

Interview

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Within the 3-CO project, funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe program, an app is being developed that supports consumers in making sustainable choices towards bio-based products. Can you briefly outline the key steps of the development process towards the final app, from scouting existing digital solutions to eco-label collection and user testing?

The 3-CO app was created with a clear purpose: to help people make smarter, more sustainable choices when buying everyday products. Backed by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme, the app gives consumers instant, trustworthy information about eco-labels and bio-based goods.

From the beginning, the team focused on building something practical. We studied plenty of existing apps and tools to understand what works and where they fall short. What we found was a gap. Most apps are either too technical, too limited in scope, or focused only on organic food. 3-CO fills that gap by covering a wider range of products,



including packaging, textiles, cosmetics, and cleaning supplies.

To make the app truly useful, we created a structured database of more than 150 verified eco-labels. Each entry includes the label's name, what it stands for, where it applies, and what sustainability guarantees it offers. This allows users to quickly understand the real meaning behind the symbols they see on packaging.

Once the content was in place, the focus shifted to design. We tested three versions of the app interface and selected the one that users found most intuitive. The result is a clean, simple layout that makes it easy to scan, compare, and make informed choices in just a few taps.

The most powerful feature of 3-CO is its smart label scanner. Using image recognition powered by artificial intelligence, the app can instantly identify eco-labels on product packaging. Just point your phone's camera at the label and get immediate details about its credibility and sustainability

criteria. No need to search manually or wonder what a logo means.

The app was developed using modern technology to ensure a fast, reliable experience. It even works offline, so you can use it wherever you shop, with or without internet access.

We also included a product forum where users can read reviews, share opinions, and learn from each other, adding a personal layer to sustainability driven by community, which most tools are missing.

Before launch, we ran multiple rounds of testing with real users to refine the experience. Their feedback helped us improve everything from label detection speed to the clarity of the information provided.

The result is an app that makes sustainable shopping easier, faster, and more transparent. If you want to buy better without wasting time or getting lost in greenwashing claims, 3-CO is the tool you've been waiting for.

The 3-CO app aims to enhance the information provided to consumers about bio-based products through improved product information and certification. What specific information will the digital solutions provide to consumers? Additionally, how does artificial intelligence contribute to the collection and processing of this relevant information?

Building on everything already introduced, the 3-CO app offers much more than quick label scanning. It delivers clear, relevant information that helps users make informed choices with confidence. Once a label is scanned, the app shows essential details: the name of the certification, what it guarantees in terms of sustainability, the countries where it applies, and visual elements like its logo and colours to support faster recognition in future purchases.

All of this is made possible by the structured eco-label database already mentioned. What sets it apart is the way it presents complex information so that it's simple, reliable, and immediately useful, removing the uncertainty around green claims and giving consumers the facts they need, right when they need them.

The product forum mentioned adds another dimension to the experience. Here, users can share their opinions, read comments from others, and

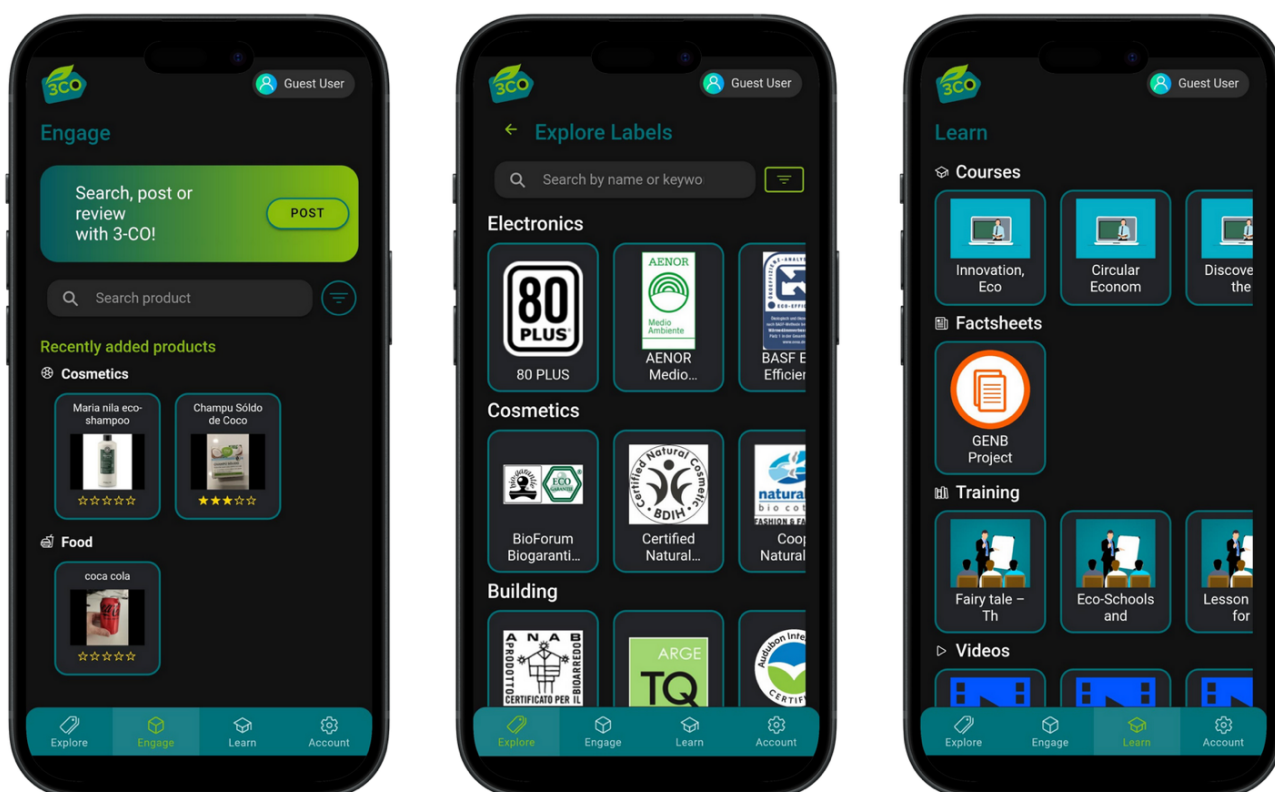
discuss specific products. It turns the app into a space for exchange and learning from other users, making sustainable shopping more social and transparent.

To support long-term awareness, the app includes a Learn section with accessible content focused on environmental concepts, the meaning behind eco-labels, and how to recognise genuinely sustainable products. This gives users the tools to better understand what they are buying and why it matters.

At the core of this system is artificial intelligence. The AI image recognition technology introduced

earlier is not just a one-time feature. It continuously improves by learning from the images users scan. The more it is used, the better it becomes at identifying labels quickly and accurately. This benefits not just the individual user but the entire community, reinforcing the app's value in the long term.

In the end, the 3-CO app is more than a tool. It is a practical guide, a learning space, and a community platform all in one, helping consumers move from confusion to clarity in their everyday purchases.



The market currently offers various apps that inform consumers about the sustainability of their purchases. What unique and innovative features do 3-CO's three digital prototype solutions bring to the table? Could you describe how consumers are expected to integrate the app into their physical shopping experience?

While other sustainability apps often limit their focus to organic food or basic recycling advice, 3-CO was built to address a wider need. It brings sustainability insights into areas that are often overlooked, such as textiles, personal care items, packaging, and other bio-based consumer goods that people use every day. This broader scope is one of the main ways 3-CO sets itself apart.

What also makes the app unique is how seamlessly it fits into the shopping experience. As consumers walk through a store, they can simply use their phone's camera to scan the label on any product. The app instantly identifies the eco-label and pulls up detailed, reliable information from its certification database. This real-time access allows users to make better decisions in the moment, without interrupting their routine or requiring extensive research.

But 3-CO offers more than just data. The built-in product forum adds a social dimension that most tools lack. If a user wants to know what others think of a particular product, they can quickly search for it and see comments from the community. If they want to share their own experience, they can do that, too. This creates an active space where people can learn from each other and contribute to a shared goal of more sustainable consumption.

In this way, the app becomes a natural partner during everyday shopping. It helps users clarify what sustainability claims really mean, shows them how products compare, and connects them with others who care about the same values. By combining technology, information, and community, 3-CO transforms how people engage with sustainability in their day-to-day choices.

Which bio-based labels are currently available in the app, and what criteria did you apply to select them? Are there plans to expand the range of labels included in the final version of the app?

The 3-CO app currently includes a comprehensive selection of more than 150 verified eco-labels covering a wide spectrum of bio-based products. This list was carefully developed to ensure that the information provided to users is both trustworthy and relevant across different product categories, including packaging, textiles, cosmetics, and household goods.

To determine which labels to include, the team applied several clear criteria. First, the label had to be recognised at national or international level, with established certification standards and trans-

parency in its sustainability focus. Second, it had to be directly related to bio-based content, production practices, or environmental performance. And finally, priority was given to labels that are visually present on consumer goods in the European market, ensuring that the app actually supports shopping decisions.

The result is a diverse, structured database of certifications that allows users to instantly identify what a label represents, where it is valid, and what sustainability claims it actually guarantees. Labels such as the EU Ecolabel, Cradle to Cradle, FSC, Blue

Angel, Fairtrade, and Global Organic Textile Standard are just a few examples of the many available through the app.

Although there are no immediate plans to expand the list before the final release of the app, the system has been built to remain flexible and

scalable. This means that new labels can be added at any time in the future as new certifications emerge or as user demand evolves. By doing so, the 3-CO app is not only prepared to meet today's sustainability expectations but is also ready to grow with the changing landscape of sustainable production and consumer awareness.

What strategies will 3-CO employ to ensure continued use of its digital solutions for sustainable purchasing decisions even after the project has ended? Which role does gamification play for keeping users involved?

To ensure that users continue relying on the 3-CO app long after the project has ended, the design focuses on creating habits, building community, and offering ongoing value. One of the core strategies is encouraging user participation through the product forum. This feature transforms the app from a unilateral information source into a space for exchange, as users can share their opinions, comment on specific products, and learn from others. It helps create a sense of community and turns individual users into active contributors rather than passive readers.

In addition to community-building, the app uses gamification to maintain long-term engagement,

as every time a user scans a recognised eco-label, they can earn a custom digital badge. These badges serve as small but meaningful rewards, making the experience more interactive and enjoyable. Rather than just consuming content, users are acknowledged for their actions and encouraged to keep exploring and contributing.

Together, these strategies make the 3-CO app more than just a tool for sustainable shopping. It becomes part of a user's routine, combining practical information with social interaction and motivation. This is how 3-CO plans to remain useful and relevant, even after the project itself ends.

How does the 3-CO app address consumer scepticism towards sustainability labels and app usage during in-store shopping? How does the app align with and support the objectives of the European Union's New Consumer Agenda¹?

The 3-CO app was built with a clear understanding of the doubts many consumers have when it comes to sustainability claims. Greenwashing, ambiguous labels, and inconsistent information have made people more cautious and, in many cases,

sceptical. This is why transparency and trust are central to how the app works.

Instead of relying on generic claims, the app provides users with verified, clearly explained information about each eco-label it recognises.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0696&from=EN>



Every label in the app has been vetted and structured in a way that allows users to see what it stands for, which sustainability areas it covers, and where it is officially recognised. This clarity helps clarify sustainability certifications and gives consumers a solid base to trust what they are seeing.

To further reduce barriers during in-store use, the app was designed to be fast, intuitive, and reliable. With a quick scan, users receive straightforward information on a product's label without needing to search or decode anything themselves. The offline functionality ensures that even in shops with poor connectivity, the app still works, making it practical for everyday use and helps users feel more confident using it regularly.

The app's approach also directly supports the goals of the European Union's New Consumer Agenda, which calls for greater transparency, stronger rights for consumers, and better tools to support sustainable choices. Then, 3-CO aligns with these objectives by giving people access to trustworthy information, enabling informed decisions, and promoting responsible consumption through education, digital empowerment, and community participation.

By making sustainability more accessible and practical, 3-CO helps bridge the gap between consumer intention and action, turning awareness into real behaviour change at the point of purchase.

Download the 3-CO App

<https://3co-project.eu/consumer-app/>