

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT: 'ETHICAL CONSUMPTION IN CHILE: A REVIEW OF EXISTING RESEARCH'

This is a summary of key findings from the report *Consumo ético en Chile: una revisión de la investigación existente*. It offers a review of existing academic literature and studies on 'responsible consumption' in Chile. 'Responsible consumption' – or 'ethical consumption' – is here understood as a type of consumption which takes into consideration the impact of consumption on the environment and society.

The report addresses three central areas: First of all, it examines and describes the different approaches and expressions used in Chile when referring to 'ethical consumption', such as: 'responsible consumption', 'solidarity consumption' and 'sustainable consumption'. Although these expressions share common core values, they all have a different emphasis.

Secondly, it examines the literature on existing organisations linked to 'ethical consumption' in Chile, such as NGOs, small and large businesses as well as state organisations - all of which offer ethical products or have links with 'ethical consumption' one way or the other.

Thirdly, based on available studies and surveys, the report provides a characterisation of the Chilean version of the 'ethical consumer', showing their perceptions, values and practices linked to 'responsible consumption'.

In general terms we can say that 'ethical consumption' is still a nascent phenomenon in Chile. A proof of this is the relative scarcity of academic research on this matter. In addition to this lack of information, there is a divergence between the abstract discourse and the most common practical actions around 'responsible consumption'. This divergence in turn has proved a challenge for existing 'ethical consumption' initiatives.

This divergence can be specifically observed in the variety of existing research topics (CSR, solidarity economy, consumer rights, etc.); in the different types of consumers engaging on 'responsible consumption' practices; in the asymmetry of the existing information on corporate behaviour and different types of organisations involved - they differ in their nature and CSR interests.

This report was developed as part of the international Project called '*Leveraging Buying Power for Development: Ethical Consumption and Public Procurement in Chile and Brazil*' financed by ESRC and DFID, both from the UK. In Chile, the Project was carried out by a team of researchers from Universidad Diego Portales (Chile) and the Chilean NGO Fundación Ciudadano Responsable. The other project partners were: Royal Holloway, University of London; the NGO Ethical Consumer Research Association (ECRA); Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro and the Brazilian NGO Instituto Akatu.

The studies analysed in the report point to significant differences between discourses and practices among consumers in relation to their ethical buying behaviour. Not many Chilean consumers prioritise sustainability when making shopping decisions. However, a strong focus on saving money leads to sustainable actions, even if the primary motivation is to guard the personal and/or family resources and steer clear of debt. Therefore, saving energy and planning their shopping are the most common practices among Chilean consumers. Actions that involve spending more money on a product, or that require a personal effort, such as going further to buy organic produce or do recycling, are less common.

It is precisely this particularity that makes us raise the question: shouldn't 'ethical consumption' be defined in a different way in different cultural contexts? 'Ethical consumption' discourses are popular in high-income economies in Europe and North America. However, this and related concepts cannot be simply applied as a 1-to-1 copy in each country but are culturally embedded in each country context. Our research shows the need to understand and conceptualise 'ethical' and 'responsible consumption' in a way which takes into consideration the institutional settings, as well as the social, economic, political and cultural context of each country.

The full report can be downloaded from the ERSC-DFID Choices website:

<http://sustainablechoices.info>