

La voix des Consommateurs  
à travers le monde

The global voice  
for consumers

La voz global para la defensa  
de los consumidores



# Consumer Organisations:


What do they do  
and how do they do it?

Consumers International  
The Global Voice for Consumers

# The Basics

- Consumers International is a global federation of consumer organisations
  - 250 members in 115 countries
  - Membership fees \$1.8m
  - Programme grants \$3.5m
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# Agreed principles

- The United Nations Guidelines on Consumer protection 1985
  - Chapter on Sustainable Consumption added in 1999
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# Consumer rights

- The right to satisfaction of basic needs
- The right to safety
- The right to be informed
- The right to choose
- The right to be heard
- The right to redress
- The right to consumer education
- The right to a healthy environment



# The Diverse Needs of CI Members

- In developed countries, consumer organisations deal mainly in **CHOICE**
  - founding members – CU (US), CA (UK)
- In developing or transition countries, the issue is **ACCESS**

# Consumer Choice

- COs conventionally confined focus to: **personal choice** issues concerning **private goods**

US Tradition: Chase and Schlink - *Your Money's Worth* 1927

- COs undertake comparative testing of products for *best buy* guides
  - 1930s CU (US) *Consumer Reports*
  - 1950s CA (UK) *Which* Magazines
  - 1990s KonFOP (Russia) *Spros*

# Consumer Product and Service Research:

## Unique Characteristics:

- Independent of business or political interest
- No advertising - revenue from sales
- Impartial and objective research methodologies



# Product Testing – Basic Purposes

## 1. Choice

- Offer *best buy* guides
- Help consumers make risk and safety evaluations

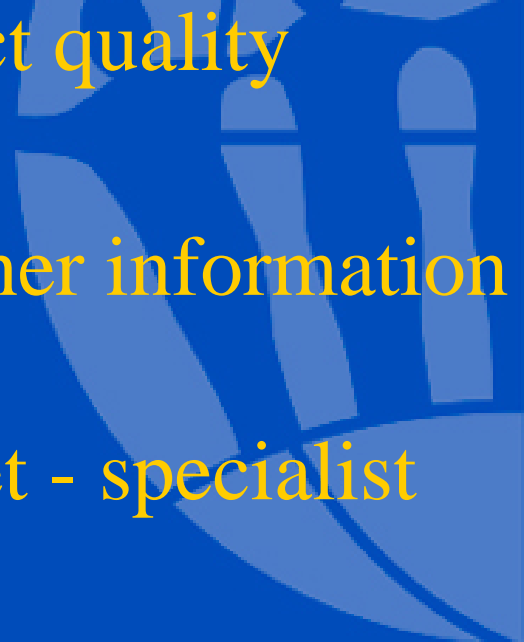
## 2. Public Interest / Regulation

- Protect the public from:  
Injury risk / Short-weighting / Adulteration / False claims
- To encourage uniformity in standards and regulations
- To encourage independent expert research into causes of product related injuries


# Product Testing

- Through product testing COs primarily acted:
  - To ensure that buyers have unbiased information about goods
  - To counterbalance to the weight of manufacturing industry
  - To ensure that the consumer is sovereign in the marketplace

# New Challenges

- General improvement in product quality
    - less need for new information
  - Increasing competition from other information sources
  - Increasing complexity of market - specialist sources of information
  - Changing policy environment
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# Adapting


- **Tailoring information for individual consumers**
    - e.g. *modelling* information
  - **Adapting to new market needs**
    - new information e.g. guarantees, servicing, loan deals
  - **Using new media for providing information**
    - e.g. telephone hotlines, CD Rom programmes
  - **New Services – reviving cooperatives, insurance, class actions**
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# CI and Public Goods

- CI represents consumer interests on matters affecting essential utilities
- CI campaigns to influence policies and laws which affect the marketplace...  
...and **ACCESS** to it



# Consumer Access

- More than half of our members are in the developing world
  - There are 32 countries in the OECD. CI has members in 115
  - 1000 million living in the underdeveloped world lack basic shelter, food, clothing and clean water
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# Consumer Access Issues

**More than half CI members operate in countries which face inadequate and unreliable supply of the most essential services because of:**

- Inefficiency
- Low investment levels
- Lack of financial viability
- Absence of consumer orientation

# Product Testing in Developing Countries

## Issues:

- Little or no product testing
  - Weak consumer representation in standard-setting processes
  - Standards as technical barrier to trade
  - No regulatory framework for enforcement
  - No consumer protection law
  - No competition regulation
  - Lack of enforcement of citizens' rights
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# CI's Role and Priorities (1)

CI works to strengthen nascent COs in developing countries

- Advice and technical support
- Fundraising and project support
- Building networks
- Research and information



# CI's Role and Priorities (2)

- Many decisions no longer made at national level
  - If you want a voice, you have to be there
- Governments **AND** regional and international organisations need to be lobbied by consumer groups
- CI represents consumers at ISO and Codex to ensure standards are appropriate
  - Not used as barriers to markets
  - Relevant to consumers in different regions of world

# Global Coalitions for Global Issues

- **Issues consumers must organise internationally on:**
  - Food (biotechnology; safety; security; sustainable production and consumption)
  - Trade (services; public utilities; e-commerce, IP)
  - Environment (information; sustainable consumption)
- **Consumers need to monitor and participate in standard-setting decision-making processes at national and international level**
  - WTO (TBT, SPS, DSM), ISO, WHO / FAO, Codex Alimentarius

Thank You

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[www.consumersinternational.org](http://www.consumersinternational.org)