

INFORMATION NOTE

CARBON FOOTPRINT OF PRINTING INKS

1. There is a wide consensus that society has to take action to rapidly reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, to limit global warming, which requires the public to have access to information to guide life-style decisions. In this respect, there is a growing interest in establishing the embodied greenhouse gases emissions (the so-called %carbon footprint-) of each component in a product or service.
 2. Print plays an important part in informing, protecting and supporting today's society in so many different ways, with applications such as food and drink packaging design; external and internal protective coatings on food packaging; newspapers, journals and magazines; security and production control markings; bar codes; and credit and other financial cards.
 3. Increasingly, printing ink manufacturers are being asked to provide information on the carbon footprint of their products, for use in calculations of the impact of the article or activity to which they are applied. This Information Note has been prepared by EuPIA, representing European printing ink manufacturers, in order to clarify the industry's current position on the carbon footprint issue.
 4. Printing ink manufacturers recognise that the carbon footprint is one measure that can provide information to address concerns on global warming. A number of tools are available and printing inks have been included in preliminary calculations of the carbon footprint of printed materials. Generally, determining the carbon footprint of printing inks is not easy because of the wide range of ink formulations and chemicals used. The results of the calculations show varying results according to the different models used.
 5. Specific calculations carried out by the German Printing and Media Industries Federation (bvdm), concluded that the contribution of the printing ink to the carbon footprint of a printed article is between 1 and 3% of the total carbon footprint of a printed article. The variation depends mainly on two factors: the types of printing inks and printing processes and the number of articles printed. The same order of magnitude is observed in other calculation models.
 6. The work to date thus confirms that a printing ink, regardless of its composition, makes a very small contribution to the carbon footprint of consumer products. Before further refinement of these preliminary data can be considered, the following have to be taken into account:
 - ~ There is not a universally agreed definition of a carbon footprint.
 - ~ There is currently no agreed or standardised methodology for carbon footprint calculations.
 - ~ There are a number of methods for converting energy consumption into CO₂ emissions, giving different results.
 - ~ Previous experience of life cycle assessments, which conceptually apply the same principles as carbon footprinting, shows that they can be costly and time-consuming to carry out; are subjectively dependent on the allocation or weighting of environmental impacts; require information that can be difficult to obtain from the supply chain; and can rely on commercially sensitive information.
- Therefore the printing ink industry supports the need for wider agreement on principles and fundamentals before further assessment of printing inks is carried out.
7. The European printing ink industry is aware that work is being carried out by various organisations to develop standardised methodologies. As these are established, we will assess their value and will work on the development of a harmonised industry approach to calculate the carbon footprint of printing inks.

8. In the meantime, we are of the view that a 1-3% default contribution from printing inks is sufficiently accurate, given the current state of development of carbon footprint calculation methodologies.
9. This Information Note will be regularly updated to reflect the evolving development of this important issue.

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