

Carbon footprint analysis supporting environmental communication with customers: Case of Agfa Graphics printing plate systems

An Vercalsteren

VITO – Flemish Institute for Technological Research, Unit Transition Energy and Environment
Boeretang 200, B-2400 Mol, Belgium

Agfa accepts responsibility for its products and supports the international Responsible Care initiative, a voluntary program drawn up by the Chemical Industry. Product Stewardship is one of Agfa's corporate commitments. It is 'Responsible Care' applied to products, in other words, accepting responsibility for one's products by critically examining the environmental and safety issues throughout each stage of the product's life cycle. Agfa's Environmental life cycle management is the application of life cycle thinking to modern business practice, with the aim to manage the total life cycle of its products and services towards more sustainable consumption and production.

During the past years Agfa-Graphics cooperated with VITO for studying the environmental aspects of their products. This was analyzed by VITO using the life cycle assessment methodology (LCA). This cooperation resulted in different projects which are closely related to the state-of-affairs of Agfa-Graphics' product development. The company is particularly interested in analyzing the environmental aspects of newly developed products compared to existing products. It is not Agfa-Graphics' intention to compare own products with competing products, their only interest is to monitor the environmental impact of their own products. The LCA-studies are focused on quantifying the environmental impacts in the evolution from computer-to-film (CT F) systems into computer-to-plate (CT P) systems and recently into chemistry-free plate systems. In the presentation we will focus on the process, more specific the life cycle inventory and methodology, and on the results of the product carbon footprint analysis that we perform at this moment in close consultation with Agfa-Graphics for their most important printing plate systems. By means of this LCA-based carbon footprint analysis Agfa-Graphics wishes to gain insight in the carbon footprint of 8 Agfa plate systems. This way Agfa-Graphics wants to communicate their products' environmental information to their clients. So the main reasons for carrying out this study are: getting respective information about the carbon footprint of the plate systems, performed by an independent assessor and based upon an internationally accepted assessment methodology; to develop and implement concepts to improve the performance of their computer-to-plate systems with regard to environmental performance; set Agfa-Gevaert in position to answer customer questions with respect to the carbon footprint of Agfa-Gevaert plate systems.

One of the objectives of the presentation is to discuss bottlenecks that LCA-experts and companies run into when gathering information to assess the environmental impacts in general and more specific the carbon footprint of products. Moreover attention will be paid to the opportunities that carbon footprint analyses and LCA-studies in general offer to companies with regard to communication with customers and stakeholders.