

Major and recurring concerns/ issues were:

- Will promotion of codes and labels encourage people to think of these mechanisms as solutions to problems, and to neglect other critical avenues for poverty alleviation, protection of human rights and promotion of sustainable development? Or do codes and labels function as “signal flares” which engage consumers and companies in effective responses to problems in limited areas, and at the same time illuminate and encourage action on the underlying causes of denial of labour rights or child labour? What educational resources are required, and who will provide them, so that consumers and companies move beyond a “clean hands” approach to labels, and engage more fully in the issues as citizens?
- Will market-based approaches reinforce attitudes that governments can’t do anything in the face of capital mobility, and that the only realm we have for action is as consumers? What is or could be the relationship between codes / labelling systems and government responsibility? Is it reasonable to hope that codes can or will “provoke the state rather than replace the state”? Are there ways in which governments could provide incentives and penalties to encourage the development of codes and the use of labels?
- What are the requirements of effective monitoring, so that codes of conduct and labelling systems are not only make claims which consumers and the public can trust to be credible, but also contribute to the empowerment of workers and other organizations of civil society? What is the role of professional auditing firms on the one hand, and human rights groups and other NGOs on the other? What is the role of unions in relation to codes and labelling systems, e.g. what is their role in monitoring?; might unions in some cases be displaced by monitoring organizations?
- What priority do we give to the involvement in the development of codes (both standard-development and monitoring systems) of civil society organizations from both South and North? (The Forest Stewardship Council was acknowledged to provide an important model for North-South relations in the development of its label.)
- How do we encourage the development of codes and labels that are effective because they address issues specific to certain sectors of the economy or countries, without ending up with a confusing proliferation? What will be the impact on Canada of the more developed code initiatives in the United Kingdom, Europe and the U.S. ? Will there be a “spillover” of advertising of codes and labels which do not suit the Canadian context or meet our criteria? Could we develop an all-encompassing framework— an “all-mark”? Should we seek the use of a single set of basic principles, e.g. the ILO core labour rights?
- How should codes and labelling systems be financed? Should preference be given to labelling systems which generate market-based contributions to development (as in Rugmark and Fair TradeMark)? What is the market for labels on products if the label