

Carbon footprinting

Carbon footprinting refers to the declaration of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with a product or service. This information is reported in terms of carbon dioxide equivalents.

This means that emissions of other GHGs (such as methane) are converted into carbon dioxide equivalents. In other words, what is the climate changing effect of this gas compared to the climate changing effect of carbon dioxide (referred to as radiative forcing).

These emissions occur due to the generation of electricity, burning of fossil fuels, transportation, processing, etc., etc. It is usual to report these data in terms of carbon dioxide equivalents over a 100-year time period, but other ways of reporting are possible.

Increasingly, rather than seeing carbon footprints reported for products and services, we are seeing whole organizations reporting their footprint.

The organizational GHG report is produced in accordance with the requirements of ISO 14064-1:2018 Greenhouse gases – Part 1: Specification with guidance at the organization level for quantification and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and removals.

The report distinguishes between Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, which are defined as follows:

Scope 1 emissions are direct greenhouse (GHG) emissions that occur from sources that are controlled or owned by an organisation (e.g., emissions associated with fuel combustion in boilers, furnaces, vehicles).

Scope 2 emissions are indirect GHG emissions associated with the purchase of electricity, steam, heat, or cooling. Although scope 2 emissions physically occur at the facility where they are generated, they are accounted for in an organisation's GHG inventory because they are a result of the organisation's energy use.

Included in Scope 3 emissions are: purchased goods and services, capital goods, fuel-and-energy-related activities, upstream transportation and distribution, waste generated in operations, business travel, employee commuting, upstream leased assets, use of sold products, end of life treatment of sold products.

We have recently completed a GHG footprint study for Vastern Timber Ltd and the results have been published <https://www.vastern.co.uk/our-first-full-carbon-audit-is-complete/>