

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT POLICY BY THE BRAZILIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

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Abstract:

This article investigates Brazilian government initiatives at the federal level that aim to align public procurement with social and/or environmental criteria. It should be clear that, unlike decisions typically reached by individual consumers, government procurement should not only consider economic factors. Other factors, such as environmental and social protection, should also be considered through the process of public procurement.

Currently, citizens are intensifying their demand for administrations to adopt an overall “greener” approach that, in Brazil, brought changes to a Federal Law and the promulgation of a directive with rules about sustainable public procurement. Basically, the directive includes criteria to support the decision of procurement officials in such a way that their purchasing guidelines can require products containing a minimum amount of recycled content or achieving specified levels of energy efficiency. Furthermore, it is important to note that the procurement official’s decision is quite complex, since they should take environmental criteria without reducing the competitiveness of the bidding process.

Although the use of public procurement to achieve social and environmental outcomes is widespread, detailed information about how it operates is often sketchy and difficult to find. Here, necessary data to evaluate the performance of that policy are obtained from the Management Report, sent, annually and by electronic means, by each public federal agency to the Brazilian Supreme Audit Institution (hereafter called “Tribunal de Contas da União” or “TCU”). Based on the reports, we analyse the responses given by public managers of that agencies that concerns with environmental management and sustainable public procurement. The public managers are requested to answer about: inclusion of environmental criteria in public purchasing procedures, quantity of purchased products with recycled content, use of environmental label or certification as a decision criteria, acquisition of cleaner vehicles or purchasing of vehicles that use alternative fuels and proper disposal of solid waste produced by their activities.

From the results, we found that for almost 40% of Brazilian public agencies, at the federal level, was not yet included any environmental and/or social criteria in your public purchasing procedures and only 7,5% of such agencies are considering integrally the procedures adopted by the policy directive. Besides, we suggest that the policy should be changed to use the monetary value as argument for the purchasing decision. Obviously, this value should take the full range of economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of public procurement into account, in order to assure the attainment of the policy's main objective that is promote sustainable consumption in Brazil.