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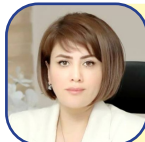
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CONTENTS

The role and prospects of innovations in uzbekistan's strategy for transition to a green economy	4
Abdurakhmanova Gulnora Kalandarovna	
Evaluation of the vape category among e-cigarette smokers in Uzbekistan.....	9
S.M. Mirzaliev, G.K. Abdurakhmanova, M.O. Kurolov, Judy Smetana, Krissy Lewis	
Features of the south korean education system and possibilities of their application in Uzbekistan	23
Mukhamadjanov Shakhriyor Solijon ugli	
Exploring the directions of sustainable development of tourism in uzbekistan.....	28
Khusniddin Egamnazarov	
Influence of the number of workers on the profitability of enterprises	35
Gafurova Azizaxon Fatixovna	
Strategies for differentiating teaching instructions in the esp classroom	39
Shahnoza Berdiyeva Xolmaxmatovna	
Factors affecting remote services of banking	43
Khudoyorov O.O.	
Digital transformation of manufacturing	48
Kudaynazarova Dilnaz Koshkarbaevna	
Forming important methods for nurturing students' educational initiatives based on national-cultural approaches	54
Azimova Nilufar Nuriddinovna	
The multifaceted dimensions of poverty in Asia: a comprehensive analysis.....	61
Amirdjanova Sitara Sunnat kizi	
Spiral models of innovative development: triple, quadruple and five helix models.....	66
Sultanova Munisa Samat kizi	
Strategic development of mice tourism in Spain: trends and implications	72
Bahromov Behzod, Egamnazarov Husniddin	
Development of food market infrastructure	77
Daminova Ugiloy Mirzakul kizi	
The mechanisms for developing students' motivation for independent learning through educational project technology	83
Kasimova (Mulladjanova) Nasiba Azimdjanovna	
Program-based budgeting and its application potential in Uzbekistan.....	89
Ganieva Malika Maksudovna	
Management of integrated manufacturing enterprises	92
Tursunova Zarnigor Rustamovna	
Building a sustainable workforce: the role of green hrm in driving corporate environmental responsibility.....	96
Omanova Nargiza Rustam kizi	
The main features of e-commerce dynamics in world countries.....	105
Dilafruz Sodikova	
Theoretical foundations and macroeconomic impact of foreign direct investment: insights and implications for developing economies	113
Ibragimov Ganijon Gayratovich	
Ethical views of eastern intellectuals on the formation of personality culture	118
Berdibaev Aydos Tolibaevich	
Algorithm for the development and evaluation of the efficiency of energy-saving measures for fuel oil farms of thermal power plants	121
Khamdamova Gavhar Absamatovna	
Development of the silk industry based on innovative activities in the republic of uzbekistan	126
Aliyeva Nadirakhon Abdumalikovna	

Analysis of investments in real capital of Uzbekistan.....	130
Sayfullaeva Madina Ismatovna	
Green energy development tendencies in the world.....	134
Jabborov Xurshid Toramurod ogli	
Economic incentive mechanisms for eco-labelled suppliers in public procurement.....	139
Isoqulova Munisxon Abdurasul qizi	

ECONOMIC INCENTIVE MECHANISMS FOR ECO-LABELLED SUPPLIERS IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

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Abstract: Over the past decade, public procurement has increasingly been recognized as a strategic tool for promoting the transition to a green economy. International experience from the OECD, the European Union, Japan, and South Korea demonstrates that eco-labeling and targeted institutional incentives significantly enhance the environmental effectiveness of public procurement. In Uzbekistan, reforms implemented between 2019 and 2023 have laid the initial legal and strategic foundations for green public procurement. However, the application of environmental criteria remains largely voluntary, and institutional mechanisms require further development.

This study analyzes national reforms in light of international best practices and proposes a set of measures to strengthen Uzbekistan's public procurement system. Key recommendations include integrating eco-labeling as a mandatory or prioritized criterion, providing financial incentives, eliminating additional guarantee requirements for certified participants, building institutional capacity and establishing monitoring systems to evaluate environmental and economic outcomes. Implementing these measures is expected to accelerate Uzbekistan's transition to a sustainable economy, support local green producers, and optimize long-term socio-economic and ecological benefits.

Key words: Green Public Procurement, Eco-labeling, Environmental Sustainability, Institutional Incentives, Public Procurement Reform, Sustainable Economy, Uzbekistan, Green Economy Transition, Eco-Certification, Resource Efficiency.

Annotatsiya: So'nggi o'n yillikda davlat xaridlari yashil iqtisodiyotga o'tishni rag'batlantiruvchi strategik vosita sifatida tobora e'tirof etilmoqda. Iqtisodiy hamkorlik va taraqqiyot tasgiloti (OECD), Yevropa Ittifoqi, Yaponiya va Janubiy Koreya tajribasi ekologik belgilar va institutsional rag'batlar davlat xaridlarining ekologik samaradorligini oshirishda muhim ekanligini ko'rsatadi. O'zbekistonda 2019–2023 yillarda amalga oshirilgan islohotlar dastlabki huquqiy va strategik asoslarni yaratdi, biroq ekologik mezonlarning qo'llanilishi asosan ixtiyoriy bo'lib qolmoqda. Ushbu tadqiqot milliy islohotlarni xalqaro tajriba kontekstida tahlil qiladi va ekologik belgilashni majburiy yoki ustuvor mezon sifatida joriy etish, moliyaviy rag'batlar berish, qo'shimcha kafolat talablarini bekor qilish, institutsional salohiyatni oshirish va monitoring tizimlarini yaratish kabi tavsiyalarni taklif etadi. Ushbu choralar O'zbekistonning barqaror iqtisodiyotga o'tishini tezlashtiradi va mahalliy yashil ishlab chiqaruvchilarni qo'llab-quvvatlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: yashil davlat xaridlari, ekologik markirovkalash, institutsional rag'batlar, vositachilik yig'imi, davlat xaridlari islohotlari, barqaror iqtisodiyot, Yashil iqtisodiyotga o'tish strategiyasi, qo'shimcha zakalat mablag'lari, resurslardan samarali foydalanish.

Аннотация: За последние годы государственные закупки становятся стратегическим инструментом для стимулирования перехода к зелёной экономике. Опыт Организации экономического сотрудничества и развития (ОЭСР), Европейского Союза, Японии и Южной Кореи показывает, что экологическая маркировка и институциональные стимулы существенно повышают экологическую эффективность государственных закупок. В Узбекистане реформы, проведённые в 2019–2023 годах, заложили первоначальные правовые и стратегические основы зелёных государственных закупок, однако применение экологических критериев остаётся в основном добровольным.

В данной статье национальные реформы анализируются в контексте международного опыта и предлагаются меры, включая внедрение экологической маркировки в качестве обязательного или приоритетного критерия, предоставление финансовых стимулов, отмену требований по дополнительным гарантиям, укрепление институционального потенциала и создание систем мониторинга. Реализация этих мер позволит ускорить переход Узбекистана к устойчивой экономике и поддержать местных «зелёных» производителей.

Ключевые слова: зелёные государственные закупки, экологическая маркировка, институциональные стимулы, посреднические сборы, реформы государственных закупок, устойчивая экономика, стратегия перехода к зелёной экономике, дополнительные гарантийные средства, эффективное использование ресурсов.

INTRODUCTION

Global climate change, the increasing scarcity of natural resources, and the rising anthropogenic pressure on the environment are compelling governments to reconsider their economic policies and institutional mechanisms. Public procurement systems play a critical strategic role in achieving sustainable development objectives, serving as a powerful tool to regulate economic activity, influence market behavior and promote environmentally responsible practices. According to the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), public procurement accounts for approximately 12–20% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in most countries, reaching up to 25% in certain cases. This significant share underscores the potential of public procurement to steer markets toward sustainability, guide producers toward compliance with environmental standards, and increase the share of eco-friendly products and services.

Within this context, eco-labelling emerges as a key instrument for signaling environmental quality and sustainability credentials in products, works and services. Eco-labelled suppliers participating in public procurement are uniquely positioned to advance green objectives, but they often face higher transaction and certification costs. Consequently, economic and administrative incentives — such as fee reductions on intermediary charges and waivers of additional performance guarantees—are increasingly recognized as effective mechanisms for promoting sustainable procurement. These incentives help compensate for additional compliance costs, reduce bureaucratic burdens and enhance the competitiveness of environmentally responsible suppliers in the procurement process.

The purpose of this study is threefold. First, it aims to explore the theoretical foundations of incentivizing eco-labelled suppliers in public procurement, providing a comprehensive review of economic, institutional and policy-oriented perspectives. Second, the study examines the chronological evolution of these mechanisms in international practice, highlighting relevant case studies from the European Union, Japan, South Korea, the United States, and Canada. Third, it investigates the applicability and necessity of adopting such incentive-based approaches in the context of the national economy of Uzbekistan, where green procurement policies are increasingly recognized as vital for fostering sustainable economic growth and environmental protection.

By analyzing these issues, the study seeks to establish a rigorous theoretical and empirical basis for the integration of economic incentives into public procurement systems, thereby facilitating market transitions toward sustainability, enhancing environmental innovation, and promoting the adoption of eco-labelled products and services in state procurement processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE TOPIC

To date, public procurement practices incorporating eco-labelling have not been sufficiently standardized or fully validated across national and international contexts (OECD, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Despite growing recognition of Green Public Procurement (GPP) as a strategic instrument for achieving sustainable development objectives, empirical studies indicate that the integration of eco-labelled products, works and services into procurement processes remains inconsistent and context-dependent (UNEP, 2020; European Commission, 2021). In particular, the application of financial and administrative incentives—such as reductions in intermediary fees for eco-labelled suppliers or waivers of performance guarantees—has been variably implemented, resulting in heterogeneous outcomes in terms of supplier participation, market competitiveness and environmental performance (OECD, 2022; World Bank, 2021).

Academic literature and international reports have increasingly emphasized the role of eco-labelling as a signaling mechanism to identify environmentally responsible suppliers within public procurement systems. Suppliers with recognized environmental certifications often face higher upfront costs due to compliance, monitoring and reporting requirements, which can create barriers to participation in government tenders (UNEP, 2020; European Commission, 2021). Consequently, several authors and policy frameworks have proposed targeted economic incentives as an effective mechanism to enhance supplier engagement while maintaining environmental integrity and procurement efficiency (OECD, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Such incentives include fee reductions for eco-certified suppliers and the removal of additional collateral or performance guarantees, designed to lower financial barriers and promote market entry for sustainable suppliers.

The literature review demonstrates that while GPP and eco-labelling are widely recognized strategies for promoting sustainability in public procurement, practical implementation remains uneven. According to OECD (2022), effective GPP requires alignment between procurement policies, environmental standards, and supplier incentives, including mechanisms to reduce administrative and financial barriers. Similarly, World Bank guidance highlights the importance of embedding sustainability criteria throughout the procurement lifecycle, from tender design to contract management, to ensure that eco-labelled suppliers are adequately incentivized and market adoption is enhanced (World Bank, 2021).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, multi-method research design aligned with the analytical frameworks commonly applied in OECD, green finance, and sustainable public procurement research. The methodological approach reflects international best practices in policy evaluation, institutional analysis, and regulatory assessment, ensuring relevance for high-impact Scopus-indexed journals in the fields of environmental economics, public finance, and public policy.

A chronological analysis was applied to examine the evolution of environmental labeling systems and green public procurement (GPP) policies from the 1970s to 2023. This method enabled the identification of key policy milestones, institutional transformations, and shifts in financing mechanisms supporting environmentally sustainable public purchasing, in line with OECD policy development stages.

An institutional analysis was conducted to assess the role of financial, fiscal, and administrative incentive mechanisms embedded within public procurement systems. Particular attention was given to green finance instruments—such as preferential procurement criteria, life-cycle costing, eco-label eligibility requirements, and budgetary incentives—that influence procurement behavior and promote low-carbon and environmentally sustainable outcomes.

A comparative analysis was employed to systematically compare green public procurement frameworks across selected OECD and partner economies, namely the European Union, Japan, South Korea, the United States, and Canada. This approach enabled the identification of convergences and divergences in regulatory design, financing mechanisms, and implementation capacity, as well as the extraction of transferable best practices relevant for emerging and transition economies.

A regulatory and legal analysis focused on official policy documents, strategies, and standards issued by the OECD, UNEP, ISO, and the European Commission, alongside relevant national legislation and procurement guidelines. This analysis provided a structured assessment of the normative, legal, and financial foundations underpinning environmental labeling and green public procurement systems, with particular emphasis on their alignment with sustainable finance principles and climate policy objectives.

Finally, logical analysis and synthesis were employed to integrate findings across all methodological components. This process facilitated the development of evidence-based conclusions and policy recommendations aimed at strengthening green finance mechanisms within public procurement systems and enhancing their contribution to environmental and climate objectives.

Overall, the application of this OECD-aligned, multi-method qualitative framework ensures analytical rigor, strengthens cross-country comparability, and enhances the policy relevance and robustness of the study's conclusions.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The concept of environmental labeling first took shape in the 1970s within the framework of environmental economics theory, when ideas were advanced on how to improve market mechanisms to reduce the external environmental impacts of economic activity (i.e., environmental externalities). Early academic and policy discussions emphasized using market-based instruments to inform consumers and internalize environmental costs.

In the 1980s, Germany introduced the Blue Angel (“Blauer Engel”) environmental label, which is recognized as one of the first institutionalized ecolabel programs in the world, designed to identify products and services with lower environmental impacts on a voluntary basis. The Blue Angel was established by the Federal Ministry for the Environment in 1978 and became a model for many subsequent ecolabel initiatives globally.

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro emphasized the importance of environmental information disclosure and informing consumers as essential elements of sustainable development. This landmark event provided international policy impetus for expanding environmental labeling and other information tools to assist consumers in making environmentally sound choices.

Green Public Procurement (GPP) has increasingly been recognized as a strategic policy instrument for promoting sustainable consumption, reducing environmental externalities, and supporting green market development. According to the OECD, by the early 2020s more than 90% of OECD member countries had adopted national GPP policies or incorporated environmental criteria into public procurement frameworks, reflecting the growing role of procurement as a demand-side sustainability tool.

Foreign experience

The European Union has progressively developed a regulatory framework for green public procurement (GPP) since the early 2000s. Environmental considerations were first clarified in the 2004 Public Procurement

Directives, which allowed environmental criteria and labels to be used in procurement specifications. Directive 2014/24/EU continues this approach by explicitly permitting contracting authorities to reference environmental labels, including the EU Ecolabel, in technical specifications and award criteria, provided that such labels are transparent, objective, and accessible to all interested parties. Under this framework, EU member states have discretion in how they implement GPP, including through supportive measures aimed at facilitating participation.

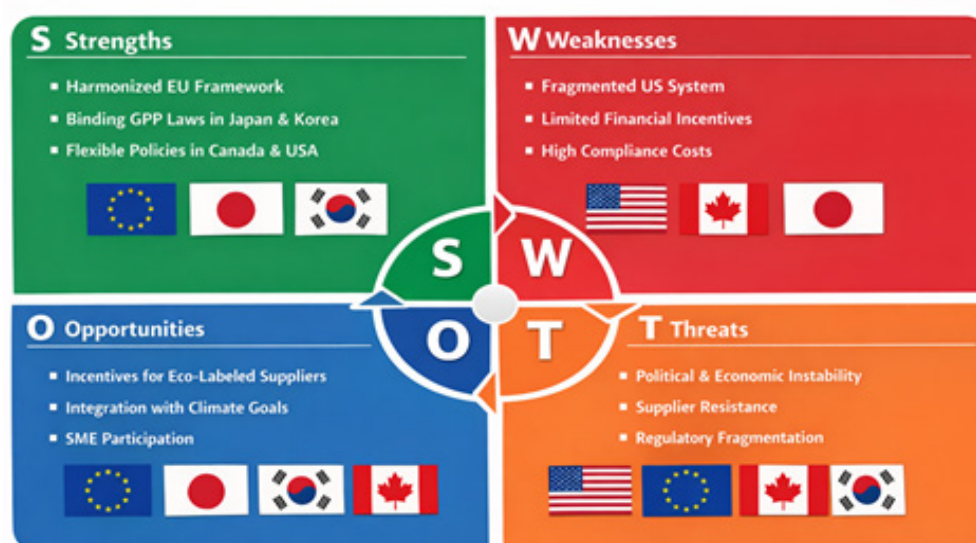
Japan's approach to green public procurement is founded on the Act on Promotion of Procurement of Eco-Friendly Goods and Services by the State and Other Entities (often called the Green Purchasing Act), enacted in 2000 and enforced from 2001. Under this law, national government institutions are obligated to consider environmental factors when purchasing goods and services, based on criteria established in a Basic Policy issued by the Ministry of the Environment.

South Korea has established one of the most prescriptive green public procurement systems globally through the Act on the Promotion of the Purchase of Green Products, enacted in 2005. The introduction of Minimum Green Standards, operationalized primarily from 2010, has further strengthened this framework by setting mandatory environmental requirements for selected product categories.

Canada's green public procurement framework is anchored in the Policy on Green Procurement, first adopted in 2006. Green procurement is implemented in conjunction with the Greening Government Strategy which emphasizes life-cycle-based decision-making, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, waste, and toxic substances, and the purchase of environmentally preferable goods and services.

In the United States, green public procurement is implemented through a combination of federal executive directives, provisions within the Federal Acquisition Regulation, agency-level guidelines and state-level initiatives. At the federal level, sustainable procurement policies promote energy efficiency, recycled and bio-based content, the use of environmentally preferable products.

At the subnational level, initiatives such as the Buy Clean California Act (2017) represent more stringent and targeted approaches, requiring the use of low-emission construction materials in public infrastructure projects. Overall, the U.S. green public procurement model is characterized by regulatory fragmentation alongside a growing emphasis on climate-related procurement criteria (pic.1).



Pic.1. Comparative SWOT Matrix of Green Public Procurement Systems (up to 2023)

From a comparative perspective, the EU, Japan and South Korea demonstrate more institutionalized and coordinated GPP frameworks, often supported by standardized environmental labeling systems and administrative incentives. Canada and the United States, while increasingly integrating environmental criteria, rely more heavily on policy guidance and decentralized implementation mechanisms. These structural differences significantly shape the scope, consistency and enforcement of green public procurement practices across jurisdictions.

From an analytical standpoint, these differences highlight the critical role of institutional design, incentive structures, and enforcement capacity in determining the effectiveness of GPP systems. Strong legal mandates, coordinated administrative frameworks, and credible monitoring mechanisms appear to be key drivers of sustained GPP performance. At the same time, the SWOT analysis indicates that even advanced systems face

persistent threats, including political and economic instability, supplier resistance, and regulatory fragmentation, which can undermine long-term policy credibility (pic.2).



Pic.2. Comparative analysis of green public procurement systems

Overall, the comparative evidence suggests that effective GPP implementation requires a balanced approach: institutionalized frameworks to ensure consistency and accountability, combined with targeted financial and administrative incentives to encourage supplier participation and innovation. This conclusion is consistent with OECD analytical frameworks, which emphasize policy coherence, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building as central prerequisites for leveraging public procurement as a strategic tool for advancing green economy transitions.

Over the past decade, public procurement has increasingly been viewed as an important demand-side tool for facilitating the transition to a green economy. Experiences from the OECD, the European Union, Japan, and South Korea demonstrate that eco-labeling and institutional incentive mechanisms play a decisive role in enhancing the environmental efficiency of public procurement. Taking these approaches into account, reforms implemented in Uzbekistan between 2019 and 2023 have been analyzed, and proposals for improving the national system have been developed.

In Uzbekistan's strategy for transitioning to a green economy for 2019–2030, the role of public procurement in environmental transformation is explicitly defined. In particular, the strategy envisions the gradual introduction of requirements in public procurement aimed at resource efficiency, energy efficiency, and reducing negative environmental impacts.

By now, under the framework of the Law on Public Procurement, environmental requirements and voluntary environmental criteria had begun to be applied in certain sectors. According to OECD analyses, during this period, environmental elements in Uzbekistan's public procurement were mainly recommendatory, and their application was not centralized. At the same time, the eco-labeling system was not yet fully developed institutionally, and the share of certified products remained limited.

In the European Union, public procurement has systematically increased demand for environmentally friendly products through eco-labeling (EU Ecolabel) and unified GPP criteria. In Japan and South Korea, laws such as the Green Purchasing Act have introduced administrative and financial incentives for products with eco-labels. These practices encourage local producers to comply with standards while ensuring long-term budgetary efficiency.

The experience of the United States and Canada, by contrast, is more decentralized: environmental criteria are primarily implemented through policy directives and voluntary programs, which has led to inconsistent sustainability outcomes across regions.

Taking into account Uzbekistan's existing institutional framework, it is considered appropriate to actively promote eco-labeling in public procurement. In particular, for participants in public procurement whose goods, works or services have eco-labeling certification or meet environmental labeling requirements, the intermediary fees applied during tender procedures could be reduced by 30 percent. International practice shows that financial incentives for "green" public procurement generally range between 20–35 percent. For example, in EU countries, products with environmental certification are given priority scores of up to 20–30 percent in procurement evaluation. In Japan, suppliers with eco-labeled products benefit from partial reimbursement of administrative costs during tender procedures, providing an average economic relief of 25–30 percent. In South Korea, participation in public procurement with products included in the "Green Products" list can result in additional financial benefits equivalent to up to 30 percent. In this sense, 30 percent is considered an optimal incentive level in international practice.

Furthermore, eliminating the requirement for participants to provide additional guarantee (collateral) funds can reduce their financial burden. Not requiring additional guarantees from public procurement participants with eco-labeling certification reflects the institutional guarantee role of environmental certification, aligns with trust-based approaches used internationally and strengthens competition by reducing financial barriers.

It is also necessary to encourage local producers to adopt "green" standards through partial compensation of eco-certification costs or tax-administrative incentives. International experience demonstrates that such mechanisms effectively motivate local producers to meet environmental standards. This approach reduces financial barriers for environmentally compliant products, particularly expanding participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in public procurement, and helps increase the market share of sustainable and environmentally friendly products. Practices in the European Union, Japan and other countries show that supporting certification does not create an excessive burden on the state budget; on the contrary, in the long term, it enhances efficient resource use, reduces environmental risks and attracts green investments, thereby improving socio-economic efficiency.

Therefore, adapting and implementing these mechanisms in the context of Uzbekistan is considered an important institutional factor for transforming the public procurement system environmentally. These recommendations align with EU and East Asian practices and are expected to support the growth of Uzbekistan's green market through public procurement. Moreover, it helps to attract green investments and ensure long-term efficient use of budgetary funds.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The integration of environmental criteria into public procurement has significant potential to accelerate Uzbekistan's green economy agenda. Experiences from leading countries demonstrate that eco-labeling and targeted incentives drive compliance with environmental standards and stimulate market demand for sustain-

able products. Uzbekistan's current framework provides a foundation, but strengthening institutional mechanisms and introducing structured incentives are necessary to maximize the impact of green public procurement.

In conclusion, Uzbekistan stands at a pivotal point in reforming its public procurement system to advance environmental sustainability. The adoption of well-designed mechanisms, informed by international best practices, can enhance institutional capacity, incentivize local producers and generate lasting socio-economic and environmental benefits.

Based on the foregoing analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Make eco-labeling a formal requirement in public procurement tenders and provide scoring advantages for certified products.
2. Offer financial incentives, such as reduced intermediary fees and partial compensation for certification costs to encourage participation.
3. Provide a 30% reduction in intermediary fees for public procurement participants who possess environmental labeling documentation and offer eco-labelled goods, works or services, in order to strengthen financial incentives for environmentally responsible suppliers.
4. Eliminate the requirement for additional guarantee (collateral) funds for participants with eco-labeled products in public procurement.
5. Develop clear institutional guidelines and provide training for procurement officials and suppliers.
6. Monitor and evaluate the environmental, economic, and social impacts of green procurement initiatives regularly.
7. Remove additional guarantee requirements for eco-certified suppliers to reduce financial barriers.

International experience shows that eco-labeling, when institutionally integrated with the public procurement system, accelerates the transition to a green economy. In Uzbekistan, the legal and strategic framework has provided initial steps in this direction. However, introducing clear financial and administrative incentives for participants with eco-labeled products would significantly enhance the environmental effectiveness of public procurement. Strengthening Uzbekistan's public procurement system through eco-labeling, financial incentives and streamlined procedures can promote environmental sustainability, support local producers, and enhance long-term socio-economic and ecological outcomes.

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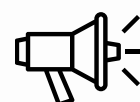
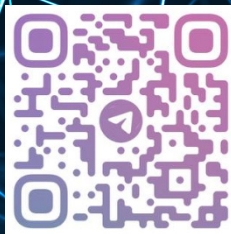
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