

# Choose less contaminating products thanks to eco-labeling

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Ensuring the sustainability of the products we use is a fundamental challenge for society, and is becoming ever more important for consumers and companies. A researcher from the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC) has come up with an eco-labelling system that provides environmental information, showing the carbon footprints generated by the goods and services in question during their "life cycle".

"This study provides an alternative means of efficiently communicating

environmental information to companies, [consumers](#) and interested parties – the eco-label. This is a consolidated tool for informing society about the environmental burden of the goods we use, making it possible to differentiate between the products of different companies and organisations and, in future, to choose products that are less contaminating", Aldolfo Carballo Penela, a researcher at the USC and author of the study published in the *International Journal of [Life Cycle Assessment](#)*, tells SINC.

The research is based on a system known as the "method composed of financial accounts (MC3)", which was initially designed by J.L. Doménech, a biologist at the Department of the Environment in the Port of Gijón, in order to estimate the ecological and carbon footprints of organisations. Carballo has adapted this method to evaluate the environmental footprints of goods and services through all the phases that products pass through before reaching the final consumer.

"It is of fundamental importance to provide the consumer with environmental information, by including information on a product's carbon footprint, related to the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases during its production. These eco-labels on the product will make it possible to raise awareness, inform people about production methods, and to allow companies and organisations to carry out efficient environmental management", the expert explains.

In order to test his method, he used a can of Galicia mussels, produced by a specific brand, and analysed the parallel contamination involved in each of its "life cycle" phases.

"I did this to test the system using a practical example, and the result is that each metric ton of this product generates 10.7 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>", Carballo points out.

## Eco-labels on all products

The research provides this numerical indicator. Then, the aim would be to transform these greenhouse gas emissions into the eco-label. "It would be useful to apply this eco-labelling system to as many goods as possible, to make it visible on all [products](#), and for all consumers to become familiarised with this kind of information", the researcher adds.

"It is of key importance to achieve a productive development model that can be sustainable over the long term. This is one of the challenges that humanity must tackle. Preserving the environment in a condition in which it can continue providing environmental resources and services for future generations must be one of the pillars upon which sustainable development is built, and the contribution that companies and organisations make to this process will be of fundamental importance", stresses Carballo.

**More information:** Adolfo Carballo Penela, Juan Lu s Domenech, "Managing the carbon footprint of products: the contribution of the method composed of financial statements (MC3)", International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment , Nov 2010.

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