LC Net Focus

2020 Retrospective
The Life Cycle Initiative’s 2020 Progress Report is now available.

Like elsewhere in the world, our work in 2020 was affected by COVID-19. But, thanks to our robust and dedicated network, most of our activities continued as planned. While we missed the opportunity to meet in person, the move to a virtual space allowed more people from around the world to engage – whether through online consultations, webinars or e-learning opportunities. The report highlights the major milestones of 2020, of which there were many. There is a lot which we, as a community, can be collectively proud of and which would not have been possible without the human and financial contributions of the life cycle community. Thank you!
Deep Dive

ISO and LCA: A conversation
Nydia Suppen recently sat down with the Life Cycle Initiative to discuss key updates happening under ISO and links to LCA. She wanted to share her enthusiasm for the increasing role of LCA within ISO. There is lots of good news to share!

After two-years of consultation, the ISO Technical Committee (TC) 207 on environmental management has expanded this standard's scope to support sustainable development objectives which means that TC 207 now includes related social and economic aspects, in support of sustainable development.

Recent developments with ISO TC 207, Subcommittee (SC) 5 on life cycle assessment, cover updates in definitions of life cycle, system boundary, and consistency, completeness, and sensitivity checks. Amendment 2 of ISO 14044 expands on different procedures for allocation. In response to an increasing number of requests from industry, consumers, and decision makers to be able to compare products and services, another new standard is being developed: ISO/TS 14074 “Environmental management - Life cycle assessment - Principles, requirements and guidelines for normalization, weighting and interpretation”. Work is in working draft stage and is anticipated to run another couple of years. To quote Nydia, “inputs are welcome so reach out to your national member”.

Other activities under the ISO TC 207 SC 5 in 2021 include the development of:

- ISO TR 14055-2 “Guidelines for establishing good practice for combating land degradation and desertification – Part 2: Regional case study examples”.
- ISO 14075 for social LCA – The framework will include assessment systems for social impacts and their possible link and interaction with environmental impacts and costs effects. This approach is in line and supports the new Scope of ISO/TC 207 with regards to advancing in the field of sustainability and is an important standard for developments of sustainability assessments in a life cycle context.

There is also work on-going with other TC 207 sub-committees: the LCA and
Ecolabelling subcommittees (SC 5 and SC 3 respectively) are working to identify and discuss topics that are needed to develop and verify environmental statements that are based on LCA. There is also joint work with the ISO subcommittee on greenhouse gases (ISO/TC 207/SC 7), which is developing a new standard on carbon neutrality.

As you can see, a lot is underway. Experts are needed, so this is a direct invitation to get involved. “The Life Cycle Initiative community has been a leader in this area, so we have a key role to play,” noted Nydia. “With COVID, all ISO activities have moved on-line, allowing for a most robust participation.”

If you want to learn more about LCA and ISO or how you could contribute, please contact Nydia directly.

Nydia Suppen is a Mexican delegate to ISO and Vice-Chair of Subcommittee 5 on LCA under the Technical Committee 207. She has been a member of the Life Cycle Initiative since its inception. You can reach her at: nsuppen@centroacv.mx

Announcements

Plastics at the UN Environment Assembly
UNEP launched its latest report with 350 participants from across the globe at the virtual side-event

On 19 February 2021, the UN Environment Programme, along with the Government of India and the European Commission, co-hosted a side event as part of the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA5). The event was dynamic and very insightful, with more than 350 participants from across the globe and the technical coordination of the Life Cycle Initiative. During the event UNEP launched its latest report: “Addressing single-use plastic products pollution using a life cycle approach”, which summarises the LCA meta-analyses on eight different product types, presents an overview of policy actions that many member states have undertaken in addressing single-use plastic products (SUPP) pollution, and provides details on ten of those case studies. Furthermore, the Government of India, the European Commission, Colombia, Norway and Kenya presented their life cycle-based policies and plans to address SUPP pollution within their respective countries, thereby setting an example for other governments to take action.

This event responded to UN Environment Assembly 4, Resolution 9, on “Addressing single-use plastic products pollution”. The recording of the event
The Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Belgium underlined the importance of the Initiative’s work on social LCA. The European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries (in his opening remarks at the event *Addressing single-use plastic products pollution using a life cycle approach*) highlighted the added value of the Initiative in bringing life cycle thinking into policymaking.

LCA Database Helpdesk: Online and Ready to Help
The Helpdesk walks individuals and entities through the database development process, provides training and access to experts

With LCA becoming prominent in policymaking, it’s important that a country has a LCA database to support good policy decisions. Regionally representative data for LCA is crucial for measuring resource efficiency, environmental impacts and even circularity in a country’s products and economy.

The newly updated *Technical LCA Helpdesk* walks individuals and entities through the database development process and provides training resources and access to expert advice. Its content is based on global experience to-date, including efforts by six developing countries. The Helpdesk is a joint effort of UNEP and the Life Cycle initiative, with the financial contribution of the European Commission under the REAL project.

LC Thinking Around the World: Success story videos
Using LCA to improve the sustainability of operations

The Initiative has helped various stakeholders in different industries to use LCA to improve the sustainability of operations where it is most needed. From large-scale palm oil production in Guatemala to a free mobile app in Thailand, LCA has been used to identify a wide variety of opportunities to reduce environmental impacts while increasing productivity and even the income of
Sustainable Humanitarian Packaging Waste Management
Joining forces towards more sustainable management of food packaging waste

USAID, WFP and other humanitarian players are joining forces towards managing more sustainably the waste created by the packaging of food and other items. This Joint Initiative will look at the whole supply chain, using
The implementation phase is currently being planned. Subscribe to the newsletter to stay informed.

Seeking an LCA expert
Contribute to an analysis of alternatives to single-use plastic products

The Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva is urgently seeking a life-cycle analysis (LCA) expert to prepare a 15-20 page chapter evaluating the suitability of a range of selected materials to replace the use of plastics for specific single-end use products. The emphasis will be on natural materials commonly available or produced in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The chapter will also summarize findings of established studies comparing the life-cycle analysis of these materials to plastics for a few specific products identified (E.g. Shopping bags, beverage and water bottles, take-away cartons, cups, plates and utensils). A good starting point may be the SUPP meta-studies available on the Initiative’s website.

A first draft of the chapter will need to be submitted by the end of March. Please contact Mahesh Sugathan if interested for further details.

Project & Activity Updates

Single-Use Plastic Products and Their Alternatives
Additional product meta-studies published; more to come soon

Single-use plastic products (SUPP) pollution is a serious issue that needs urgent and sustained attention at all levels of society. There is a need to consider alternative solutions to single-use plastic products. The Initiative is working to consolidate knowledge on the environmental footprint of eight single-use plastic products, compared to their alternatives. Shopping bags, bottles and take-away packaging were already published in 2020. We are pleased to announce the release of the LCA meta-studies for beverage cups and tableware. The reports on nappies, menstrual products and face masks will also be released within the first half of 2021. So, watch out for them on the same webpage!
The United States Federal LCA Commons recently published its U.S. Electricity Baseline on the Global Life Cycle Assessment Data (GLAD) platform. This data set is a major milestone in advancing consistency and quality in U.S. federal LCA. Background data such as electricity generation and transmission can drive the results of a LCA. The U.S. Electricity Baseline uses the best publicly available sources and can be used as the foundation for studies across diverse disciplines such as agriculture or infrastructure, making the results more consistent, comparable, and interoperable.

Read the full article on this data set
As noted in January’s LC NET, GLAM (Global Life Cycle Impact Assessment Method) is now in Phase 3. This phase is focusing on establishing a comprehensive, consistent and global Environmental Life Cycle Impact Assessment (LCIA) method, covering classification, midpoint and damage characterization, normalization and weighting to assess the life cycle impacts of products and services on human health, ecosystem and natural resources.

There is a lot of interest in this work. So, we will report on what each working group is doing, highlighting each in turn over the next four editions of LC NET.

Here is a summary of what is happening in the ecosystem quality task force with its three overarching tasks:

1. harmonization of existing impact categories;
2. development of relevant new impact categories; and
3. inclusion of extinction probabilities in the assessment process

In previous GLAM phases recommendations were made at the endpoint level for biodiversity impacts caused by land use impacts, ecotoxicity, eutrophication and terrestrial acidification. In GLAM 3 these categories will be reviewed and harmonized. In addition, new impact categories related to biodiversity impacts from water use, climate change, marine plastics and fisheries will be recommended.

All new and re-visited impact categories will provide characterization factors for regional biodiversity losses. These categories will be translated into global biodiversity losses, using the same approach but one which takes global extinction probabilities into account.

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**E-learning Back on Track!**

For over a week towards the end of February, the Initiative’s e-learning website was inaccessible due to technical difficulties. We received several requests for assistance during this time, which is a testimony to the demand for this resource! We’ve now fixed the issue. Our apologies for the inconvenience caused and thank you for both your interest and your patience. Please keep using the e-learning modules and do not hesitate to raise it with us if any further issues appear with this valuable resource.

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**PACE and the Circular Economy**

The PACE’s Circular Economy Action Agenda is a rallying call for businesses, governments, researchers, consumers and civil society to work together to accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

The Action Agenda is made up of five publications on: plastics, textiles, electronics, food, and capital equipment. Each of them presents circular economy objectives, potential impacts and barriers and provides ten calls-to-action designed
what is already working.

The LC Initiative contributed the life cycle perspective by:

- Assessing qualitatively the impacts of implementing the circular economy for the food, plastics and electronics sectors
- Identifying the main current environmental issues
- Assessing whether the actions, based on a few targeted circularity strategies, would improve the sustainability performances, would lead to an uncertain situation, or rather would potentially risk of worsening the situation.

*The Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE) was created in 2018 by the World Economic Forum and is currently hosted by the World Resource Institute.*

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**SCP-HAT Regional Workshop**

Over the course of the next three months, the Initiative is hosting a series of regional workshops on SCP-HAT – the Sustainable Consumption Production Hotspot Analysis Tool. Designed for SCP practitioners including SCP National Focal Points, UN Country Teams and other key decision makers, these training sessions are part of capacity building for GO4SDG’s [Global Opportunities for Sustainable Development Goals](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/g4sdgs/) work on mainstreaming resource efficiency in development and climate change strategies. The regional workshops will be held in five of the UN regions: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and West Asia. Each workshop will be adapted to the respective regional policy priorities.

*UNEP and its partners launched the GO4SDGs initiative in 2019. It aims to accelerate the shift to more inclusive green economies and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns, to strengthen public and private sector capacities to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement.*

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**SDG-LCA**

To reach the goals the United Nations (UN) set in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we must cooperate on all levels, and we see more and more businesses that want to do their part. The project ‘Linking the UN Sustainable Development Goals to life cycle impact pathway frameworks’ focuses on making the contribution to and reporting on the SDGs more relevant for businesses. The work is led by [Pré Sustainability](https://www.pre-sustainability.com/) and [2.-0 LCA](https://www.2-0lca.com/) with support from the Life Cycle Initiative.
Currently companies are applying the developed methodology, but we would like to involve more businesses. If you would like to join this process to test the SDG-LCA methodology, please contact the Secretariat for more information.

**Full Position Paper on Circular Economy and LCA now available**

We are pleased to announce the recent publication of a Position Paper "Using Life Cycle Assessment to Achieve a Circular Economy". It is now available in the [International Journal of LCA](https://www.lca-journal.org). This position paper provides an LCA perspective on the development, adoption, and implementation of circular economy (CE), while pointing out strengths and challenges in LCA as an assessment methodology for CE strategies. The paper also contains examples of how companies are using LCA in implementing their circular economy strategies.

The Life Cycle Initiative contributes to other global and regional Circular Economy (CE) fora, including the technical working group of the ISO/TC 323 on CE.

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**News from the Life Cycle Community**

**New Project on Sustainability Assessment**

The European Green Deal, Europe’s new agenda for sustainable growth, highlights the need for reliable, comparable and verifiable sustainability information. **ORIENTING** is a research project working to develop an operational methodology for product Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment (LCSA). The project will develop a practical tool to assess sustainability performance in a comprehensive, consistent and practical manner; a Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment methodology for products.

The project will analyse the environmental, social and economic impacts of products of 17 organizations in 8 different European countries. The developed methodology will be applied to five case studies to ensure its applicability in business practice. Results will be validated by a broad community of stakeholders, including potential users such as LCSA practitioners, advocacy groups and decision makers from the private and public spheres.

Several Life Cycle Initiative members including **Ecoinnovazione**, **PRé**
Join us as a Funding Partner

The work of the Life Cycle Initiative would not be possible without the support of its sponsors. By contributing to the Initiative, businesses and governments not only gain access to unparalleled expertise in how to align their activities with their United Nations Environmental and Social Development commitments, but they also play a role in transforming their activities, as models of Life Cycle Thinking. If you are interested in becoming a funding partner, please contact the Initiative.

Yes, I'm interested to contribute as a Funding Partner

Ongoing call for LC Net contributions

Members of the Life Cycle Initiative, please feel free to submit your event, job vacancy, news, capacity development opportunities, topics and stories related to life cycle thinking and LCA, to be shared with the global life cycle community. We are always looking for featured coverage on the experience how life cycle thinking contributes to different policy agendas, sustainable business and decision making, in various countries and regions.

Note that we cannot accept contributions of a commercial nature. LCNet is released bimonthly in the beginning of January, March, May, July, September and November; please send us your piece approximately two weeks before the release date. We look forward to your contributions in disseminating life cycle knowledge from global policy and business agendas!

Yes, I have content for the LC Net!

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS!