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10.10.08 CERTIFICATION LABELS TO RATIONALIZE: COOP

An expert from a leading Swiss supermarket chain is predicting a major rationalization of the existing sustainable labelling schemes.

The head of quality assurance and sustainability at COOP Switzerland, Sibyl Anwander, said this would make purchasing decisions easier for both consumers and retailers, in an interview at the World Export Development Forum today.

Those labels likely to go are the ones unable to support their credentials with a strong communication campaign.

Despite the expected consolidation, confusion may remain as new issues are emerging, such as dealing with climate change by reducing carbon emissions, or measuring the “water footprint” of products, said Ms Anwander.

“As water usage becomes more important, this will become an important indicator.”

Ms Anwander said governments could help improve sustainability by providing technical assistance to producers to help them meet certification standards, but should not intervene in the rating or definition of different labels in the sustainability movement.

“That really is the role of the NGOs and the consumer organizations,” Ms Anwander said.

Ms Anwander is expecting all aspects of sustainability combined into a single label.

WEDF – one of the most influential forums for discussion of trade issues in the developing world – is organized every year by the Geneva-based International Trade Centre (ITC).

www.intracen.org/wedf

For more information:
Contact: Natalie Domeisen
Chief
Communications and Events
P: +41 22 730 0370
M: +41 79 239 1825
E: domeisen@intracen.org

