MANUFACTURE 2030

How to:
Interpret product carbon footprints

What can the results of a PCF be used to determine?

A summary of a PCF can be used as a way of benchmarking a product against similar products within your own, or others', portfolios. By understanding how a given product compares to others, some insight can be gained into the relative environmental impact of a product and whether there are opportunities that others have taken which have significantly reduced this emissions footprint.

A detailed breakdown of a PCF can be used to identify emission hotspots within a supply chain, including identifying activities and processes that are outside of your control (and typically categorized as Scope 3). When a hotspot is identified, manufacturers can then build actions which might include:

- Electrification of energy intensive activities
- Switching of fuels or using renewable energy alternatives
- Sourcing materials from elsewhere or changing ingredient mixes to reduce the impact of particularly harmful materials
- Encouraging changes in product design to reduce emissions at different stages and improve efficiencies

How can a PCF be used to promote and improve transparency?

A primary data score is often reported alongside a PCF. which estimates the contribution of emissions from primary data sources to the overall PCF. A greater primary data score indicates that the PCF value has more primary data and so is more likely to be representative and accurate for the given product, whereas a low primary data score suggests less representativeness and potentially higher uncertainty.

If a PCF has a low primary data score, then the certainty over emission hotspots identified can be significant, and an initial actions may be developed to collect primary data for that particular source to gain a better understanding of it and therefore what emissions interventions would work best. By doing so, you can develop a better understanding of the emissions from your own supply chain and build a more representative PCF. This improves transparency for you and for any customers that you send the PCF to for reporting.