

To live at the expense of others – what is the actual scale of these costs?



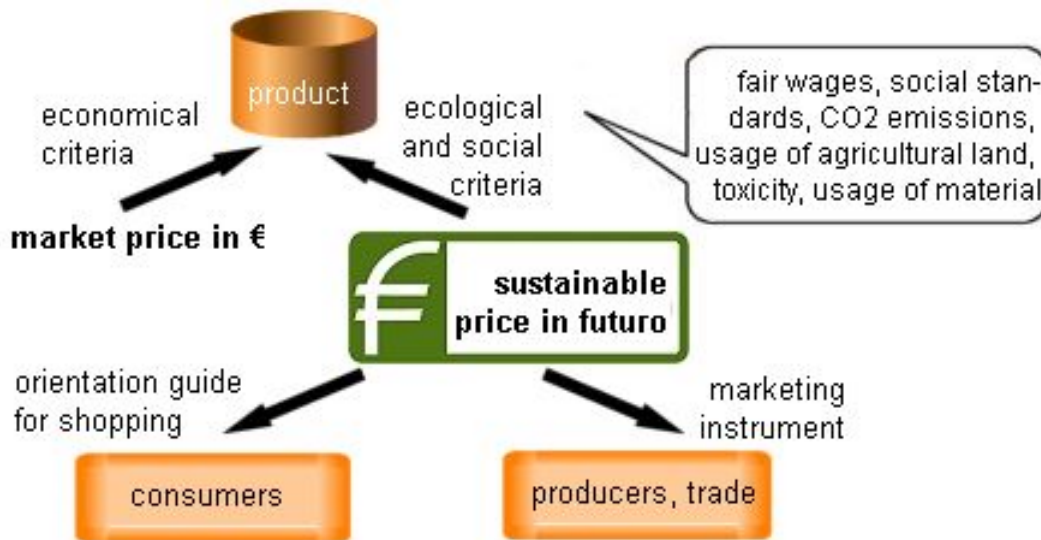
The project "futuro" calculates "sustainable prices" for products (started 2001)

Individuals get more and more concerned about quality of goods (especially food) and services, but they have little means by which to judge the ecological and social impact of production, transport, use and disposal of goods and services. There are some established eco-labels, for example the Austrian "Umweltzeichen", that signify some goods as "better" than others. But they don't answer questions like "how much better", which would allow for price-like comparisons – a well-established habit in shopping.

The project futuro aims to label goods with their "true" (sustainable) prices. These sustainable prices should be able to reflect the scope of sustainability (i.e. social and ecological) and to allow for comparisons between different types of products (where eco-labels only provide a sort of ranking of products of the same type from different producers). In this sense the sustainable prices are meant to build an orientation guide for consumers.

So far the algorithm to calculate sustainable prices includes the following sustainability criteria: "fair wages", "social standards", "CO₂ emissions", "usage of agricultural land", "toxicity" and "usage of material". The sustainable price of a product consists of the objective characteristics of the product (e.g. wage unfairness or CO₂ emissions during the production) and the democratically evaluated impact of each sustainability criterion.

The higher the sustainable price of a product, the less sustainable is the product. While the market price measured in € is paid by the consumers, the sustainable price given in f is a fictitious extra charge, which considers sustainability and should be added on top of the market price.



In 2001 a research was carried out to find out about similar initiatives.

In 2002 participative steps to determine the sustainability criteria to be included in the sustainable price were taken.

In 2003, in co-operation with scientists, the calculation methods were finished and applied and demonstrated on first products: apple- and orange-juice.

In 2004 T-Shirts are under evaluation.

In the following years the algorithm has to be fine-tuned, more products shall be evaluated, and special workshops will spread the idea and involve more people in the process.

www.futuro-preise.at/preise/