



# Home decoration & home textiles

## Insights and forecasts on key European market dynamics

This trend mapping document discusses four main directions in the home decoration and home textiles sectors, covering the social and economic environment that leads to actions at many levels in the value chain. Direction I describes the European citizens' search for identity and his or her need to express that identity. The second direction is the increase in differentiated marketing, reflecting the rapid appearance of new niche markets. The third direction discusses the ongoing development of conscious consumption. Direction IV is the rebalancing of the global market and encompasses the changing political and economic role of Europe. Insight into these four directions can be directly applied to product development.

## DIRECTION I : IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF "ME TIME"

### Essential consumption

As mature market consumers, Europeans are investing their identity in their purchases for the home. Part of this trend includes an awareness and appreciation of the core values of the product: its design, materials and techniques.

Items bought by this consumer are well considered, essential, and meaningful to him/her. He/she favours authentic, sustainable products with supreme performance and design and a lasting appeal, which contribute to his/her health or well-being.

### New skills & experiences are the new luxury

Growing numbers of consumers are no longer (solely) obsessed with owning the traditional status symbols – they have gone beyond 'bling'. The 'new luxury' is all about unique experiences, acquiring new skills, possessing eco-credentials, and showing your generosity or connectivity. The consumer derives status and pleasure from mastering cooking skills, 'curating' the living room, enjoying a Spa at home that rivals the one he or she enjoyed on Bali, or celebrating Eid with the neighbours. He or she is looking for products that increase his/her knowledge, add meaning and significance to his/her experiences and contribute to the development of his/her inner quest.

### Look at me

Some consumers attain status by impressing an appreciative audience with their knowledge, experience or broad-mindedness. However sincere the quest for identity, this consumer is seeking recognition and admiration. The new Spa area will be shown to all – live or on Facebook, dinner with friends turns into a 'co-creation' session, and the home will be decorated for Christmas from roof to toilet – just to be on top of the heap. Especially for younger consumers, participation is the new consumption. With new technologies, everybody can become a designer, using the home or website as a platform. Brands that help consumers develop skills and create output will be in demand.

Focusing on the 'I' can also lead to narcissism, hedonism and escapism. Examples of this include playing the 'master chef' at home, buying top-of-the range pots and pans to impress, or cluttering the home with items that take the consumer to an imaginary Christmas world. Products encompass or show off a person's values concerning sustainability.

### A moment for myself and/or "Me Time"

The home is also a place for retreating, recharging, relaxing, and life off-line. This trend refers to the moments away from the constant stimuli from the outside world, being able to ignore the rigours of the commitments a person may have: as a parent, or an employee, a member of the community. Western citizens are learning to become more aware of their spiritual well-being, the importance of a healthy body and mind, and of finding a personal balance. A moment for myself at home can take the shape of enjoying a favourite hobby, lazing in the bath, being with one's immediate family, or being in one's own personal space. Spaces within the home are becoming more flexible in order to cater for moments of interaction or disengagement, with flexible furniture, attention to natural materials and elements (e.g. flowers) and soothing fragrances.



Identity-driven consumerism also creates the need for products that offer new physical, spiritual and learning experiences, and moments of introspection.

Items bought by this consumer are well considered, essential, and meaningful to him/her. He/she favours authentic, sustainable products with supreme performance and design and a lasting appeal, which contribute to his/her health or well-being. The social changes (drivers) described above also affect the buying behaviour of consumers and, in turn, the products. These consumer and product trends can be divided into four main themes –master chef, pampering/wellness, showing and sharing, and celebration – as described overleaf.

## Master chef: experiences and skills are the new status and Look at Me

### Consumer trends

- Due to the economic downturn, consumers now have a revived interest in home cooking, nutrition and health, combined with the movement towards sourcing food locally, has also increased the focus on home-prepared meals. Sharing the cooking experience and the resulting dishes is seen as an integral part of bonding.
- New status symbols in Western society are less about one's material well-being (owning luxury goods) and more about showing and sharing one's newly acquired skills. Amateur home cooks are now presenting themselves to their family and friends as 'master chefs', taking centre stage with their new cooking islands, and using professional quality kitchenware (durability, energy/space saver, ergonomic, 'glam' kitchen tools etc.).
- Cooking has become a hobby (e.g. baking cupcakes), which is why cookware and bakeware are considered as nice gifts for any occasion.
- The busy life styles of families with children (social commitments, homework and hobbies for kids) often leaves them little time to enjoy preparing and cooking extensively. Therefore, they are often focused on convenient solutions that speed up home cooking and maintain a healthy lifestyle at the same time.

In a category that is largely hi-tech and industrially made, hand-made is hot. Kitchen- and serveware that is hand-woven or hand-carved, or adds a hand-made finish to an industrially produced item, catches the attention.

### Trends at product level

- Cooking utensils and tableware, which are already at a high level of functionality, are now also becoming highly decorative (e.g. good-looking kitchen machines).
- More attention is being paid to the presentation. Putting cookware (pans, oven dishes and even blenders) on the table is fine; they are no longer left behind in the kitchen, provided their design is great. Electrical kitchen tools are getting well styled and can be found on the dining table.

### Considerations for action:

- Since products are in contact with food, pay extra attention to health and safety requirements.
- Understand what the target country's food culture is like before targeting that market.
- Consider your strategic options in range development and positioning. If your specialisation is processing one or more wood types, for instance, consider marketing complete tableware concepts in wood, including salad sets, trivets, bowls and plates, pestles and mortars, etc. If your focus is more product-oriented, such as cutlery, you could expand your line using different materials, or move into different segments (e.g. by play with price points).
- Offer choice - consumers want to develop their own, personal collections, need sufficient options.
- Know your market - main distributors and brands, trade fairs, consumer needs - and apply your knowledge to drive innovation in production, market development, pricing strategies, investment in packaging and communication, etc.
- Delivering the product already packaged as a gift can give you a competitive advantage; show your buyer you can also take care of packaging.
- Kitchen and cookware design must be functional and can even indicate its use.
- Innovate by combining materials and/or hand-made and mechanised processes, as this is a way to develop premium lines in a market that is predominantly middle-end.
- Add identity to products and merge functionality with design/decorations.
- Consider investing in product development or a partnership with a European producer or designer. Co-creation with producers, retailers and marketers can increase your opportunities on the market.

## Pampering/wellness: time for myself / Me Time

### Consumer trends

- The Economist Intelligence Unit predicts, despite global economic downturn, the modern consumer is not only interested in appearance, but also in his/her well-being.
- The world of home, body care and food is coming together in the idea of 'slow cooking, 'slow food' and a greater interest in spiritual and physical wellness, making a bar of soap part of home fragrance, a cooking pot a decorative item in its own right, and a bathrobe, a home product.
- Demographic changes favour the beauty and personal care industry: ageing populations ensure a growing market for pampering and health-related products and services, as older customers want to keep a healthy and youthful appearance, boosting revenues at beauty salons and spas. Proliferation of fitness/spa clubs provides the consumer with opportunities for exercise/pampering.
- The bathroom has been transformed from a utility area into to a more decorative room with plants, small furniture, wall decoration, etc. Bathing has been transformed into a home-spa experience: a time for oneself, for relaxing in a pleasing environment. The European consumer is learning to take the time for physical and spiritual 'healing' in his/her own home.

### Trends at product level

- Pleasure, intimacy, time and authenticity are the key words of this theme.
- Pampering/wellness products are emotional products. A bar of soap has turned into a gift and a premium wellness and fragrance product, influencing one's mood and the atmosphere in the home.
- Self-indulgence became more important during the crisis. Small pleasures create happiness; therefore, small pampering products that can be bought/used frequently are important.

This opens up the traditional boundaries between these categories and allows for products or ranges that combine these same underlying values.

### Considerations for action:



- Create concepts; complete ranges that can fully cater to the needs of the consumer (e.g. soaps combined with scented candles, perfumes with room fragrances) or complete offerings of kitchen and table textiles. This may drive new business models, ranging from outsourcing to mergers.
- Bring the five senses into play in the development and marketing of your range, as this category is all about "sensing" Products that pamper make perfect gifts. Therefore, develop the gift aspect of your products with the help of gift packs (using nice local materials such as woven baskets for soaps), clever pricing, and great background stories.
- This category already has strict health and safety specifications and, as such, sustainability is a logical



next step (e.g. feel-good aspects related to the renewable use of environmental resources or community-based production).

## Showing and sharing: essential consumption

### Consumer trends

- The ongoing trend towards open-plan interior designs, not only creates a feeling of more space in the home, the space also becomes multifunctional or has 'shared functions' (cooking, entertaining, taking short naps). This allows the consumer to create different atmospheres: the kitchen also becomes a place to work or study (TV on), or an area for lavish dining. This flexibility can be enhanced by creating boundaries, or 'temporary walls' by using 'flexible furniture': occasional tables, cocktail caddies, etc.
- The new emphasis on walls, wallpapers and wall treatments is one of the most dynamic trends. Wall decoration, be it textile- or hardware-based, is becoming a way to express one's identity – it creates atmosphere, shows a person's status, and stimulates interaction between visitors of the space with wallpaper, wall hangings, mirrors, frames, abstract wall decorations, paintings, and lighting.

At the same time, after years of ridding the house of walls, the wall and room divider is returning with a vengeance.

### Trends at product level

- There are two aspects: *Non-emotional* means technical innovation: the TV will have a central place in the home and take up part of one wall. The living room becomes a social entertaining space. Products need to have improved functionality: high-tech curtains that block sunlight, etc. *Emotional* refers to products that bring warmth or create a warm feeling in the home, like curtains and carpets.
- Bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms are expected to be an emerging trend in the short term. Storage products will be important here, including multipurpose products. Plenty of textiles will be used here to bring warmth, facilitate cocooning, and play as emotional decoration.
- The garden is expected to become more integrated with the home to bring nature into the house.
- Lighting will play an important role, particularly to change the mood of a space.

### Considerations for action:

- Since rooms are more connected, decoration needs to match the overall style of the home. Study your distributors' end consumers and their main preferences. TV, home magazines, and direct information from your distribution partners are invaluable sources of information.
- DC exporters wishing to target European markets need their identities to put forward important elements such as artisanship, natural materials, and simple styles. These elements, transformed in an individual way, influenced by one's own context will if translated into the right product, make DC exporters an attractive proposition for European consumers looking for ways to express their individuality.
- Multi-functionality in small furniture is a must, as consumers want to transform their rooms into multi-purpose spaces as well.
- Wallpaper and soft furnishings have long been anonymous background props in the home. Now that the walls and windows have become a way for the consumer to express himself, styles can be expressive and the category as a whole can move upwards.
- In line with the wider trend of blending inside and outside spaces in the home, products that can be both inside and out on the terrace will find favour.
- Because the consumer wants to feel connected with nature, and because the thought of environmental sustainability has become more important.





## Celebration: Me Time and escapism

### Consumer trends

- As part of an ongoing search for identity, birth, birthdays, marriage and death are increasingly surrounded by (often borrowed) rituals of celebration and commemoration. In addition, during specific moments in the religious calendar, European consumers want to 'get into the emotion' and experience the atmosphere.

### Trends at product level

- Christmas is a 'bonding' event, as the spirit of Christmas brings warmth and harmony to the home. Consumers do their best to create a Christmas atmosphere by decorating their home and having a richly laid table. The living and dining rooms bring family and friends together. Cooking and eating together is the basis for the interaction and time is taken to dine well.
- Christmas as a shopping and decorating spree – clutter makes things cosier – Christmas as a way to live inside a story, a pre-cooked comfort zone built around stories of Father Christmas, Fairyland, romantic winter wonderlands, and a nostalgic journey into the stories of one's youth. Product themes are familiar and worn out, products are constantly restyled and trendy.

### Considerations for action:

- Adapt to or adopt a "moment" market that focuses on a moment in consumption rather than on a general or permanent functional or emotional consumer need or demand.
- Home accessories are an emotional category from which consumers derive pleasure just for their decorative impact. Therefore, a good decorative object in itself will have sufficient appeal to the consumer and does not need to possess functional value as well.
- Add a touch of your local context or culture to your decorative objects to feed into the present consumer's openness to the presence of origin in products. Do be aware of the fact that products become more niche when you increase their ethnicity.
- A seasonal market such as Christmas can be attractive for a concept that already includes other celebrations (Valentine, weddings, Easter, birthdays etc.), or where the exporter already has a footing in the regular mid-market for home decoration. It is important to keep abreast of trends regarding Christmas material, decoration and techniques by studying Chinese and other manufacturers online and at trade fairs.
- Hand-made products are a small but growing element in Christmas decoration, and any new exporters who are able to offer new ideas, materials or techniques may find a slot in mainly mid-to-high and premium segments that are appreciative of such values.
- Since Christmas is a time of goodwill and positive emotions, fair-trade concepts may have a competitive advantage.



## DIRECTION II: THE END OF UNDIFFERENTIATED MARKETING

### Adhere to clear consumer choices

The European population is becoming more highly educated, wealthier and less focused on basic needs. This will increasingly change the buying motives of European consumers: home products need to express your identity and/or must give you a good feeling. Therefore, home product concepts have to appeal to the senses and possess functional dimensions in order to cater to specific target groups in the European market (e.g. young people, baby boomers or city dwellers).

### Adapt your home products to new types of domestic arrangement

Europe's population will continue to relocate to urban areas over the next decade. While urbanisation rates are slowing down in Western European countries, Eastern European countries are undergoing rapid expansion in terms of urban population. Owing to this development, traditional family structures and relationships are changing in favour of new and more fragmented ways of sharing a home, especially in the urban centres. In European urban areas, there are numerous types of domestic relationship and ways of living together, ranging from one person households, single-sex households to multi-generation households, for example with a grandmother living in to look after the grandchildren while their parents are working.

### New communication channels requiring transparency among DC exporters

In 2012, 73% of Europe's population had access to the internet. This figure continues to grow as Eastern Europe's population is connecting to the internet in increasing numbers. The result is one of consumers who are more aware of what is going on worldwide. This means that it has become easier for consumers to compare and review your products or the way you do business. However, they are also increasingly open to inspiring stories from the other side of the world. The marketing of home products, traditionally the domain of brand and PR-driven communication, is now gradually gearing itself towards consumer referral and reviews. More and more companies are seeking to either enhance or establish their CSR programmes to do business with a purpose. Social media has become an increasingly important part of business marketing and client base development platform. In the future, this development will be increasingly important.

### Considerations for action:



- Focus on functional appeal: Concepts that are functional and feel logical to the consumer are potential winners, e.g. a well-developed product range based on a clearly binding element (a technique, style or theme).
- Focus on emotional appeal: Develop a concept for your home products which tells a story or makes the consumers part of an experience, e.g. handmade or traditional crafts.
- Focusing on niche lifestyles could give you an advantage. Focus specifically on the various new partnership lifestyles and on new forms of cohabitation, such as single-person households, same-sex relationships and extended family households.
- Bear in mind the urban reality of European consumers: they lack space and nature. Benefit by offering home products that save valuable space or products that bring nature into the home.
- Transparency about how you make your home products needs to become a part of your business' DNA. It will be increasingly important in the future.
- Try to engage in virtual communities, such as Facebook or LinkedIn groups. Through these online platforms you can not only promote your home products, but also improve your knowledge about European consumers' tastes.

## DIRECTION III: IS EUROPE STILL THE OBVIOUS CHOICE FOR EXPORTERS?

### Use BRIC markets as stepping stone to EU

For many years, Western markets were the main target for DC exporters of home products as they had little domestic or regional market for handmade crafts and textiles. Over the past few decades, however, the emerging BRIC countries have seen strong economic growth, leading to a burgeoning urban middle class with a higher disposable income. These changes to the structure of the social pyramid mean that these emerging BRIC markets are becoming of increasing interest to DC exporters. They can use these markets as a stepping stone to the European market. In the long run, Western markets (including European markets) will no longer be the obvious choice for exporters. DC exporters will also become more interested in supplying the emerging BRIC markets.

### Chinese buyers are your entry to Europe

Over the past few decades, Chinese manufacturers have started to compete on a global level, profiting from a well-established infrastructure and low production costs. Increasingly, Chinese wholesalers will be running their own exports to Europe. These Chinese wholesalers will form partnerships with other DC exporters, resulting in increased competition with European importers/wholesalers for DC suppliers. Apart from catering to the global market for home products, China is also becoming a destination market for Chinese manufacturers. This will have consequences on the focus of Chinese manufacturers. In the future, it is anticipated that Chinese manufacturers will focus more on sales in their domestic market and give less attention to Western buyers of home products. Chinese manufacturers will no longer be willing to supply to every European importer. This means that European importers will be seeking out alternative suppliers in the region to replace Chinese suppliers. China is also becoming a destination market for European importers/wholesalers trading home products destined for the middle-



BRIC markets are becoming of increasing interest to DC exporters. They can use these markets as a stepping stone to the European market. In the long run, Western markets (including European markets) will no longer be the obvious choice for exporters.

### Considerations for action:

- Actively search for export destinations within your region. Contact business support organisations with up-to-date market information about trading opportunities in your region.
- You can use your regional market to create export volume as a stepping stone for entry to the European market. Product and market trends will differ per region. Therefore, create offers that can work both for European markets and your regional ones. Choose target groups that can be found both in your EU market and your regional market (e.g. urban middle classes).
- Register for trade portals that are frequented by Chinese exporters and importers; visit and participate in Asian Regional/Chinese trade fairs; contact your embassies in China; organise a trade mission to China with colleagues.
- Show yourself at EU trade fairs as well as at Asian Regional trade fairs frequented by EU buyers. Actively scout for new European buyers, especially those that are clearly buying from China now but which may want to shift to the regional.
- Discuss possible strategies with your existing EU buyers to help them penetrate the Chinese market with your products. Help your EU buyer by being flexible in production and a leader in terms of quality and delivery.



high to high-end segments. DC exporters can profit from this development by exporting indirectly via European importers/wholesalers.

### Focus on essential products or show your added value

The global economic downturn has strongly affected mature Western European markets (while the emerging Eastern European countries have kept growing, albeit at a slower pace). Although Europe is slowly recovering from the recession, there has not been a complete recovery. To a large extent this has been caused by the financial crisis in the EU (the euro crisis). The EU member states, particularly in Mediterranean countries, will continue to be financially challenged in the near future. The first steps have been taken, but more measures are needed for economic recovery.

This development has left few European consumers untouched. In general, European consumer confidence is low due to the risk of losing jobs or homes. Most Europeans have also been confronted with a decrease in disposable income: income that, prior to the crisis, would have been spent on products for the home. As a consequence of insecurity concerning the European market, European buyers are also looking for European suppliers that they are better able to control in terms of quality, lead times and transparency, while simultaneously lowering (transportation) costs. In addition, both retailers and importers/wholesalers are hesitant to overstock. These risks are being passed on to their suppliers.

### DIRECTION IV: CONSCIOUS CONSUMPTION GOING MAINSTREAM

#### Reduce your ecological footprint

Nowadays, consumers experience being green as something inspiring and pleasing. A 'green' product can be made of environmentally sustainable raw materials, but it can also mean home products that have a low ecological footprint owing to the close geographical proximity between the country of origin and the end-market. Many European consumers increasingly expect their home products to be environmentally sustainable. In the near future, and as a result of this, retailers must increasingly prove that their products are environmentally sustainable. This drive for sustainability has implications for stakeholders in the home products value chain, where the search for sustainable solutions is becoming an increasing challenge.

For exporters in developing countries opportunities can be found in developing products of environmentally sustainable materials and designs (recycling, re-use, reduce). Another implication of the drive is the attempt to lower transportation emissions by stakeholders in the supply chain. They



#### Considerations for action:

- Make a clear choice about which segment you want to supply. In these times of economic adversity, DC exporters can focus on either essential products in the lower segments (functional and basic) or on meaningful products in the higher segments (offering diversity, emotion or experience).
- In order to compete with European suppliers, show your buyers your product's unique story by emphasising the (traditional) handmade skills and origin of the materials and techniques which cannot be sourced from European suppliers.
- European consumers are buying more selectively: they are choosing home products that offer either value for money or added value (function, design, meaning or emotion).
- Try to be a lean and flexible exporter by being able to supply smaller quantities at shorter intervals.
- Consider keeping stock for certain standard items that your importer may want to re-order to help them satisfy retailer needs effectively.



will turn to innovative methods in packing and packaging. On the other hand, 'Made in Europe' is gaining popularity. European home products are sourced from a closer geographical proximity, making the ecological footprint of these products lower. Therefore, DC exporters outside of Europe will increasingly be faced with competitors producing in Europe, while DC exporters in Eastern Europe might profit from this development.

### Contribute to social equality as a DC exporter

Besides environmental sustainability, European consumers are also becoming more aware of social imbalances on the global scale; consequently, they want to contribute to a better world. For that reason, Fair Trade concepts for home products are growing within the home sector. Fair Trade initiatives within the sector can be very diverse, each having its own viewpoint on ethical trading and providing retailers and consumers with several choices for contributing to the world. Markets of interest for Fair Trade home products include the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and the Netherlands, while the Czech Republic is a promising growth market in Eastern Europe.

### Your buyers have more confidence in the viability of sustainability

All stakeholders in the home products value chain are becoming increasingly aware of the financial profitability of socially and environmentally sustainable home products. Whether retailers or suppliers of home products, they will all be adding more sustainably produced product ranges to their assortment and will even be adopting sustainable business concepts. This development confirms the maturity of social and environmental sustainability: sustainable concepts are no longer dictated by public movements but, rather, are being pulled by stakeholders in the home sector. DC exporters should be aware that European consumers are not prepared to pay a premium for sustainably produced home products as a matter of course. Sustainable features must add value to the home product, e.g. by saving energy.

### Considerations for action:

- Emphasize sustainable aspects in your home products as they can give you a comparative advantage over other suppliers.
- Your buyers will increasingly demand proof concerning the sustainability of your products. This can be done by using certification schemes or by simply not making any exaggerated or unrealistic claims about your product. Alternatively, you can integrate your green motivation in your designs.
- Register for trade portals that are frequented by Chinese exporters and importers; visit and participate in Asian Regional/Chinese trade fairs; contact your embassies in China; organise a trade mission to China with colleagues.
- If your product is sustainably produced and has additional functional benefits, you will be able to ask for an additional premium.
- Because of the 'Made in Europe' trend, you must be distinctive; show your product's origin in addition to applying unique techniques and materials.
- You need to make buyers realise that your product can be made only by you in your country.
- DC exporters can profit from growing awareness among consumers by clearly promoting the social impact of their production process.
- By embracing Fair Trade certification, exporters are better equipped to target this niche market. However, bear in mind that becoming certified brings with it significant costs.

### Considerations for action:

Profit from this opportunity by using your own sustainable concept in your home products to make yourself distinct from your competitors.



# Buyer Requirements for Home Decoration & Home Textiles

Legal requirements are a must - relevance set by material and use

Pay attention to the indications of which materials / products are concerned per requirement described. The following 'musts' apply to the products and uses listed:

- General product safety - applicable to all products.
- Chemicals - specific for textiles, wood, decorative oil lamps and food that come into contact with food.
- CITES - applicable to products made from wild plants and animals.
- CE-marking - applicable to toys and electronic products.
- Labelling- specific rules for textiles and electronics.
- Looks like food?-applicable to products designed to look like food.

**General product safety:** The General Product Safety Directive basically states that all products marketed in the EU must be safe to use and forms a framework for all specific legislation established for specific products and issues. If no specific legal requirements have been established for your product and its uses, the General Product Safety Directive still applies. If there are specific requirements applicable to you, the General Product Safety Directive applies in addition, covering all other safety aspects which may not have been described specifically.

**Chemicals -restricted substances:** The EU has restricted a great number of chemicals in products that are marketed in the EU. These are listed in the REACH regulation (Regulation (EC) 1907/2006). Which chemicals are of relevance for you will depend on your specific product and material used. Here, you can find a summary with some practical market information for the most common materials and products within the sector home decoration and home textiles:

*Textiles:* If you dye your products, make sure you don't use any of the azo dyes that release any of the 22 aromatic amines which are prohibited. The EU legislation lists the aromatic amines, not the azo dyes which release

them. The vast majority of azo dyes are therefore legally acceptable. Moreover, most reputable dye manufacturers only produce legally accepted dyes. However, border rejections and market withdrawals do show that azo dyes still is an issue that causes problems on the EU market, as a number of tested products still show the prohibited aromatic amines and are consequently withdrawn from the market (mainly clothes and toys). Furthermore, the flame retardants which can be used have been restricted, where Tris (2,3 dibromopropyl) phosphate (TRIS); Tris(aziridiny) phosphineoxide (TEPA) and; Polybromobiphenyles (PBB) have been prohibited in products intended to come into contact with the skin (e.g bed linen). Finally, if you use PVC in your products, know that organostannic compounds are also restricted.

*Wood:* If your wood products are impregnated, know that the EU prohibits creosote substances and arsenic in wood products.

**Decorative oil lamps:** Decorative oils lamps may only be placed on the market if they conform to the European Standards on Decorative oils lamps: EN 14059. This is a compulsory standards, as established in Regulation (EC) 1907/2006 (REACH). The requirements include the prohibition of chemicals classified as 'dangerous' and hazardous colouring agents and perfumes. You can find the standard EN 14059 on the CEN (the European Committee for Standardization) website -[www.cen.eu](http://www.cen.eu).

**Any products that come into contact with food in their use (bowls, pans, cutlery...):** Food safety is of major concern in the EU, and safety measures reach further than the food itself to cover dishes and packaging that come into direct contact with food. Chemicals in ceramics and plastics, for instance, have been restricted. As products not fulfilling these requirements are regularly withdrawn from the market, you need to make sure your products meet the requirements if they come into contact with food in their use.

**CITES- products from wild plants and animals:** If you produce products made from wild plants or animals,

you need to make sure that these do not fall under the restrictions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The EU has implemented the requirements in Regulation 338/97 and lists restricted species (including products thereof) and special procedures where applicable.

**CE-marking toys & electronic products:** If you produce toys or electronic products (such as decorative lighting), your products will need to be affixed with the CE-marking in order to be marketed in the EU. CE-marking shows that a product is assessed before being placed on the market and that it meets EU safety, health and environmental protection requirements. The requirements have been set for a variety of categories, including toys (Toys Safety Directive 2009/48/EC) and low voltage products (Low Voltage Directive 2006/95/EC). The safety requirements are set out in the directives, and standards have been developed to show compliance with them. For electrical and electronic equipment, a recent recast of the so called RoHS directive (2011/65/EU) is relevant, which restricts the use of certain hazardous substances and also introduces CE-marking.

**Labelling- specific rules for textiles and electronics:** For certain product types, specific labelling rules have been established at EU level:

*Textiles:* your textile products must be labelled with the fibre composition and using the fibre names in accordance with EU rules. The aim of this common set of labelling rules, is to ensure that the consumer knows what he is buying.

*Electronics:* Energy-related products must be labelled in view of their energy efficiency when marketed in the EU. The most energy efficient products may be marked 'A+++', and the least efficient class of products is 'G'.

**Looks like food?** When designing your products for the EU market, bear in mind that decorative items that look like food to the extent that they could be confused with real food products are not allowed on the EU market. There are a variety of products that fall within this category, think for instance about candles that look like biscuits or candy, or erasers in the shape of berries. The

risk identified with non-edible products that could be mistaken for food products, is choking and the requirements are established in Directive 89/357/EEC.

## Good sustainability performance commonly asked

**Social performance:** Sustainability is one of the ways for companies to differentiate themselves, and the means of offering sustainable products are numerous, ranging from recycling to choice of sustainable materials to certification and use of labels (see 'Niche'). Two retail initiatives have gained quite some ground in (particularly) western European countries: BSCI and ETI. Retailers/importers participate in the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI). The Ethical Trading Initiative, ETI, is a global standard, with a strong presence in the UK market.

**The Niche for certified sustainable products:** While sustainability is gaining ground, the actual use of certification is still a niche in this sector.

*Fairtrade products:*

Among the niche initiatives, Fairtrade is the best known with a relatively large market presence



(including several sectors). *Ethical carpets:* In addition to fair trade, there are a few ethical initiatives focusing specifically on the carpet industry.

**Eco-labelled textiles:** There are several different eco-labels used for textiles (including carpets and rugs), and as this is a means of showing sustainability, there is an interest from buyers. The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) is a textile processing standard for organic fibres; OEKO-TEX stands for no use of hazardous chemicals; and the EU Ecolabel also looks to chemicals environmentally-friendly options. ■ Source : CBI