



13-14 November 2025

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSUMER PROTECTION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE TRUTHFULNESS OF "ECO," "BIO," AND "GREEN" LABELS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ROMANIAN MARKET

Diana MARIN ¹

¹University of Life Sciences "King Michael I", Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Timisoara

Abstract: The paper examines the authenticity and effectiveness of the "eco," "bio," and "green" labels on the Romanian market by analyzing the legislative framework, certification mechanisms, and consumers' level of awareness. Using a mixed methodology (legislative analysis, literature review, content analysis of labels, and case studies of representative products), we identify regulatory gaps, risks of greenwashing, and propose practical recommendations for authorities, certification bodies, retailers, and consumers.

• Introduction

- In 2024, Romania had over 18,000 registered organic farmers (compared to approximately 9,800 in 2016), representing an increase of over 80% in the last eight years.
- The total certified organic area reached approximately 600,000 ha, or about 4.5% of the country's total agricultural land.
- The market value of organic products in Romania was estimated at over €180 million in 2024, growing steadily but still well below the European average (where average per capita consumption exceeds €80/year, compared to €10–15/year in Romania).
- Risk of greenwashing: Products that use green colors, leaves, eco symbols, or vague expressions can mislead consumers if there is no clear certification. Examples of problematic practices include the use of the terms "natural" or "eco" on products that contain conventional ingredients without certification.
- Role of authorities: There is a legal framework for sanctioning misleading claims, but controls are not always exhaustive; the lack of harmonization of private labels complicates monitoring.

• Results and discussions

- Prevalence of voluntary and private labels: There are numerous private or international labels present on the Romanian market (e.g., ECO LABEL, various private certificates). These vary in rigor; some are accredited according to international standards (ISO 14024), while others are less transparent.
- Consumer perception: The average level of information is variable; many consumers automatically associate green labels with "sustainability" without checking the type of certification. Consumer education is crucial.

Conclusions

On the Romanian market, regulated "bio"/"organic" labels offer a high level of confidence for consumers; however, the terms "eco" and "green" often remain ambiguous and subject to marketing abuse. To protect the eco-conscious consumer and support true sustainability, measures are needed to increase transparency, harmonize certification schemes, and inform the public.