



UNEP/ SETAC Life Cycle Initiative


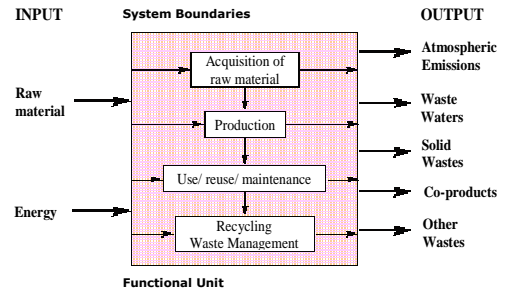
Towards Global Guidance for Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) Databases
 - Why this process & What it is? An Introduction




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Why databases are important in Life Cycle Assessment ?

ISO 14040 series





Motivation

- **Need for international guidance** to guarantee an efficient allocation of resources, to ensure reliability and quality.
- Decision in 2007 to produce a **manual on developing a countries' LCAdata for energy systems**.
- However, the manual has **not been finalized** yet due to the important amount of diverging comments.
- Discussions indicate that there are a **number of contentious issues** around the way how to develop a LCA database
- The idea was born of a **workshop to address both political and technical issues** related to LCA database guidance:
 - Political issues include the agreement on principles at the global level on **how to set up and govern LCA databases**.
 - On the technical side the UNEP-SETAC International LCA database guidance should **cover requirements on goal & scope, modelling, quality, documentation and review**.



Vision statement

- To provide global guidance on the establishment and maintenance of LCA databases, as the basis for future improved interlinkages of databases worldwide.
- To facilitate additional data generation (including for certain applications such as carbon and water footprint creation) and to enhance overall data accessibility.
- To increase the credibility of existing LCA data, through the provision of such guidance, especially as it relates to usability for various purposes.
- To support a sound scientific basis for product stewardship in business & industry and life cycle based policies in governments, and ultimately, to help advance the sustainability of products.

This should complement other ongoing initiatives.


Objectives of a workshop

- Move towards global guidance on LCA databases by providing a **platform to conclude on common agreements in the area of LCA databases and find ways to overcome remaining challenges**, e.g.:
 - context of regional and national as well as industry database initiatives in a globalised world
 - relationship of unit versus systems data
 - role of data from Input-Output Analysis
 - overall guarantee of data quality and transparency
 - relationship of inventory and life cycle impact assessment
- **Striving towards consensus** by identifying the expected agreements among the leading LCA database experts worldwide and by drafting a LCA database guidance document based on this.
- **Focusing on life cycle inventories (but covering the relation to life cycle impact assessment), not being sector-specific and not coming up with a common database format.**
- **Guidance then available for each regional and national as well as industry database initiatives to support their efforts.**


Procedures

- The entire process including the **5-day workshop** and a related **1-day symposium**, both tentatively scheduled for 2010/11, are **organized by the Secretariat of Life Cycle Initiative** on behalf of UNEP and SETAC.
- **The International Life Cycle Initiative's Board (ILCB)** appointed a chair and a co-chair from UNEP and SETAC as neutral 2010 process moderator, and in addition **10 steering committee members** from governments, industry and academia and civil society. The Steering Committee to be **further extended based on further suggestions from ILCB**.
- None of the **existing LCA guidance documents** will be used as a starting point for the discussions but stakeholders have been approached in **advance** to provide their inputs, based on which an **annotated outline will be prepared** for guidance document.
- The **Steering Committee will mobilise resources for the workshop** and **select the Workshop chair and co-chair and appoint facilitators** for breakout groups to be established during the 2010 Workshop.
- The Secretariat will prepare a **list of around 40 participants to be invited to the Workshop**, in close collaboration with Steering Committee for consideration by the ILCB.



Governing principles

- All parties accept UNEP and SETAC as the organizations that facilitates and organizes the process guided by the steering committee to develop a common UNEP/SETAC Global LCA database guidance.
- Preference will not be given to any participating stakeholder, in particular any single database providers, and they are treated as equal parties in the decision process needed to come to a common UNEP/SETAC Global LCA database guidance.
- All parties may, in spite of their contribution to the guidance development, deviate when dealing with their own stakeholders on specific policy objectives.
- All parties understand and accept that its own policy objectives may not coincide with those of other parties involved.
- All parties accept that reaching the ultimate goal of a globally accepted guidance is a process that may take considerable time, and all parties commit themselves to help reaching this goal by showing patience and respect to deviating opinions, ambitions and goals. A time table will be developed by the steering committee to allow participants a full understanding of the expected time frame.



Conflict resolution mechanisms

Full consensus for agreements is the first option. Failing that, best consensus will be sought in the following way:

1. If there is consensus on a best practice approach: Recommend a single approach
 2. If support is split between two or more best practice approaches: Offer a choice and make conflict explicit.
 3. If there is no agreement on two or more best practice approaches: Offer no guidance, give case studies or address qualitatively
 4. If the group agrees the issue should not be addressed in this guidance document (i.e. format, nomenclature and impact assessment) : Provide rational for omission in the document
 5. In any case allow for minority statements and recommendations, if asked for by the minority.
- All efforts should be made to achieve consensus on each aspect of the guidance document. If the workshop participants are unable to reach a consensus, they are asked to provide a set of options, indicating the relevant pros and cons of each option.
 - In the case of no consensus, every participant will have the possibility to mark a strong diverging opinion as "fundamental difference". In that case, the diverging opinion will be noted and documented in final document.



Guidance documents and related ones received

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| •Ecoinvent International | •Japan |
| •Environmental services (Veolia Environment) | •Paper and Board |
| •France | •PAS2050 |
| •India | •Plastics (Europe) |
| •International Reference Life Cycle Data System (ILCD) | •Sustainable Building and Climate Initiative |
| | •U.S.A. |
| | •WorldSteel |



Next steps

- A. Final Workshop Steering Committee Formation
- B. Final Program Development
- C. Acquisition of Financial Assistance
- D. Invitation of Workshop Participants
- E. Management of Workshop Logistics
- F. Activities to ensure a wide acceptance of the outcomes in the wider expert community