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Korea to Develop Eco-Design Evaluation Standards for the Global Market

- National Institute of Environmental Research launches product evaluation standards research to support Korean-style eco-design system

The National Institute of Environmental Research (NIER, President Park Yeon Jae), under the Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment (MCEE), announced that it will hold a research kickoff meeting on August 5 at Bieum Seojae near Seoul Station (located in Yongsan-gu, Seoul) to develop standards for objectively evaluating eco-design products, in support of the government's policy initiative to introduce a Korean-style eco-design system.

Eco-design is an environmentally friendly approach to product design that minimizes waste by ensuring products are designed from the outset to last longer, be easier to repair, and be easier to recycle at the end of their life cycle.

In July 2024, the European Union (EU) brought into force the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), requiring most products sold in the European market to comply with strengthened environmental standards from the design stage. Beginning in 2027 with textiles and apparel, the regulation will be phased in across all product categories.

Accordingly, the research being undertaken by the NIER focuses on establishing standards that provide objective criteria for measuring and evaluating environmentally friendly products.

The research team plans to conduct a comprehensive review of the

evaluation standards and methodologies already used by the EU and the international community to establish evaluation standards for the “horizontal requirements”^{*} that can be applied across multiple product categories, as well as standards for the textiles and apparel sector, where the regulation will first take effect.

^{*} Ease of repair, recycled material content, recyclability, etc.

The findings from this research are expected to provide a key foundation for helping Korean companies proactively respond to increasingly stringent overseas environmental regulations and strengthen their export competitiveness in the global market. They are also expected to support the transition to a circular economy by reducing waste through greater resource circulation.

Building on this research, the NIER plans to gradually expand the scope of assessment to include products such as tires, furniture, and electronic appliances. Through long-term research, it also intends to provide ongoing support to ensure the Korean-style eco-design system becomes firmly established across domestic industries.

Park Jeong-min, Director General for the Environmental Resource Research Department at the NIER, said, “This research will help Korean companies remain competitive amid evolving global environmental regulations while laying the groundwork for the transition to a resource-circulating society.” She added, “We will work closely with industry to establish practical and reasonable evaluation standards tailored to Korea’s circumstances.”