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## **Voluntary Environmental Certification as a Method of Creating Competitive Advantage**

Voluntary environmental certification is a relatively new tool for marketing in the Ukrainian industrial sector. Throughout the world about 400 different voluntary environmental standards exist, including ISO 14000, EMAS, Fairtrade, Forest Stewardship Council, and many others, which are applied for sustainable development of various businesses and different kinds of enterprise structures.

In Ukraine, the companies are certified with rare exceptions only for compliance with ISO 14000. However, because transition to these standards is voluntary, nowadays around a dozen of businesses is certified with ISO 14001. This tool is still poorly used as a method to create a competitive advantage.

Studying the experience of "Sandora" company has shown that the transition to voluntary environmental standards can give a company significant economic and market advantages:

- Expand export opportunities of products in the CIS countries and Western markets;
- Demonstrate a potential consumer high level of liability for environmental safety and production, and thus increase the level of consumer confidence and increase sales in certain markets;
- Reduce the environmental and economic conflicts and improve the efficiency of the whole system of marketing;
- Switch to the concept of mutually beneficial partnerships with suppliers, customers and other market participants who are interested in creating environmentally sustainable chain of sales;
- Get the benefits to participate in various government projects and orders as an environmentally sustainable enterprise;
- Switch to energy and resource saving technologies.

The research has shown that the company does not receive all benefits due to the lack of necessary marketing activities which should be directed to formation of an appropriate image for the buyers. Particularly for the "Sandora" company it would be reasonable to carry out the following measures:

- Organize specialized exhibitions, competitions, fairs;
- Take part in international competitions of bioproducts;
- Promote products through retail;
- Inform consumers through media, etc.;
- Develop a delivery system of organic food from producers to consumers directly.