document does not define ethical behaviour.

The proliferation of ethical claims has led to confusion in the marketplace, particularly where terms are used that are insufficiently or inconsistently defined, and where the scope of a claim, the basis of conformance or method of verification is unclear.

It is important that ethical claims are accurate and not misleading to avoid negative market effects such as trade barriers or unfair competition. The evaluation used by those who make ethical claims needs to be clear, transparent and documented so that those who purchase or can potentially purchase, use or dispose of products can be assured of the reliability of the claims.

This document is intended to facilitate the communication of accurate, credible and verifiable information about the ethical aspects of a product, process, service or organization. It is relevant for the creation of new claims, the improvement of existing claims, and to assist users in understanding claims already in the market place.

In this document, the following verbal forms are used:

- “shall” indicates a requirement;
- “should” indicates a recommendation;
- “may” indicates a permission;
- “can” indicates a possibility or a capability.

Further details can be found in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

For the purposes of research, users are encouraged to share their views on this document and their priorities for changes to future editions. Click on the link below to take part in the online survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SQYJVDJ>

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Ethical claims and supporting information — Principles and requirements

1 Scope

This document contains principles and requirements for developing and declaring ethical claims and for providing supporting information, where specific standards have not been developed, or to supplement existing standards.

This document is intended for use by all types of organizations and is applicable to all types of ethical claims relating to a product, process, service or organization.

This document can also be used by those seeking a better understanding of ethical claims and their use. This document can support the development of programmes for aspect-specific and sector-specific ethical claims.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

ethical claim

statement, symbol or graphic that declares one or more ethical aspect of a product, process, service or organization

Note 1 to entry: An ethical claim can take the form of a statement, symbol or graphic on a product or package label, in product literature, in technical bulletins, in advertising or in publicity, amongst other things.

Note 2 to entry: Ethical claims can be declared by persons or organizations such as producers, manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers or communities.

Note 3 to entry: Ethical aspects can include a broad range of social, economic justice and sustainability issues, e.g. local sourcing, fair trade, humane treatment of animals. Many ethical aspects are described in international documents and programmes identified in the Bibliography.

3.2

explanatory statement

explanation which is needed or given so that an *ethical claim* (3.1) can be properly understood by a user or potential user of the product

[SOURCE: ISO 14021:2016, 3.1.7, modified — The words “environmental claim” have been replaced with “ethical claim” and the words “purchaser, potential purchaser or user” have been replaced with “user or potential user”.]