

EMPOWERING CONSUMER CHOICE AND ECODESIGN - BEST PRACTICES FOR FMCG WITH ENVIRONMENTAL LABELLING OF FOOD

FAQ ON THE FRENCH CASE

BACKGROUND

Why have an environmental score?

In 2021, the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** (IPCC) concluded that climate change is unprecedented in thousands of years, human in origin, widespread and intensifying: "*Unless there is an immediate, rapid and large-scale reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, the 1.5-degree goal will be out of reach*" (IPCC, 2021).

At the same time, according to the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services** (IPBES), human activity threatens global extinction for about 25% of species: "*This loss of diversity, including genetic diversity, poses a serious risk to global food security by undermining the resilience of many agricultural systems to threats such as pests, pathogens and climate change.*" (IPBES, 2019).

Faced with these environmental emergencies, the **agri-food sector** can be viewed as forming part of the problem while also having vast potential to provide solutions, regardless of enterprise size.

These solutions are structured around two inter-related components, cornerstones of the transition towards more-sustainable food systems:

- **Climate action:** through actions to reduce generated emissions and to develop carbon sinks to sequester them
- **Biodiversity preservation:** through reducing pesticide use, supporting protein autonomy, practising crop rotation, using a wider variety of seeds, protecting endangered species, etc.

To these two major issues are added those of pollution, product origin, and packaging circularity, etc.

Displaying environmental scores on food products forms part of the toolkit available for implementation by the food industry to reduce the impact of food production and consumption on our planet.

The environmental scoring of food must meet a dual objective:

- To help consumers make an informed shift towards a more-sustainable diet
- To encourage ecodesign throughout the entire value chain (production, processing, distribution, catering, etc.) for every product available in France

What is the background in France?

Environmental labelling of food¹ was reintroduced into French public debate by the AGECE² Law of 2020 and the Climate and Resilience Law of 2020, which provides for such labelling, to become mandatory within a maximum of five years.

Today, knowledge, tools and ecosystems seem to be **sufficiently mature** to propose a first response to this collective need for an environmental score on food, an altogether challenging issue. A synchronisation of actors to propose an **irreproachable scientific basis that is understandable by all is essential**. That is why, in the period from mid-2020 to mid-2021, a group of around 20 voluntary actors (manufacturers, distributors, food service, trade associations, applications, consumers, etc.)³ took part in projects to develop environmental scoring and labelling methods for the agri-food sector. These projects were evaluated by ADEME (Environment and Energy Control Agency) and the Ministry of Ecology, which published their conclusions in a scientific report in January 2022. The French government then submitted a report to Parliament in March 2022 to stimulate a political debate towards a harmonised methodology and system for display, with an implementation target of early 2023.

Both reports recommend a **calculation** and **communication** system based on **products' overall ecological footprints** (greenhouse gases, water and land consumption, pollutants, etc.) and for their **whole life cycles** (from extraction of raw materials through to end of life). **This system does not include societal indicators** (animal welfare, fair trade, etc.) that will have to be dealt with separately. In France, the nutrition dimension is already covered by the "Nutriscore", which has its own specific display.

The questions raised for the method of calculating the environmental score are still pending the resolution of numerous challenges (impact of agricultural production methods, packaging end of life, impact of fishing practices for seafood products, variability in the origin of ingredients, taking seasonal factors into account, etc.) but we must not wait until we have the perfect methodology before moving to large-scale implementation.

Why is France ahead in this matter?

France investigated the possibility of displaying the carbon footprints of widely-consumed products in the early 2010s (Grenelle 2008) but this project did not reach a successful conclusion, due to a lack of reliable life-cycle analysis data. In 2013, the creation of the Agribalyse database, which now includes generic LCA data for more than 2800 typical French food products made it possible to relaunch this project with a more holistic ambition. In particular, it enabled the various experiments conducted under the aegis of ADEME and the creation of the first two environmental score systems in 2021:

- **Ecospore**, a scoring and labelling model developed by a private consortium of food applications and start-ups and an environmental consulting agency
- **Planet-Score**, a scoring and labelling model developed by an organic farming trade association

Other countries have in parallel developed this type of generic LCA data for various applications:

- **Denmark**, to incorporate climate impact into national dietary recommendations
- **Sweden, Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand** and others, to allow researchers to model the environmental impacts of different diets
- **In the UK**, the Earth Foundation is currently testing [Ecoimpact Score](#), a calculation and labelling model based on specific LCA data. IGD a British trade association, is working with local authorities (DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and the NGO **WRAP** (Waste and Resources Action Programme) on another proposal. Lastly, **OmniAction**, born on the occasion of

¹ An approach that began in 2009 with the Grenelle Environment Forum.

² Law against Waste and for a Circular Economy

³ Groupement Les Mousquetaires, Yuka, L'Empreinte, Karbon, La Note Globale, ATLA, Elixor, ADEPALE, Invitation à la ferme, Interbev, ITAB, Open Food Facts, BearingPoint, Yuka, INNIT, Kisaco, Crystalchain, Eiko, Experoil and Carrefour.

the UN World Food Systems Summit (2021) is another multi-criterion labelling system for the impact of foods on the health, environment and social dimensions.

What is the ADEME experiment?

In 2020, France set up a governance system involving researchers (Scientific Committee), government organisations (ADEME, Ministries of Ecological Transition; Agriculture, Food and Environment; School of Agriculture, etc.) and private-sector actors (producers, distributors, start-ups, trade organisations, etc.) and NGOs, in order to experiment upstream of implementation of the Law. Each actor was able to contribute to the debate by providing specific inputs related to their expertise (conceptual framework, scientific evaluation, proposals for scores, field experimentation, etc.).

This experimentation phase enabled ADEME to define the main principles for experimental labelling and to propose a particular system that combined the advantages of the different systems tested.

What are the next steps in the French experimentation programme?

The government wants the environmental scoring of food to be implemented in the relatively short term (early 2023, depending on political decisions), while working on the improvements needed to ensure that it evolves over time:

- Continuous improvement of the Agribalyse generic database (quality and quantity of data)
- Improvement of the LCA method (adjustment of ecotoxicity indicators, work on biodiversity, carbon storage, etc.)
 - Summer 2022: version 1 of the algorithm
 - September-December 2022: testing of 500 products and sensitivity analyses
 - Autumn 2022: version 2 of the algorithm and company testing (including visuals)
 - End of 2022:
 - IDDRI (Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations) analyses
 - Provision of a beta calculation tool
 - Cost analysis by the Ministry of Economy
- Definition of tool and data control methods in order to:
 - Ensure that national and sector-level rules have been correctly applied in the calculation tools
 - Verify the relevance, completeness and reliability of the data used. The certification that may be required for specific private data

Members of the Institut du Commerce also wish to particularly mention the following points for vigilance and/or improvement:

- Respect for the confidentiality of company data: definition of good practices for sharing information enabling the calculation of the environmental score of food products according to the different types of uses that may be made with consumers
- Identification of good practice to meet the challenges of understanding the score if it is used alongside nutritional indicators
- Provision to all (producers, processors, distributors, caterers, etc.) of a simple calculation tool enabling the widest-possible deployment of environmental labelling, for example, through the provision of free online tools. This will have to be supported by a major consumer education campaign and methodological support for agri-food actors
- Development of work on the functional unit (beyond the weight and volume used by default)
- Priority to virtual labelling of environmental scores, in order to facilitate implementation by a large number of actors while providing consumers with comprehensive and educational information. This type of labelling makes it possible to provide updates in real time and to accelerate deployment without being in opposition to current European regulations (FIC, Food Information to Consumers)

Are any other experiments being done on other types of non-food products?

Yes, other [experiments](#) involving mandatory labelling are under way, particularly for the textile/clothing/footwear sector and the digital sector.

CALCULATION OF THE SCORE

What are the objectives of the environmental score/labelling for foods?

The environmental score/label must permit **comparisons** to be made:

- **Between products of different categories** (eggs vs. meat) to encourage consumers to change towards more sustainable diets
- **Between products of the same category** (conventional eggs vs organic eggs) to encourage ecodesign by manufacturers

The signals sent by the environmental score/label must be **consistent with the policy vision of the desired food system (more organic farming practices, for example)**

Environmental scoring coverage should be as broad as possible in respect of foods (all widely-consumed products should be included) and of actors (producers, distributors, caterers, etc.).

The calculation method used must be transparent and easily accessible.

What are the principles recommended by ADEME for calculating the score?

Methodology

The methodology must be scientifically robust.

It must be based on the LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) method, which measures environmental impacts based on 16 standardised indicators throughout the value chain. The LCA calculation must be aligned with the **European PEF or any other government-recognised standard**.

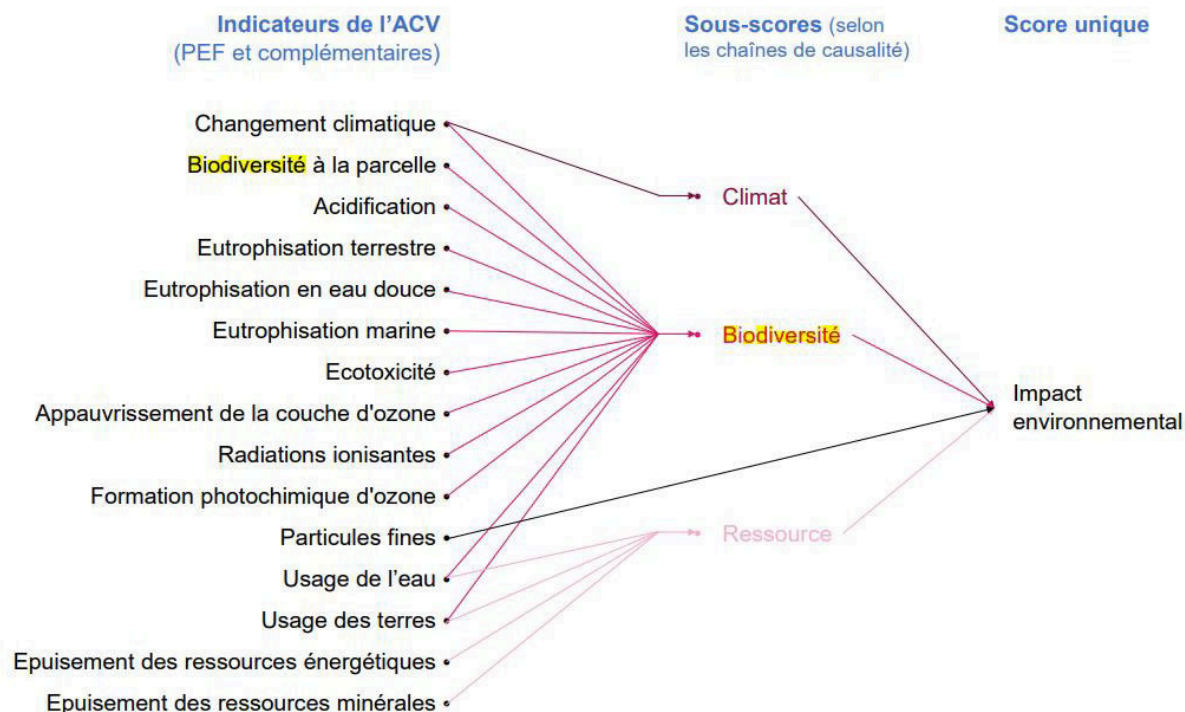


Figure 35 : Regroupement des indicateurs de l'ACV en trois thématiques (adapté à partir des travaux du Conseil Scientifique)

However, the LCA has blind spots, such as impact on biodiversity at the plot level (effect of pesticides), carbon storage through agricultural practices, packaging end of life, etc.). The performance of the LCA therefore needs to be improved:

- In the short term, it may be supplemented by **additional indicators or modifications to currently inadequate indicators, thus modulating the LCA score**
- In the medium and long terms, it can be improved by introducing **additional indicators, adjusting the methods of calculating the current indicators and/or by adjusting the weighting of the different indicators**

In both cases, the weighting of complementary and additional indicators must be scientifically justified and reflect the policy choices associated with the agriculture of tomorrow.

The most common **functional units** for calculation of the LCA score are **weight** (kg) and **volume** (litre). In some cases (catering, products consumed in small quantities), calculation by the **portion** may also be useful (per serving or dish) The environmental scores of foods should be linked to their nutritional scores, consistent with the government's consumption trajectories, taking account of the function of foods in diet. In the absence of a consensus to date and pending future FAO recommendations,⁴ it is desirable to retain weight (or volume) as the functional unit of reference.

In line with ADEME, members of the Institut de Commerce working group recommend that **LCA indicators be aggregated into a single score** for ease of understanding by consumers (possibly with some additional detailed indicators, such as carbon impact).

Lastly, the methodology for calculating the environmental score/labelling must be transparent and accessible to all.

Data

The calculation of the environmental score must be based on **reliable data** collected using recognised and verifiable methods, whether generic, specific or semi-specific.

Operators must be able to rely equally on generic, specific and semi-specific data.

- Access to specific or semi-specific data can be expensive and very difficult for some companies (SMEs) or may have no impact on the overall score. **Generic data must, therefore, be available to all free of charge**
- **Specific data should be favoured if they can reflect the product's score better** than generic data, provided that they have been generated using a recognised methodological framework (e.g., certification, verified specifications)
- **The origin of the data must be transparent** for consumers: generic, specific or semi-specific data

Examples:

- **Specific:** Full LCA carried out by the company for a given product (ingredients and their origin / agricultural production method; processing process; packaging; logistics, etc.)
- **Semi-specific:**
 - Public semi-specific data: generic ingredients (sugar cane from the West Indies, French pasteurised whole milk, strawberry yoghurt from French milk and fruit, etc.); generic recipes (partial), type and format of packaging (e.g., individual dose/bulk), quality label, origin (partial)
 - Private/manufacturers' semi-specific data: recipe (complete), logistical organisation, agricultural production methods. "Relevant" parameters are to be specified by sector
 - Implementation of semi-specific data requires calculation tools or ready-reckoners. For recipes, an algorithm developed by INRAE makes it possible to simulate these in the absence of a complete list of ingredients
- **Generic: "Non-adjusted" data** (sugar cane, pasteurised milk, fruit yoghurt, etc.): Although these data make it possible to differentiate between categories of foods, they do not enable differentiation between products belonging to the same food category or to promote ecodesign. **The "raw" use of these data for environmental labelling should, therefore, be avoided in the short term**

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

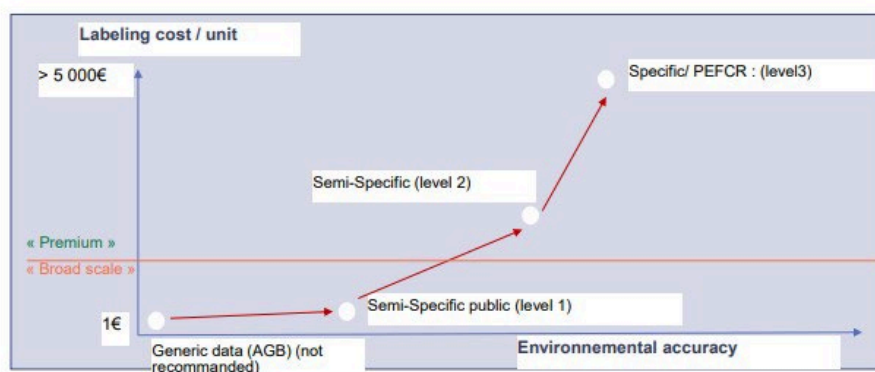
In France, ADEME has developed Agribalyse, the environmental database for French agricultural and food products (2,800 raw or processed products, 14 indicators built on the basis of Life Cycle Analysis). To support sustainable food, Agribalyse provides reference methodologies and a generic data set accessible free of charge. Depending on the context of use, these data must be combined with complementary indicators (e.g., production methods, biodiversity indicators, packaging circularity, etc.) to take ecodesign efforts into account.

The quality and completeness of the data in the Agribalyse database will be improved to cover all product categories and better reflect, for example, the impact of agricultural production methods. Sectors are able to support ADEME in these developments.

There are other environmental databases for food, some of which are in the public domain (such as [Hestia](#), in the UK, developed by Oxford University and WWF-UK) and others of which are in the private domain (such as [SimaPro LCI Databases – Agri-footprint](#) or [Quantis - WFLDB - World Food Life Cycle Assessment Database \(quantis-intl.com\)](#) available under license).



« Cout vs précision » : approche semi-spécifique recommandée



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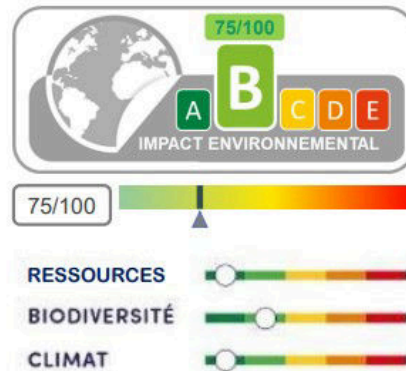
Format for expression of the score

The expression format advocated by the government report is a "simple and prescriptive format" for good understanding by consumers. A compromise should be sought between a score with a limited number of classes (e.g., A to E) to facilitate understanding by consumers and a score with a finer level of detail (for example, 1 to 100) to promote ecodesign initiatives. The use of a colour-coding system is recommended to enhance the impact on consumer practices.

A second level of reading will be able to provide telling technical indicators expected by consumers (country of origin, packaging, etc.).

Format – Orientation exemple

- Aggregated, colored, prescriptive
- Need for a refined scale to support ecodesign in particular
- Highlight main environmental topics for education and trust



- Compact on pack system + online information :
 - Production type
 - Origine
 - Transport type
 - Packaging material...
 - Detail on other indicators...

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Positioning of the score

The ESA study annexed to the government report highlights a strong consumer attraction to display on the packaging and online. The government report recommends "that a degree of flexibility in the media used for display should be left to manufacturers, with an encouragement to use a format on the packaging and the possibility of having access to additional information online (using an app or website, via QR code for example).

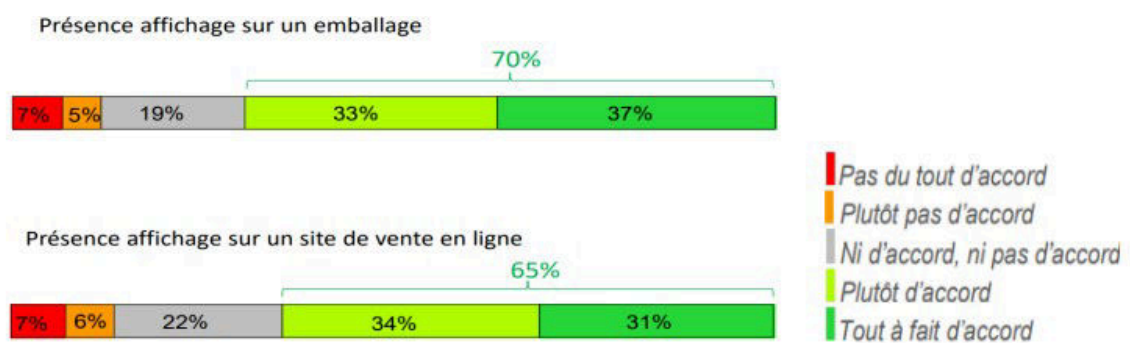


Figure 31 - présence d'un affichage sur emballage ou en ligne : réponses aux questions : « je suis intéressé(e) pour avoir un affichage environnemental sur les emballages des produits alimentaires » et « je suis intéressé(e) pour avoir un affichage environnemental sur les sites internet associés aux produits alimentaires ou sur les sites de vente en ligne de produits » - (source étude ESA, 1065 répondants)

Indeed, given the physical constraints and financial cost for companies of displaying the information on packaging, members of the Institut du Commerce work group recommend the **use of digital tools as the preferred option** (speed and low cost of implementation, possibility to give an overall score plus specific subscores, ease of updating, etc.).

ANNEXES

Should biodiversity be taken into account?

- ⇒ **The impact on biodiversity (endangered species, biodiversity at plot level) – negative and positive – must be taken into account** in the environmental score regardless of the method chosen: specific LCA indicator, weighting of LCA indicators, or indicator complementary to LCA

- ⇒ **Quality labels, agricultural initiatives, agro-ecological infrastructure**, etc. may be taken into account to assess the impact on biodiversity at the plot level, pending the creation of recognised indicators
- ⇒ **The quality labels / initiatives taken into account** in the indicators must be based on robust and controlled scientific evidence
- ⇒ **The score is intended to value practices that best respect seasonality and the natural regeneration of soils and species.** It is, however, very challenging to imagine integrating dynamic data over the year, because of:
 - ⇒ The variability of land uses for livestock farming
 - ⇒ The seasonal variability in livestock feeding
 - ⇒ The variability in a recipe's supplies according to the seasons, prices and raw materials stocks, etc.

Should carbon sequestration be taken into account?

- **Carbon sequestration** must be taken into account in the calculation of the environmental score to enhance the positive impact of the more virtuous agricultural practices (agroforestry, temporary grasslands, hedges, regenerative agriculture, etc.)
- **Carbon offsetting** cannot be taken into account in a product's environmental labelling if it is at the farm level. It can be attached if it can be **directly** linked to a specific product

Should the impact of packaging and its end of life be taken into account?

- Currently, the environmental impact of **packaging** is only partially taken into account in the LCA method (incomplete consideration of the packaging's end of life). However, the environmental score aims to encourage more-responsible choices, in line with the desired societal trajectory (reduction of waste, litter, microplastics, etc.). Environmental labelling should, therefore, include additional criteria to enhance ecodesign, the possibility of multiple use (buying loose/re-use), the possibility of recycling, the integration of recycled material and, conversely taking account of the final pollution caused by certain materials

Should pesticides be taken into account?

- Currently, different agricultural models coexist and each must contribute to reducing the use of **pesticides**. The environmental score may reflect the agricultural systems supported by the public authorities to meet these environmental health challenges

Should seasonality be taken into account?

- The score should include the issue of **seasonality**, based on the date of harvest or fishing. The information must remain understandable regardless of the season and be adapted according to:
 - The type of product (raw, processed, fresh, long-life)
 - The variability of supplies during the year (NB: the concept of production proximity / "local" production is also taken into account in the LCA)

DEPLOYMENT IN FRANCE AND EUROPE

What would be the ideal scenario for the deployment of the food environmental score at European level?

It is essential to avoid confusion for consumers through a multiplicity of different labels and conflicting information.

The experiments conducted in France have enabled numerous tests to advance knowledge. But France will not wait for Europe to come up with a ruling for all countries. ADEME is very active in coordinating its work with the European level and in seeking convergence. France has lessons to share. The idea would be to set up a project similar to the French experiment with other European countries.

What will become of the labels that are already in place (Ecoscore, Planetscore, etc.?)

French manufacturers and distributors will follow the French and European recommendation, which may draw on private initiatives (Ecostore, Planetscore, Glimpact, etc.) but these private initiatives will ultimately have to align with the official system put forward by the authorities.

How can ECR Community and The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) help?

What roles should manufacturers and distributors play?

French manufacturers and distributors are working within their various representative associations to propose a food environmental labelling system able to measure the environmental impacts of the products they sell, in order to **improve their practices and help consumers to make conscious choices**.

As part of the CGF's Collaboration for Healthier Lives French initiative "On s'y met" (Let's Go) which aims to support consumers to move towards healthier, more sustainable purchasing behaviours, members of the Institut du Commerce and the Consumer Goods Forum wanted to:

- ⇒ **Create** a new common knowledge base on the food environmental score and share this in order to upgrade the skills of all players in the sector, beyond experts, in France and internationally
- ⇒ **Express a collective, cross-category, vision of the common principles to be adopted to calculate a food environmental score:** points of consensus, points requiring vigilance and common needs
- ⇒ **Contribute to the search for solutions to facilitate its operational implementation and avoid** any kind of scattergun approach, to the detriment of the objectives sought through environmental labelling
- ⇒ **Help stakeholders in the value chain to contribute to the transition towards more-sustainable purchasing behaviours** (brands, distributors, consumer, hospitality and catering, etc.)

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- [Environmental labelling for food products – Assessment report for scientific Council](#) (ADEME, 2022)
- [Environmental labelling for food products - Government report to parliament : overview and key findings](#) (ADEME, 2022)
- [One bite at a time: consumers and the transition to sustainable food : Analysis of a survey of European consumers on attitudes towards sustainable food](#) (BEUC, European Consumer Organization, 2020)
- [Towards meaningful consumer information on food ecological impact BEUC's take on environmental scoring systems for food](#) (BEUC, European Consumer, 2021)
- [Food Labelling: Principles to support the uptake of healthy and sustainable diets - World Business Council for Sustainable Development](#) (WBCSD, World Business Council of Sustainable Development, 2021)
- [Food systems delivering better health: executive summary](#) (WHO, World Health Organization, 2021)
- [The Global Assessment report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES, 2019)
- [Making nature-positive food the norm](#) (Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation, 2021)
- [Agrobiodiversity Index](#)
- [Towards meaningful consumer information on food ecological impact \(BEUC, 2021\)](#)
- [Getting rid of greenwashing; restoring consumer confidence in green claims \(BEUC, 2020\)](#)
- [Add the government report](#)

DEFINITIONS

Common principles

- ⇒ **The life-cycle assessment (LCA)** (source: ADEME) is the most successful tool for overall, multi-criterion assessment of the environmental impacts of products/services. It is a standardised method that identifies and quantifies the physical flows of matter and energy, both inward and outward, throughout a product's lifetime (extraction of raw materials, manufacture of the product, distribution, use, collection and disposal,

transport). It assesses the potential impacts of all these and then interprets the results obtained according to its initial objectives. Its robustness is based on the "life cycle" approach and the multi-criterion approach.

- ⇒ **An LCA's multi-criterion approach** is based on a number of criteria for the analysis of inward and outward flows. "Flow" refers to everything that goes into production of the product and everything that comes out in terms of pollution. Inward flows include, for example, those of materials and energy: iron, water, oil and gas resources. Outward flows may correspond to waste, gaseous emissions, liquid discharges, etc. The collection of flow information is an important step in LCA. This information is quantified at each stage of the cycle and corresponds to indicators of potential impacts on the environment. The complexity of the phenomena involved and of their interactions is a source of uncertainty about the real value of the impacts, which is why they are described as "potential".
- ⇒ **Global carbon neutrality** (source: ADEME): Sequestering as much carbon as we emit in such a way as to stabilise its concentration in the atmosphere and thus limit the increase in the overall temperature of the planet. In an oversimplification, we speak of carbon neutrality, but beyond CO₂ this takes into account all the greenhouse gases responsible for climate change. To achieve this goal of **global neutrality** requires:
 - **Drastically reducing emissions**, whether from fossil fuels or living matter
 - **Increasing carbon sequestration sinks** Indeed, in addition to absorbing CO₂, there is a pressing need for this to be sequestered outside the atmosphere in order to create a carbon sink

For example, agricultural maize production absorbs CO₂ by photosynthesis when the plants are growing, but this is rapidly returned to the atmosphere after the harvest, through the decomposition of residues or through the consumption of these residues by animals (respiration, fermentation, etc.). This then, is not CO₂ sequestration. Conversely, extending the size of a forest will really create a carbon sink because of the long lifespans of trees. A sink is, therefore, defined as any system that absorbs more carbon than it emits.

All actors (States, economic actors, communities and citizens) need to contribute in order to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality. Individually or at their scale, **these actors are not and cannot become or claim to be "carbon neutral"**. On the other hand, they can improve their contributions to this global goal through their respective actions. ADEME is developing tools and methods to support all actors in the definition and implementation of their climate strategies.

- ⇒ **Product Environmental Footprint:** [European Commission Service Site \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)
The European Commission has proposed the method of the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) as a common and harmonised means of measuring products' environmental performance at the European scale. The PEF methodology provides detailed requirements for modelling the environmental impacts of materials/energy flows and the emissions and waste flows associated with a product throughout its life cycle. The PEF is based on a life-cycle assessment and takes the form of a generic methodology common to all categories of products (food and non-food), with adapted methodologies (Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules) for more specific categories (mineral water, dairy products, etc.).

Data

- ⇒ **Generic data** (source: ADEME): Generic data are quantified values obtained from sources other than direct measurement or calculation from direct measurements. In our case, these are "average" data from the generalist LCA databases. In France, the reference LCA database for food is Agribalyse, which provides data for "representative average products" (e.g., "average" plain yoghurt) and covers a large proportion of the diet. Other databases exist at the European and international levels (PEF, Ecoinvent, etc.). All these databases are accessible and transparent but they are not sufficiently granulated to enable comparisons between products of different brands. They do not, therefore make it possible to enhance efforts towards product ecodesign.
- ⇒ **Specific data** (source: ADEME): In contrast, totally-specific data are obtained by measurement or from calculations based on direct measurements. They correspond to the calculation of a complete LCA for a particular product (e.g., brand X plain yoghurt, all the characteristics of which are taken into account: milk used, manufacturing plant, packaging, etc.). They are precise and permit comparisons between products and the promotion of ecodesign, because their calculation mobilises data characteristic of the product, its ingredients and its manufacturing process. On the other hand, they are often costly and complex to collect and require the use of LCA software, which makes them difficult to implement on a large scale and by all actors.
- ⇒ **Semi-specific data:** Between these two solutions, it is also possible to mobilise so-called semi-specific data, which are based on generic data that can be made more precise by the manufacturer (e.g., average yoghurt data, some elements of which are specified: quantities of ingredients, type of ingredient, packaging, etc.).

Biodiversity

- ⇒ Biodiversity (source: ADEME) is the living tissue of our planet. This covers all natural environments and life forms (plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, etc.) and their interactions. It comprises three interdependent levels:
 - The diversity of living **environments** on all scales: oceans, meadows, forests, etc., to the contents of cells (think of the parasites that may live there), including the pond at the bottom of one's garden or green spaces in the city
 - The diversity of **species** (including the human species) living in these environments

- The **genetic** diversity of individuals within each species: in other words, we are all different
- ⇒ **Agrobiodiversity**, or agricultural biodiversity, refers to the diversity of species, genetic diversity and the diversity of ecosystems associated with or created by agriculture. It is a subset of general biodiversity that includes all life forms that have a direct impact on agricultural practices and encompasses all life necessary for agricultural systems: symbiotic or associated plants, trees, animals, insects, microbes, germs and fungi. It plays a pivotal role in ecosystems. Its diversity plays a role in the natural and semi-natural balances that regulate parasites, allow the pollination of cultivated plants, limit soil erosion and promote the production of biomass useful to humans. **A sustainable food system cannot exist without agricultural biodiversity.**
- ⇒ **Ecosystem services** (source: FAO) make human life possible by, for example, providing nutritious food and clean water, regulating disease and climate, supporting the pollination of crops and soil formation, and providing recreational, cultural and spiritual benefits. Despite an estimated value of \$125 trillion, these assets are not adequately accounted for in political and economic policy, which means there is insufficient investment in their protection and management.
- ⇒ **Agriculture and environment** (source: OECD: A key challenge for the agriculture sector is to feed an increasing global population, while at the same time reducing the environmental impact and preserving natural resources for future generations. Agriculture can have significant impacts on the environment. While **negative impacts** are serious, and can include pollution and degradation of soil, water, and air, agriculture can also **positively impact** the environment, for instance by trapping greenhouse gases within crops and soils, or mitigating flood risks through the adoption of certain farming practices.

Other indicators

- ⇒ **Carbon sequestration:** The capture and storage of atmospheric carbon in carbon sinks (such as oceans, forests and soils) through physical and biological processes such as photosynthesis. Carbon sequestration in soils is possible through the restoration of land use practices: conservation agriculture, agroforestry, use of cover crops or mulch, use of composts and manure.
- ⇒ **Carbon offsetting:** Since greenhouse gases (GHGs) have the same effect on the climate no matter where they are emitted, securing an emissions reduction at home or elsewhere provides, in theory, the same final benefit to the planet. Voluntary offsetting therefore consists of financing a GHG-emissions reduction or sequestration project for which we are not directly responsible.
- ⇒ **Seasonality** (source: Etiktable): A seasonal product is a food that is consumed when it reaches maturity in a natural way in its production area. This means that it respects the natural cycle of its growth, which is not accelerated by its mode of production, such as in heated greenhouses (or hothouses) for vegetables. Eating seasonal products, therefore means benefiting from our foods' best nutritional qualities, as well as having the best products at the lowest cost, since it is always at the heart of the production period that prices are at their lowest. In addition, adapting one's menus in line with the seasons is a responsible behaviour that reduces greenhouse gases.
 - While some vegetables, such as carrots, leeks, turnips and spinach, can be produced throughout the year (except when extreme wintry weather prevents harvesting or may reduce their quality), others have much shorter production periods, such as asparagus from April to June, courgettes from May to September and cardoons from October to March.
 - Fruits produced regionally have shorter and more-concentrated production periods, from May to July for cherries, in autumn for apples and pears, and from June to October for strawberries and raspberries. This means that their consumption period is also shorter. Eating responsibly means eating fruit and vegetables in season.
 - Under good conditions (well ventilated, dark, cool but frost-free space) some fruit and vegetables can be stored in good condition for several months, thus increasing the time over which they may be eaten. Vegetables in this category include potatoes, onions, beetroot, while fruit in this group include pears, apples and kiwis. Consumption of seasonal products is, therefore, not incompatible with a balanced diet throughout the year.
 - Even if we can find them for sale all year round, meat, fish and dairy products too are subject to the seasons. Respect for animal welfare and for the natural cycles of nature and reproduction, the quality of food and pasture in meadows all influence the availability or quality of these products.
 - While rabbit is available all year, goat or lamb of this quality is only available in the spring. Moreover, all meats will be better during the spring, which for animals is a time of a natural, richer and more varied diet. For poultry, on the other hand, is at its best in autumn and winter. Some types of poultry, such as Bresse festive poultry, are the prerogative of the festive season.
 - Dairy products are subject to the same seasonality, mainly due to the quality of the pasture. Winter Comté cheese produced using spring milk will be, thanks to the quality of the flora of the Jura pastures, tastier and fruitier than summer Comté. The same can be said of the fish of the Dombes, which are only available during the pond fishing season from October to February.

- **Origin of the works: CHL France "On s'y met" and the CSR committee of the Institut du Commerce**
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- **For more information:: [Score environnemental : revue critique des 6 notes du GT Indicateurs de l'ADEME](#) (2021), [Score environnemental FAQ n°1](#) (2021)**

About the Institut du Commerce

The only forum in which manufacturers, distributors and all stakeholders in the food and non-food consumer goods sector share their vision of evolutions in trade and consumers, to co-construct in a neutral manner concrete and innovative solutions to their common challenges, in a spirit of openness and progress and in an ethical framework accepted by all.

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About The Consumer Goods Forum

The Consumer Goods Forum ("CGF") is a global, parity-based industry network that is driven by its members to encourage the global adoption of practices and standards that serves the consumer goods industry worldwide. It brings together the CEOs and senior management of some 400 retailers, manufacturers, service providers, and other stakeholders across 70 countries, and it reflects the diversity of the industry in geography, size, product category and format. Its member companies have combined sales of EUR 4.6 trillion and directly employ nearly 10 million people, with a further 90 million related jobs estimated along the value chain. It is governed by its Board of Directors, which comprises more than 55 manufacturer and retailer CEOs.

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