

**Oregon and Washington Stakeholder Meeting**  
**Category-Level Product Environmental Footprinting: Foods**  
**March 4, 2016**  
**9:30 – 12:00 PM**  
**Oregon DEQ Headquarters Office**  
**RORY SCHMICK NOTES**

**Background**

On Feb 5<sup>th</sup> David Allaway provided the following update on the three projects currently being implemented as part of the product environmental footprint effort:

- 1. Concrete Environmental Product Declarations.** DEQ has entered into a contract with the Oregon Concrete and Aggregates Producer Association (OCAPA) to provide all concrete producers in the State of Oregon with free access to a web-based calculator tool that produces environmental product declarations (EPDs) for each of their concrete mixes. EPDs are third party verified product footprints that report on a variety of environmental impact categories. Producers may choose to use EPDs as a consumer facing label to help distinguish their product from others, gain “points” or “credits” in rating systems or scorecards (including LEED), or just use the EPD for targeting internal process improvements. Put simply, EPDs are like a nutrition label for products – they measure and disclose a selection of the environmental impacts that occur during material production.

The purpose of this project is to help produce EPDs for as many concrete mixes, produced by as many concrete producers in Oregon, as possible. By providing access to a common EPD tool with low cost verification for concrete producers, EPDs will cost less and be more comparable than if otherwise produced by individual businesses using their own methods. DEQ chose to focus on concrete for a number of reasons. First, concrete is environmentally impactful and opportunities exist to reduce these impacts. EPDs will allow consumer choice based on environmental impacts of the concrete mix. EPDs will also allow concrete plants to measure their baseline impacts, target improvements that matter, and monitor their success. Finally, the timing of this project is critical in helping concrete producers meet new requirements in the LEED rating system – which is a major market driver for reducing the impacts of buildings and building materials.

The web-based EPD tool is expected to become available in March 2016. Tool development is being funded by the Portland Cement Association (PCA), who is the national industry association for US-based cement producers. In addition to providing access to the tool, the DEQ partnership with OCAPA will also include a partial reimbursement for third party verification expenses incurred by each concrete plant. DEQ and OCAPA are working with groups of concrete producers and individual businesses to educate them about the value of this program and help answer technical questions related the EPD tool. So far, the program has been very well received by concrete producers and practically all of Oregon’s largest producers have expressed interest in using the EPD tool once it’s available.

- 2. Categorical Footprint Assessments of Foods.** Agricultural production and food product manufacturing are important industries in both Oregon and Washington. In addition, food – when evaluated across its entire life cycle (production, packaging, transport, storage, use and disposal) contributes significantly to environmental challenges, and by extension, offers potential for improvement. There has been extensive industry and academic research into the environmental

footprints of foods, but much of the information is not accessible to small- and medium-sized businesses in the US: some can only be found in the academic literature, much is written using scientific terminology that can be difficult for the practitioner to understand, and some of the literature is published in languages other than English. In addition, some food commodities have been studied by different teams of researchers who have come to different conclusions – at times because of different assumptions and accounting frameworks. Even highly motivated businesses may have difficulty identifying, understanding, and then drawing meaningful conclusions from the literature.

DEQ has entered into a contract with the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources & Environment, Center for Sustainable Systems to produce "categorical footprint assessments" of approximately ten different types of foods. These assessments will be summaries of footprint information at the level of individual commodities (as opposed to producer, brand, or SKU level) that can improve decision-making by producers and consumers. This kind of information can help identify "hot spots" (life cycle stages and processes that cause large environmental impacts) and by extension, help prioritize actions to reduce environmental impacts (by focusing on those hot spots). It can also help producers and consumers understand trade-offs so as to inform better decisions. Given available funds, categorical footprint assessments will be developed primarily from existing literature, as opposed to original research.

Which ten (or so) foods to study in greater detail have not yet been determined; DEQ, the Washington Department of Ecology, and University of Michigan staff are planning a meeting in Portland on March 4 to introduce this project to interested parties and to seek feedback on which food types the University of Michigan should focus its research on. UM is currently conducting a broad literature scan to identify what information is already available, and results of this literature scan as well as the University's preliminary recommendations will be available shortly before the March 4 meeting. Meeting invitations will be sent in early February and we hope that the Oregon Sustainability Board will be represented at that meeting by at least one of its members. Draft footprint assessments for the selected food types will be available in the summer and fall of this year.

- 3. Case Studies.** With financial assistance from the Oregon DEQ, the Washington Department of Ecology is currently negotiating a contract with Quantis (which did the original product environmental footprint research project with the OSB in 2014) to develop case studies featuring a cross section of businesses and their experience with product environmental footprinting. The purpose of the case studies is to share with other businesses information regarding the business and environmental benefits of product footprinting, potential pitfalls, challenges and their solutions, and recommended best practices moving forward. Case studies will be drafted and finalized in 2016 and should be available at that point to share with other businesses. DEQ hopes to engage in a discussion with OSB members later in 2016 regarding possible methods sharing this information with other businesses.

As part of the food project (#2 above), DEQ and the Washington Department of Ecology convened a stakeholder meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup> to review and discuss the project, and provide feedback regarding which foods to research further. Please see the attached meeting agenda, recommendations and presentation slides for further information.

### **March 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

On behalf of the Oregon Sustainability Board, I attended the March 4<sup>th</sup> stakeholder meeting for the *Category-Level Product Environmental Footprinting: Foods* project. The meeting was at DEQ headquarters and was well attended by representatives of many of the invited organizations (see complete list of invitees on attached agenda). After brief introductions and welcome comments by meeting co-hosts David Allaway from the Oregon DEQ and Linda Glasier of the Washington Department of Ecology, I made the following remarks:

- *On behalf of the Oregon Sustainability Board, I wanted to thank each of you for taking time out of your busy schedules to participate in this important discussion.*
- *As David mentioned, the Board was an early supporter of this project and helped convene the initial Advisory Group who helped shape some of the early research for this effort.*
- *The Board and the Governors' Office have been excited by the progress that has been made over the past year and a half and look forward to moving ahead on the targeted product environmental footprinting work we will be discussing today.*
- *We are particularly interested in seeing the outcome of this work – the “categorical footprint assessments” – become effective tools for Oregon businesses to advance their sustainability profiles by focusing on the areas of their businesses with the highest environmental impacts.*

David then gave an overview of the project objectives, context, history and possible outcomes before handing it over to Dr. Martin Heller from the University of Michigan Center for Sustainable Systems. Dr. Heller provided an excellent overview of the food lifecycle assessment literature review and recommendations for further evaluation. See attached recommendations and meeting slides for additional information.

The rest of the meeting consisted of a lively and animated discussion of the research, including comments and feedback on which foods to focus on from meeting participants.

### **Next Steps & Recommendations**

DEQ is providing an opportunity for stakeholders to share additional feedback – including thoughts regarding which foods or food types you consider to be the best candidates to advance to the next stage of the project (i.e. additional research) – until 5:00 PM on Monday, April 18. All feedback, comments and/or questions should be directed to David Allaway at [Allaway.David@deq.state.or.us](mailto:Allaway.David@deq.state.or.us) or (503) 229-5479.

The other update is to inform the OSB that the Washington Department of Ecology has withdrawn its participation in this project. No explanation was given.

I recommend the OSB continue to support this project going forward. I believe the product footprint assessments will be valuable tools for Oregon businesses seeking to make meaningful contributions towards reducing their environmental impacts. I recommend the OSB invite David Allaway to our next meeting to discuss how best the Board can support the next phase of the project.



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