INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

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Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Life cycle interpretation

Management environnemental — Analyse du cycle de vie — Interprétation du cycle de vie

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 3.

Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this International Standard may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

International Standard ISO 14043 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Life cycle analysis*.

Annex A of this International Standard is for information only.

Introduction

This International Standard on life cycle interpretation describes the final phase of the life cycle assessment (LCA) procedure, in which the results of a life cycle inventory analysis (LCI) and — if conducted — of a life cycle impact assessment (LCIA), or both, are summarized and discussed as a basis for conclusions, recommendations and decision-making in accordance with the goal and scope definition.

An LCA study begins with the goal and scope definition phase and finishes with the interpretation phase.

Life cycle interpretation is a systematic procedure to identify, qualify, check and evaluate information from the results of the LCI and/or LCIA of a product system, and to present them in order to meet the requirements of the application as described in the goal and scope of the study. The practitioner undertaking the LCA study should be in close contact with the commissioner throughout the study in order to ensure that specific questions are addressed. This communication also has to be maintained through the life cycle interpretation phase. Therefore, transparency throughout the life cycle interpretation phase is essential. Where preferences, assumptions or value-choices are involved, these need to be clearly stated by the LCA practitioner in the final report.

LCA is but one of several tools to help in decision-making, irrespective of the application, for example for information purposes (documentation of existing product systems), for improvements (implementation of changes to existing product systems) or for establishment of a new product system.

Life cycle interpretation may also demonstrate links which exist between LCA and other environmental management techniques, by rationalizing and focusing on the results. It is therefore important not only to look backward from application to the life cycle interpretation phase (and the other phases) of the LCA but also forward, e.g. to the concurrent use of other techniques.

Life cycle interpretation includes communication, to give credibility to the results of other LCA phases (namely the LCI and LCIA), in a form that is both comprehensible and useful to the decision-maker.

Whereas decisions based on technical performance, economic or social aspects are outside the LCA study, environmental issues chosen for inclusion as part of the goal and scope definition may reflect such issues.

Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Life cycle interpretation

1 Scope

This International Standard provides requirements and recommendations for conducting the life cycle interpretation in LCA or LCI studies.

This International Standard does not describe specific methodologies for the life cycle interpretation phase of LCA and LCI studies.

2 Normative references

The following normative documents contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this International Standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. However, parties to agreements based on this International Standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the normative documents indicated below. For undated references, the latest edition of the normative document referred to applies. Members of ISO and IEC maintain registers of currently valid International Standards.

ISO 14040:1997, *Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Principles and framework.*

ISO 14041:1998, *Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Goal and scope definition and inventory analysis.*

ISO 14042:2000, *Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Life cycle impact assessment.*

ISO 14050:1998, *Environmental management — Vocabulary*.

3 Terms and abbreviated terms

3.1 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this International Standard, the terms and definitions given in ISO 14040, ISO 14041, ISO 14042 and ISO 14050 and the following apply.

3.1.1
completeness check
process of verifying whether information from the preceding phases of an LCA or an LCI study is sufficient for reaching conclusions in accordance with the goal and scope definition

3.1.2
consistency check
process of verifying that the assumptions, methods and data are consistently applied throughout the study and in accordance with the goal and scope definition

NOTE The consistency check should be performed before conclusions are reached.