

Unit - V

Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs



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Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

Quality and Standardization: Voluntary and Mandatory standards; Role of BIS, Indian Standards Mark (ISI), Ag-mark, Hallmarking, Licensing and Surveillance; Role of International Standards: ISO an Overview.

Content:

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<https://consumeraffairs.nic.in/>



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Consumer movement

The **consumer movement** is an effort to promote consumer protection through an organized social movement which is in many places led by consumer organizations. It advocates for the rights of consumers, especially when those rights are actively breached by the actions of corporations, governments, and other organizations which provide products and services to consumers. Dissatisfaction of the consumers as many unfair practices were being indulged in the sellers

Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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Evolution of Consumer Movement in India

- In India, the consumer movement as a 'social force' began with the necessity of protecting and promoting the interests of consumers against unfair trade practices.
- Rampant food shortages, hoarding, black marketing, adulteration of food and edible oil gave birth to the consumer movement in an organised form in the 1960s.
- Till the 1970s, consumer organizations were largely engaged in writing articles and holding exhibitions.
- They formed consumer groups to look into the malpractices in ration shops and overcrowding in the road passenger transport.
- Because of these efforts, the movement succeeded in bringing pressure on business firms, as well as the government to correct business conduct.
- A major step taken in 1986 by the Indian government, was the enactment of the **Consumer Protection Act, 1986, popularly known as COPRA.**
- They formed consumer groups to look into the malpractices in ration shops and overcrowding in the road passages transport.
- More recently, India witnessed an upsurge in the number of consumer groups.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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Consumer Organizations

Consumer organizations are advocacy groups that seek to protect people from corporate abuse like unsafe products, predatory lending, false advertising, astroturfing and pollution.

Consumer Organizations may operate via protests, litigation, campaigning, or lobbying.

The aim of consumer organizations may be to establish and to attempt to enforce consumer rights. Effective work has also been done, however, simply by using the threat of bad publicity to keep companies' focus on the consumers' point of view.

Consumer organizations may attempt to serve consumer interests by relatively direct actions such as creating and/or disseminating market information, and prohibiting specific acts or practices, or by promoting competitive forces in the markets which directly or indirectly affect consumers (such as transport, electricity, communications, etc.).

Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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Mislead Advertisement:

False advertising is the use of false, misleading, or unproven information to advertise products to consumers. Consumers' ability to distinguish false advertisements is affected by their emotions. People with positive emotions are more sensitive to false advertisements. The advertising frequently does not disclose its sources. One form of false advertising is to claim that a product has a health benefit or contains vitamins or minerals that it in fact does not. Many governments use regulations to control false advertising. A false advertisement can further be classified as deceptive if the advertiser deliberately misleads the consumer, as opposed to making an honest mistake.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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Sustainable Consumption:

Sustainable consumption (SC) is the use of *material products, energy and immaterial services in such a way that it minimizes the impact on the environment, so that human needs can be met not only in the present but also for future generations.*

Consumption refers not only to individuals and households, but also to governments, business, and other institutions. Sustainable consumption is closely related to sustainable production and sustainable lifestyles. "A sustainable lifestyle minimizes ecological impacts while enabling a flourishing life for individuals, households, communities, and beyond.

It is the product of individual and collective decisions about aspirations and about satisfying needs and adopting practices, which are in turn conditioned, facilitated, and constrained by societal norms, political institutions, public policies, infrastructures, markets, and culture."



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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National Consumer Helpline: <https://consumerhelpline.gov.in/>

1. What is INGRAM (consumerhelpline.gov.in) integrated Grievance Redress Mechanism ?

This website has been launched by the Department of Consumer Affairs to create awareness, advise and redress consumer grievances and act as a central registry for lodging consumer grievances. Though all efforts will be made to address these grievances, all grievances may not be fully or satisfactorily resolved.

Contents of links to sites outside this web portal, are not the responsibility of the Department. All rights are reserved.

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This portal is an alternate dispute redressal mechanism.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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National Consumer Helpline: <https://consumerhelpline.gov.in/>

In case, the consumer is not satisfied, he/she can approach the appropriate Consumer Commission/Fora.

The Department of Consumer Affairs has launched this portal as an Integrated Grievance Redress Mechanism (INGRAM) for bringing all Stakeholders such as Consumers, Central and State Government Agencies, Private Companies, Regulators, Ombudsmen and call centers etc. onto a single platform.

The portal will also help in creating awareness among consumers to protect their rights and inform them of their responsibilities. Consumers can register online their grievances through this portal.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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2. What kind of grievances can be registered?

Ans. Grievances related to Consumer Issues can be registered.

3. How one registers his / her Grievance?

Any aggrieved consumer can register his / her grievance by either calling the toll free number 1800-11-4000 or 14404 and talk to an agent or register himself once in the portal, get an user id and password and lodge his grievance himself attaching necessary documents, if any.

Step 1. A one time registration is required for lodging a Grievance. For registration go to the web portal <http://consumerhelpline.gov.in> and click on the login link and then sign up giving details required, verify through your email. The User id and password are created.

Step 2. Using this user id and password, enter into the portal and fill in required details of Grievance attaching necessary documents (if available).

Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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Comparative product testing

Product testing, also called **consumer testing** or **comparative testing**, is a process of measuring the properties or performance of **products**. The theory is that since the advent of mass production manufacturers produce branded **products** which they assert and advertise **to be identical within some technical standard**.

The test procedure consists of several successive phases

- Selecting the product class and the products to be tested;
- Selecting and defining the attributes;
- Developing measuring methods (measures and measuring process);
- Performing the measurements;
- Analysing the measuring results;
- Interpreting and evaluating the data.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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Energy Rating: <https://www.beestarlabel.com/>

The **Energy Rating Label** shows the **energy** performance of particular appliances and equipment.

It allows consumers to understand how much a particular **model will cost to run**, and also how **energy efficient it might be in comparison to similar models**.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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Quality and Standardization: Voluntary and Mandatory standards; Bureau of Indian Standards

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the National Standard Body of India. BIS is responsible for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

BIS through its core activities of standardization and conformity assessment, has been benefiting the national economy by providing safe, reliable and quality goods; minimizing health hazards to consumers; protecting the environment, promoting exports and imports substitute; controlling over proliferation of varieties etc. The standards and certification scheme of BIS apart from benefiting the consumers and industry also support various public policies especially in areas of product safety, consumer protection, food safety, environment protection, building and construction, etc.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India:
Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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Bureau of Indian Standards

In recent years, BIS has worked towards specifically addressing various national priorities and other government initiatives like Swacch Bharat Abhiyan, Digital India, Make in India and ease of doing business through its activities of standardization and certification. In standards development, BIS continues to address issues of technology changes and advancements, climate change, environment and energy conservation, conditions of health and safety and facilitation of trade. In the area of conformity assessment BIS is working towards making the processes simpler and faster.

<https://bis.gov.in/>



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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OBJECTIVES OF BIS

- Harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods
- To provide thrust to standardization and quality control for growth and development of industry on one hand and to meet the needs of consumers on the other.

ORGANIZATIONAL NET WORK

BIS has its Headquarters at New Delhi. It has 5 Regional Offices (ROs) located at Kolkata (Eastern), Chennai (Southern), Mumbai (Western), Chandigarh (Northern) and Delhi (Central).

Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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ACTIVITIES

The activities of BIS can be broadly grouped under the following heads:

- Standards formulation
- International activities
- Product Certification / Licensing
- Hallmarking
- Laboratory services
- Training services - National Institute of Training for Standardization
- Consumer Affairs and Publicity

Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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STANDARDS FORMULATION

BIS formulates Indian Standards in line with the national priorities for various sectors that have been grouped under following departments like

1. Chemicals
2. Food and Agriculture
3. Civil
4. Electro-technical
5. Electronics & Information Technology
6. Mechanical Engineering
7. Management & Systems
8. Metallurgical Engineering
9. Petroleum Coal & Related Products
10. Medical Equipment and Hospital Planning
11. Textile
12. Transport Engineering



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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License: **PRODUCT CERTIFICATION – ISI**

The **ISI** is an initialism of Indian Standards Institution, the name of the national standards body until 1 January 1987, when it was renamed to the Bureau of Indian Standards.

- Standards organization: Bureau of Indian Standards
- Expansion: Indian Standards Institution
- Product category: Industrial products
- Effective region: India

BIS operates a Product Certification scheme for ensuring compliance to Indian Standards. **Presence of BIS standard mark (popularly known as ISI mark) on a product indicates conformity** to the relevant Indian Standard. Before granting licence to any manufacturer, BIS ascertains the availability of required infrastructure and capability of the manufacturer to produce and test the product conforming to the relevant Indian Standard on a continuous basis.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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License: **PRODUCT CERTIFICATION – ISI**

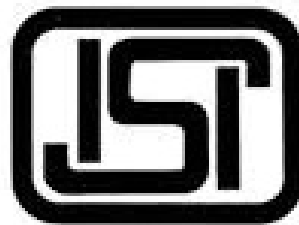
The BIS certification scheme is voluntary in nature. However for a number of products, compliance to Indian Standards made mandatory by the Central Government under various statutes in public interest.



BIS hallmark



Agmark



ISI mark



FPO mark

Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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License: PRODUCT CERTIFICATION – AGMARK

AGMARK is a certification mark employed on agricultural products in India, assuring that they conform to a set of standards approved by the *Directorate of Marketing and Inspection* an attached Office of the **Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare** under **Ministry of Agricultural & Farmers Welfare** an agency of the Government of India. The *AGMARK Head Office at Faridabad (Haryana)* is legally enforced in India by the *Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act of 1937 (and amended in 1986)*. The present AGMARK standards cover quality guidelines for **222 different commodities** spanning a variety of pulses, cereals, essential oils, vegetable oils, fruits and vegetables and semi-processed products like vermicelli



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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HALLMARKING - Hallmarking of Jewellery

Hallmarking of Gold Jewellery was started by BIS in April 2000 to provide third party assurance to consumers on the purity of gold jewellery or its fineness.

The scheme for Hallmarking of Silver Jewellery / artefacts was launched in October 2005.

Under the hallmarking scheme, the jewellers are granted certificate of registration to sell hallmarked jewellery and Assaying & Hallmarking (A&H) centres are recognized to assay the purity of the jewellery submitted by the registered jeweller along with declaration of purity and apply hallmark on such jewellery which is found conforming to relevant Indian Standard including declared fineness.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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Licencing

To cater to the needs of testing for certification activity, BIS has established **eight laboratories in the country** namely

1. Central Laboratory (CL), Sahibabad;
2. Western Regional Office Laboratory (WROL), Mumbai;
3. Northern Regional Office Laboratory (NROL), Mohali;
4. Eastern Regional Office Laboratory (EROL), Kolkata;
5. Southern Regional Office Laboratory (SROL), Chennai;
6. Bangalore Branch Office Laboratory (BNBOL), Bangalore;
7. Patna Branch Office Laboratory (PBOL), Patna;
8. Guwahati Branch Office Laboratory (GBOL), Guwahati.

In addition, BIS has also recognized NABL accredited laboratories and government laboratories to discharge the work related to testing of products for conformity assessment. In addition, BIS also has a Gold Referral Assaying Laboratory at Chennai for testing of samples.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India: Evolution of Consumer Movement in India, Formation of consumer organizations and their role in consumer protection, Misleading advertisements and sustainable consumption, National Consumer Helpline, Comparative Product testing, Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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Surveillance

After Grant of licence, a surveillance audit plan is prepared ensuring surveillance visits at least once a year:

First surveillance is carried out within 12 months from the date of certification.

Next surveillance audit to be completed in the next calendar year.

In the third year, surveillance audit is replaced with Re-certification (Renewal) audit.

Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

Consumer Movement in India:
Evolution of Consumer Movement in India,
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National Consumer Helpline,
Comparative Product testing,
Sustainable consumption and energy ratings.

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Role of International Standards:

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)- ISO is an independent, non-governmental membership organization and the world's largest developer of voluntary International Standards with a membership of 164 [national standards bodies](#).

Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges.



Unit V : Contemporary Issues in Consumer Affairs

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The ISO story

In London, in 1946, 65 delegates from 25 countries meet to discuss the future of International Standardization. In 1947, ISO officially comes into existence with 67 technical committees (groups of experts focusing on a specific subject).

BIS is a founder member of ISO and is actively involved in development of International Standards by acting as Participating (P) member or Observer (O) member on various Technical Committees, Sub-Committees, Working Groups, etc.

End of Unit-5