

Article from "Appliance Efficiency", the Newsletter of IDEA, the International Network for Domestic Energy-Efficient Appliances, volume 4, issue 2, 2000

Latin American standards and labelling initiative

Government representatives and experts from all over Latin America met in Mexico City on 10-11 August at a regional workshop to discuss appliance energy efficiency standards and labelling.

A total of 36 government representatives and experts from 15 Latin American and Caribbean countries took up the invitation of the Collaborative Labelling and Appliance Standards Program (CLASP), the Mexican National Commission for Energy Conservation (CONAE), the Climate Technology Initiative (CTI) of the International Energy Agency (IEA) and other international organisations to discuss the state of appliance energy standards and labelling in Latin America. CLASP, the main initiator of the workshop, is a consortium of energy efficiency advocacy agencies that aims to promote standards and labelling programmes world-wide. Several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, notably Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela, are pioneers in the field of standards and labelling, while others, such as Argentina, Colombia, Jamaica and Peru, have taken steps in this area. Argentina, for example, has prepared specific legislation to introduce energy efficiency labelling from 2001. However, many issues still need to be resolved – of an institutional and political nature as well as technological. The workshop identified free trade as potentially an important catalyst for the harmonisation of standards and labelling schemes on a regional basis. Furthermore, the lack of social welfare and the low purchasing power of large parts of the population make the development of socially compatible standards and labelling schemes an imperative.

CONAE and its Mexican partner organisations made the strong point that standards and labelling need to be based on appropriate legislation, institutions and procedures. In particular they should be supported by a well-established infrastructure of standardisation, certification and accreditation of test facilities. The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) emphasised the specific Latin American context, and the Latin American Energy Organisation, OLADE, presented a blueprint for regionally integrated standards and labelling schemes.

Ultimately, the success of the workshop was due to the contributions from and the lively discussions among the participants from Latin American countries. The workshop is the basis for a continuing dialogue on standards and labelling programmes within the Western hemisphere and also with other member countries of the IEA, notably European countries. CTI and CLASP will join forces in organising another workshop on the same topic in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The initiatives of both CLASP and CTI are aimed at 'paving the way' for the further development and implementation of standards and labelling programmes in one of the most dynamic regions of the world.

Wolfgang Lutz is an independent consultant and Director of Energy Strategies for Sustainable Development.

E-mail: wflutz@energy-strategies.org, www.energy-strategies.org

For more information, see www.clasponline.org, www.climatetech.net