

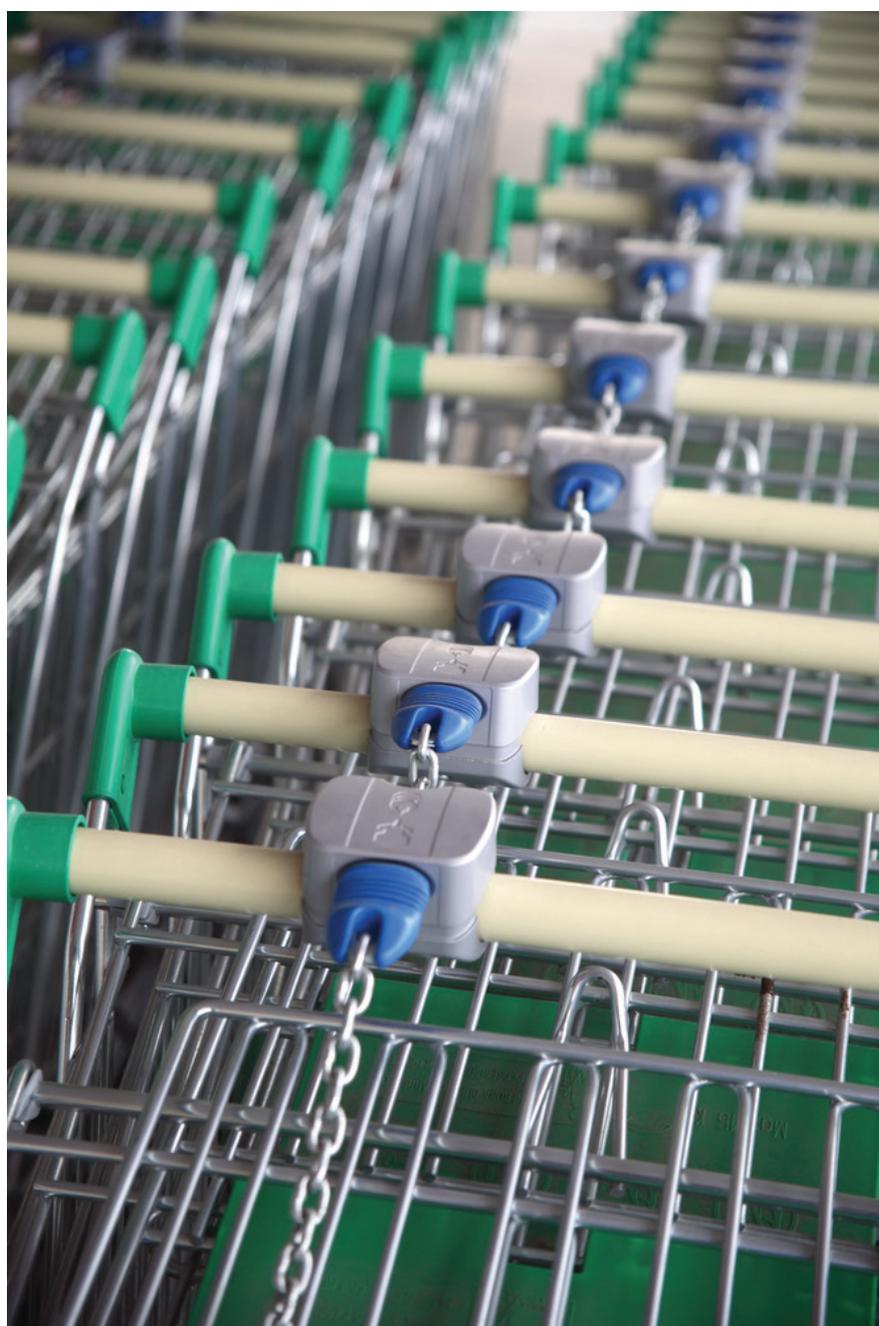
SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME - CRADLE TO RETAIL EMISSIONS ASSESSMENT REVEALS THE TRUE IMPACT OF A RETAIL PRODUCT

Measuring your company's impacts, as a retailer or a manufacturer is the first step for any sustainability action plan. However, the full functionality of these assessments, such as carbon footprint and life cycle assessment (LCA), is not often utilised. Following implementation of so-called "green" product categories, data collection and analysis often end up on the shelf. As sustainability initiatives become global, more can be done to make the most of the information gathered.

Emissions associated with imports have increased by 74% for consumer products in the last 20 years, according to a recent report from the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The carbon footprint of imported products also showed an increase, of 39%. Overall, this represents 51% of the greenhouse gas footprint for the UK, equivalent to 506mt CO₂. A similar communication has been made recently by the French Agency for the Environment and Energy Management (ADEME, with RAC and CITEPA) where an increase of 64% has been reported. Also, 43% of France's greenhouse gas footprint results from imported emissions. Thus, it is important to emphasise that reporting only on Scope 1 emissions prevents transparent communication of the environmental performance of products with bias from approximately 65% to 90%.

PILOT SCHEME IN PROGRESS

Food products contribute to almost 28% of the UK's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Meat and dairy products, as well as bread and cereals are among the major sources. The Co-operative Group, Nestle and Sainsbury's have signed up to a pilot scheme that will examine ways to prevent waste, improve energy and water consumption whilst reducing GHG emissions across their supply chains. For example, Sainsbury's will focus on improving the environmental performance of its non-vegetarian food products, while Nestle aims to improve collaboration with its principal milk supplier in the UK, to develop a new working method.



Bob Gordon, the British Retail Consortium's environmental policy adviser, said this initiative showed that retailers were committed to sustainability and driving down environmental impacts: "Reducing reliance on water, for example, should help ensure that supply chains remain resilient and dependable even at times when water is scarce."

Sustainability is not only about carbon footprinting. This type of initiative may be high on the public agenda at the moment but there are other opportunities for companies to evaluate and improve their products' environmental performance. Many similar initiatives are taking place in Europe and SGS is actively participating in a number of these.

TOWARDS A UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT METHODOLOGY?

Naturally, this is a progressive approach to simplify consumer choice and encourage suppliers to produce goods more responsibly. A larger number of products will be evaluated in order to better assist consumers in their purchases. Market trends, regulations, best practices and recommendations for government agencies are regularly scanned to update thresholds and follow up improvements made by suppliers to their products.

Lead by the need to reduce confusion of green claims of multiple origins, and promote resource efficiency, the European Commission sets the root of a common methodology for the quantitative assessment of environmental impacts of products throughout their life cycle.

Very recently, the European Commission has launched the first wave of the pilot phase for Product and Organisation Environmental Footprints (PEF and OEF). Every product will be concerned, except food and drink, for which the second wave will start in early 2014.

PEF and OEF final methodologies will embrace carbon footprint, water footprint, chemical footprint, EMAS and ISO14001/14025/14044 standards.



During a three-year period, participating companies will be able to provide their feedback on the framework establishing sector-specific methods for intermediate or final product assessment, with the following objectives:

- Validate the Product Category Rules (PCR) for harmonised communication of results.
- Test different approaches for verification systems (embedded impacts, traceability).
- Experiment with different means of communicating the results to different stakeholders.

After this period and final decisions regarding the multi-criteria assessment

methods and labelling schemes, new and more stringent environmental footprint policies will emerge. These new developments will take one of the following directions:

- Integration with existing policies: Energy Label, GPP, Ecodesign, Ecolabel.
- Cumulative, and adding a new policy based on product environmental footprint.
- Complete renewal, abandoning existing life cycle based policies to come up with a unique and strong product environmental footprint policy.

ABOUT THE TESTING PERIOD

After the publication of the ENVIFOOD protocol, an open call for food and drink products will be published by the Commission early 2014, inviting companies, industrial and stakeholder organisations in the EU and beyond, to participate in the development of product-group specific and sector-specific rules.

Companies who want to lead the selection of impact categories and define communication methods should be interested in joining the pilot phase. Companies who prefer to follow or join later should still be attentive to further developments as the European Commission is looking for a wide range of feedback, including different product types, supply chain size or company size.

If you want to take part in the open call for volunteers, want a gap analysis between the new PEF and your PCR already developed, obtain a PEF screening, or need complementary information on PEF, OEF or ENVIFOOD Protocol, please contact:

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Also, read our latest technical bulletin on the subject in [SGS Safe Guards](#).