

Closing remarks made by Mr Bernardo Hernández Bataller at European Consumer Day 2005:

In all the different statements made throughout European Consumer Day, one viewpoint has been consistently upheld: the model of production and consumption of products and services in developed societies should adhere to the principles of sustainability, in order to conserve fundamental natural resources for future generations.

The actions to be undertaken must achieve the following objectives at least:

1. The promotion of sustainable products and services:

An ongoing effort on the part of the organisations that develop and provide these products and services is necessary in order to render them evermore compatible with the principle of sustainable development. Only in this way can we enjoy stable and lasting economic growth which:

- encourages ongoing development of evermore environmentally-friendly products and services, with the aim of permanently eliminating any harmful impact of the production and subsequent use of these products and services on the environment.
- promotes research and innovation aimed at providing society with more sustainable products and services.
- nurtures “different consumption” based on the manufacture of different products and services, tying products to concrete targets designed to reduce the overall effects of their manufacture and use on CO2 emissions for example.

2. The promotion of new shopping habits:

A change in social habits and individual behaviour must also be encouraged, to promote the consumption of more sustainable products and services, making the general public more responsible and demanding with regard to the sustainability of goods and services consumed.

Specifically, this should be applied in the following ways:

- all consumers should have access to comprehensive, reliable, up-to-date and clear information on the environmental impact of all products and services.
- since information alone will not trigger behavioural change, any action necessary to bring about such change should be promoted: training, publicity etc., in order to achieve a critical mass of environmentally responsible consumers, rather than a limited number of highly motivated environmental consumers, as at present.

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3. The participation of all stakeholders:

The involvement of all social players is essential in promoting a fairer society that respects the environment and guarantees the quality of life necessary to future generations.

Sustainable consumption is not only the responsibility of manufacturers and consumers. The whole of society plays a part and every social player has much to contribute; individual efforts are not enough and the establishment of civic coalitions sharing ideas, objectives and activities is necessary. The use of the *social instruments* offered by society should be encouraged.

The use of *economic instruments* (tax reforms to increase the relative price of products harmful to the environment, subsidies to final consumers of renewable energies) should also be promoted.

The use of *legal instruments* (legislation aimed at increasing the availability of environmentally friendly products, strict rules on the labelling of products etc.) should also be encouraged.

Finally, cooperation between all stakeholders should be fostered through the exchange of information, the establishment, development and monitoring of voluntary agreements, joint activities and codes of good practice, public information and participation. This should go further than established EU and national environmental and consumer law, providing for public information, participation and access to justice in environmental issues.
