



PART 2

Read the text below and answer questions 14–26.

NAVIGATING THE GREEN MARKETPLACE: LABELS, LOGISTICS, AND IMPACT

A

Ethical shopping is often portrayed as a simple act of choosing the “right” product, yet the green marketplace is a system of compressed signals. Labels and badges reduce long, multi-country supply chains to a small symbol, and marketing turns complex environmental trade-offs into a single claim that can be read in seconds. This compression interacts with information asymmetry: producers know far more about production and transport than shoppers do, while consumers are expected to infer impact from limited cues. As a result, ethical purchasing can drift toward moral reassurance—feeling virtuous—unless it is anchored in measurable outcomes and a realistic account of what labels can and cannot represent.

B

Eco-labels differ not only in strictness but in what they treat as relevant. Some certify a single dimension, such as organic farming practices or sustainable forestry, while others attempt multi-criteria scoring across carbon, water, chemicals, and waste. Even within one category, standards diverge: one scheme may focus on farm inputs yet ignore packaging, and another may weigh energy use heavily while leaving labour conditions outside its scope. Because many schemes define boundaries differently, two “certified” products can be certified for non-comparable reasons. In practice, consumers may read a label as a general endorsement when it is actually a narrow statement about one stage in a product’s lifecycle.

C

Verification is frequently the weak point. In principle, third-party audits, supplier inspections, and chain-of-custody documentation are designed to ensure that claims track reality. In practice, auditing quality varies, fraud exists, and long supply chains create opportunities for paperwork compliance without behavioural change. Subcontracting can obscure responsibility, and documentation can be generated to satisfy requirements while practices on the ground remain unchanged. Digital traceability platforms—QR-linked records, batch tracking, and sensor-based monitoring—can improve visibility, but they are unevenly adopted and can be expensive for smaller suppliers. Moreover, traceability does not automatically mean accountability: data can be incomplete, and enforcement can be weak if incentives favour speed and low cost.



D

Logistics complicate impact in ways that labels rarely capture well. A product with relatively low-impact production can still carry high emissions if it is transported through inefficient routes or shipped by air to meet fast retail cycles. Conversely, “local” goods are not automatically greener if their production is energy-intensive or relies on carbon-heavy inputs. Comparing two products therefore requires a lifecycle perspective rather than a single appealing attribute. Tools such as Lifecycle Assessment (LCA) attempt to quantify impacts across extraction, manufacture, transport, use, and disposal, but results depend on assumptions about boundaries, data quality, and what counts as a meaningful unit of comparison. In other words, carbon intensity can shift from farm or factory to the transport system—and consumers may never see that shift on the label.

E

This complexity encourages simplification in branding and creates fertile conditions for greenwashing. Companies may highlight one visible improvement—recycled packaging, a tree-planting pledge, a “net-zero pathway”—while the underlying business model remains resource-intensive. Vague terms such as “eco-friendly” can be used without disclosing metrics, and selective reporting can make incremental changes look transformational. Regulatory fragmentation worsens this problem. When definitions and enforcement vary across jurisdictions, firms can choose the least demanding interpretation while still presenting claims as comparable. Some regulators have begun to target misleading environmental claims and require clearer disclosure, but enforcement remains inconsistent, and the burden of interpretation often falls back on consumers.

F

At the point of purchase, shoppers confront cognitive overload. Comparing standards, interpreting claims, and estimating hidden impacts is difficult under time pressure, especially when labels are numerous and unfamiliar. Many consumers therefore rely on trusted heuristics: a handful of well-known labels, a retailer ranking, or a simplified “good/better/best” shelf marker. Others disengage entirely, concluding that the system is too confusing to navigate or that individual choice is too small to matter. The result is uneven decision-making, where those with more time, education, and disposable income can treat ethical shopping as a sustained practice, while others experience it as an unrealistic demand layered on top of everyday constraints.

G

Better information does not automatically produce better outcomes, because markets respond to price. When certified options cost more, ethical consumerism can divide into a premium segment for wealthier households and a lower-cost segment for everyone else,



turning ethics into a status signal rather than a broad environmental solution. For this reason, many researchers argue that the green marketplace works best when consumer choice is supported by policy and infrastructure. Standardised definitions, penalties for misleading claims, and disclosure rules can reduce confusion, while investments in low-carbon shipping, recycling systems, and renewable energy reduce impacts across the whole market—not only for premium products. Ultimately, labels are tools rather than outcomes: meaningful change is most likely when information, logistics, and regulation align so that individual decisions add up to measurable improvements.

Questions 14–18

Which paragraph contains the following information? Choose the correct letter, **A–G**. **NB** You may use any letter more than once.

- 14** The idea that some shoppers stop trying to evaluate ethical claims because the decision environment becomes mentally unmanageable.
- 15** The point that paperwork and auditing can appear compliant even when real practices have not changed, especially in long subcontracted chains.
- 16** The argument that the widest benefits occur when policy rules and infrastructure improvements support consumer information, rather than relying on premium choices.
- 17** The explanation that certification schemes may address only certain stages or criteria, leaving other impacts outside the boundary of what is assessed.
- 18** The view that transport choices can outweigh “clean” production, and that “local” is not automatically low-impact.

Questions 19–22

Select the correct answer.

- 19** Why does the passage suggest that eco-labels can be difficult to compare directly?
 - A** Because they usually forbid any mention of packaging or transport
 - B** Because most labels measure only labour conditions and ignore environmental criteria
 - C** Because different schemes set different boundaries and priorities for what counts as “ethical”
 - D** Because all labels are audited to the same standard, making differences meaningless
- 20** What limitation of digital traceability tools is highlighted in the passage?
 - A** They may be costly and unevenly adopted, and visibility does not guarantee accountability



- B** They eliminate the need for audits by proving impact automatically
- C** They work only for very short supply chains within one country
- D** They prevent fraud entirely by making paperwork impossible to fabricate

21 According to the passage, why does greenwashing persist in the marketplace?

- A** Because lifecycle tools have removed uncertainty from environmental comparisons
- B** Because consumers refuse to use labels and demand only detailed technical reports
- C** Because regulators have already standardised environmental definitions globally
- D** Because marketing can simplify complex trade-offs while enforcement and definitions vary across places

22 What is presented as the most effective way to reduce impacts across the whole market?

- A** Encouraging consumers to memorise competing standards at checkout
- B** Combining clearer rules with infrastructure that lowers the baseline impact of products
- C** Replacing multi-criteria labels with schemes that assess only one issue
- D** Treating “local” as the primary indicator of sustainability regardless of production methods

Questions 23–26

Complete the sentences below. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the text for each answer.

23 The passage states that suppliers may appear compliant through chain-of-custody even when practices do not improve.

24 The text notes that a product’s may shift from production to transport systems depending on logistics.

25 The passage argues that inconsistent enforcement across jurisdictions creates

26 Other consumers may entirely when they conclude that the system is too confusing to navigate.

Answer Key

14. F

15. C

16. G



17. B

18. D

19. C

20. A

21. D

22. B

23. documentation

24. carbon intensity

25. regulatory fragmentation

26. disengage