

**Oral Testimony of the American National Standards Institute**

**before the  
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection**

**Hearing: “It’s Too Easy Being Green: Defining Fair Green Marketing Practices”**

**Testimony on Standards and Conformity Assessment-Based Solutions for Sustainability**

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Statement of

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Thank you, Chairman Rush. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Scott Cooper and I am vice president of government relations at the American National Standards Institute.

For more than ninety years, ANSI has served as coordinator of this nation’s private-sector led and public sector-supported voluntary consensus standards and conformity assessment system. Comprised of government agencies, companies, trade associations, professional societies, and consumer groups, ANSI represents the interests of more than 125,000 organizations and 3.5 million professionals worldwide.

Today’s consumer is shopping with sustainability in mind, placing ever-increasing value on the environmental and societal aspects of product design, manufacture, distribution, use, and disposal. Where consumers see value in “going green,” there is a competitive advantage to those companies that can supply environmentally sustainable products. But where an advantage can be perceived, there will be those who want to “game” the system. We need to ensure the credibility and consistency of environmental claims, and so I commend you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing.

By collaborating across industry sectors, we can build upon some of the excellent standards and compliance programs that are already in use in the marketplace, identify gaps where new solutions will help, and start building consensus through a partnership between the public and private sectors.

In early April, ANSI took the first step and organized a *Workshop Toward Product Standards for Sustainability* in Arlington. Convened at the request of one of our members – the U.S. EPA – the workshop was attended by over 240 in-person participants and over 100 more via a live webinar. Representatives from multiple U.S. government agencies, companies, retailers, trade associations, standards developers, and consumer groups were on hand to join the discussion.

In the coming weeks, we expect to release the final workshop report which will detail the discussions and recommendations that came out of that meeting. In the meantime, I'd like to share a few of the messages that we heard from attendees.

First, consistent and globally accepted terminology tops the list of needs. Until there is consensus, terms like “attribute” and “certification” may be interpreted differently by consumers, standards developers, government, and industry.

Second, standards should be clearly written so they can be effectively used for reliable certification. The marketplace needs claims that can be substantiated so consumers can reward good performance with their purchasing power.

And finally, participants saw a clear need for an overarching body that will coordinate and guide the process going forward with input from the public and private sectors.

As part of our mission, ANSI is proud to facilitate problem-solving through public-private partnerships. The *Workshop* is just the latest example of ANSI's many issue-driven coordination activities, which have included partnerships to enable standards and compliance-based solutions with:

- HHS on urgent healthcare information technology aspects of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*,
- CPSC on toy safety,
- EPA on water conservation, and
- DoE and NIST on the deployment of new nuclear power plants, to name just a few examples.

As the voice of the U.S. standards and conformity assessment system, ANSI is actively engaged in accrediting programs that assess conformance to standards for a number of different industries. There are many conformity assessment activities applied in today's marketplace including accreditation, certification, inspection, registration, supplier's declaration, and testing. As an independent, third-party process, ANSI accreditation helps to promote best

industry practices while reducing the need for government agencies to individually monitor conformity assessment organizations.

The Institute currently offers accreditation services for a variety of conformity assessments that are directly related to sustainable products and practices, including:

- greenhouse gas emissions,
- sustainable forestry,
- environmental management systems, and
- food and agriculture.

Third-party accreditation demonstrates conformance, verifies competence, and strengthens consumer confidence in products, people, and services. We feel strongly that it has an important role to play in the success and credibility of environmental labeling efforts.

Mr. Chairman . . . members of this Committee . . . I think we all agree that labels and communications to consumers about the degree to which products, people, and services address sustainability concerns need to be uniform, transparent, and comprehensible.

In order to make this vision a reality . . .

- We need to make more efficient use of the standards and conformance resources that are already in place . . . and we need to identify every gap that exists.
- We also need to bring to bear new human and financial resources that can strengthen existing systems while satisfying future needs.

Government and industry need to work at a single purpose if we are to define fair green marketing practices.

ANSI stands ready to coordinate the public-private partnership and take the next step toward a meaningful solution to the challenges associated with standards and compliance programs that address the environmental and social impacts of products.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

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