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#EUGreenDeal

Data for the Environmental Footprint (EF) methods

Quick guide on what data you need & where to get it

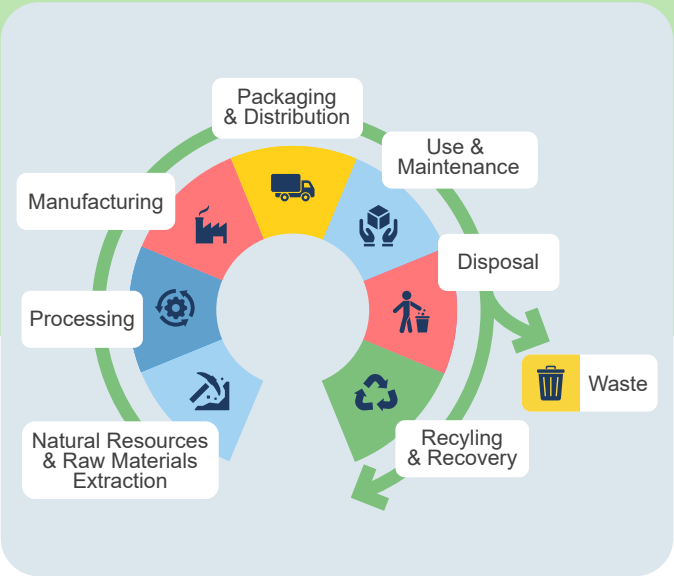
To successfully measure the environmental footprint of your product or organisation, you need reliable data from the correct sources. This factsheet explains what data you need and where to look for it, as you're getting started on your EF journey.

Why is data critical for an EF Study?

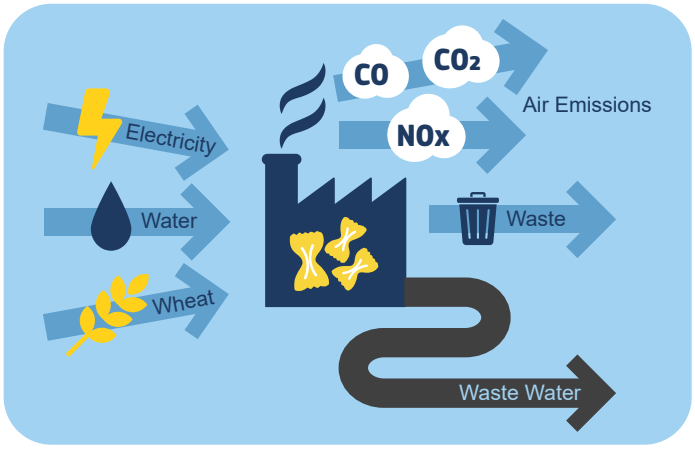
Having the right data is essential for calculating accurately and reliably the environmental footprint of a product or organisation. Accurate data ensures that the inputs and outputs of a product's life cycle, such as energy use, raw materials, emissions and the associated impacts are properly quantified and assessed. With a trustworthy environmental footprint, you can coherently inform your decision-making and your efforts in improving your sustainability.

What data do you need to calculate an environmental footprint?

A product will go through different steps or processes along its life cycle journey, from resource extraction to end-of-life. Every step of the life cycle of a product requires materials and energy (inputs) and produces emissions and waste (outputs).



To calculate an environmental footprint, you need to identify the relevant processes of the system you are studying, for example, the different operations for manufacturing a pack of pasta.
For each process, you need to quantify the inputs and outputs, and convert them to impacts on the environment.



To understand all of the exchanges between the studied system and the environment, you need to map all the processes with their inputs and outputs and how they are interlinked. This map is needed to calculate the overall environmental impact.

To start the calculation of the footprint, the different data on the inputs and outputs of each process needs to be combined in an inventory, called a life-cycle inventory (LCI).

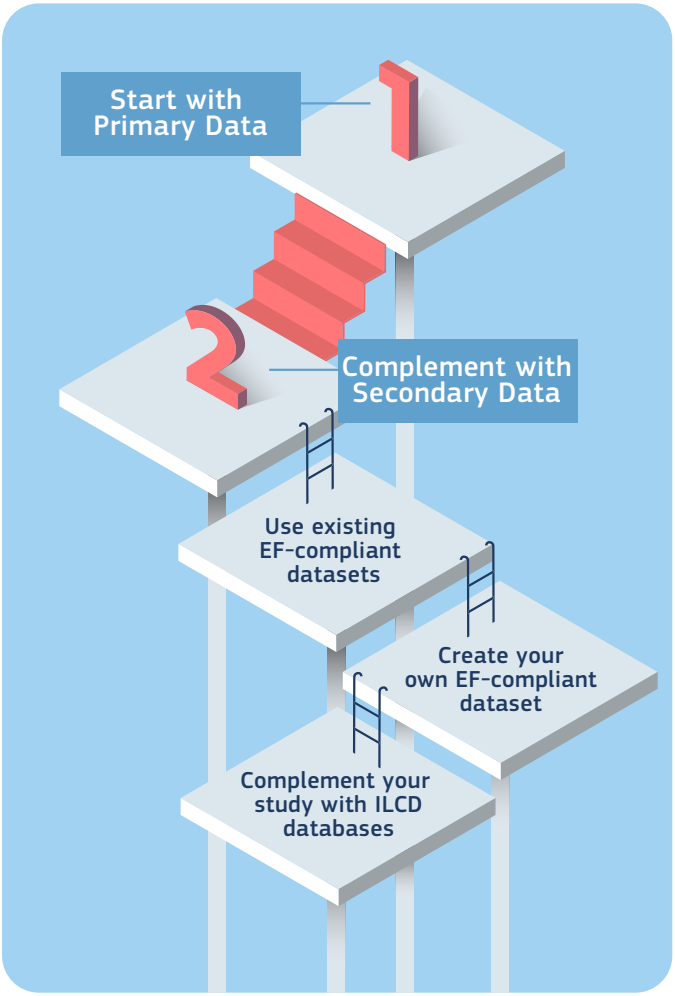
Where to get accurate data?

The best place to start is primary data which is directly collected, measured or estimated by your organisation on your own processes (called foreground processes). To calculate the footprint of your product and demonstrate its sustainability, the data needs to come from your own operations. However, for some processes outside your organisation (called background processes), collecting primary data is unfeasible or disproportional, such as tracking back to the start of the whole supply chain until the first actors involved in the production of electricity.

FOR EXAMPLE:

An organisation knows how much electricity its factory consumes and can collect that primary data.
But the origin of that electricity from the grid, often a mix, would be obtained from a secondary source.

You'll need to **complement your study with secondary data**. Start by looking for any relevant EF-compliant datasets.
If there are data gaps left, you can create your own EF-compliant dataset. If needed, you can complement the remaining data gaps with other life-cycle databases, the ILCD databases. These don't fulfil all of the EF quality standards and can only be used for up to 10% of your data needs.



What is an EF-compliant dataset?

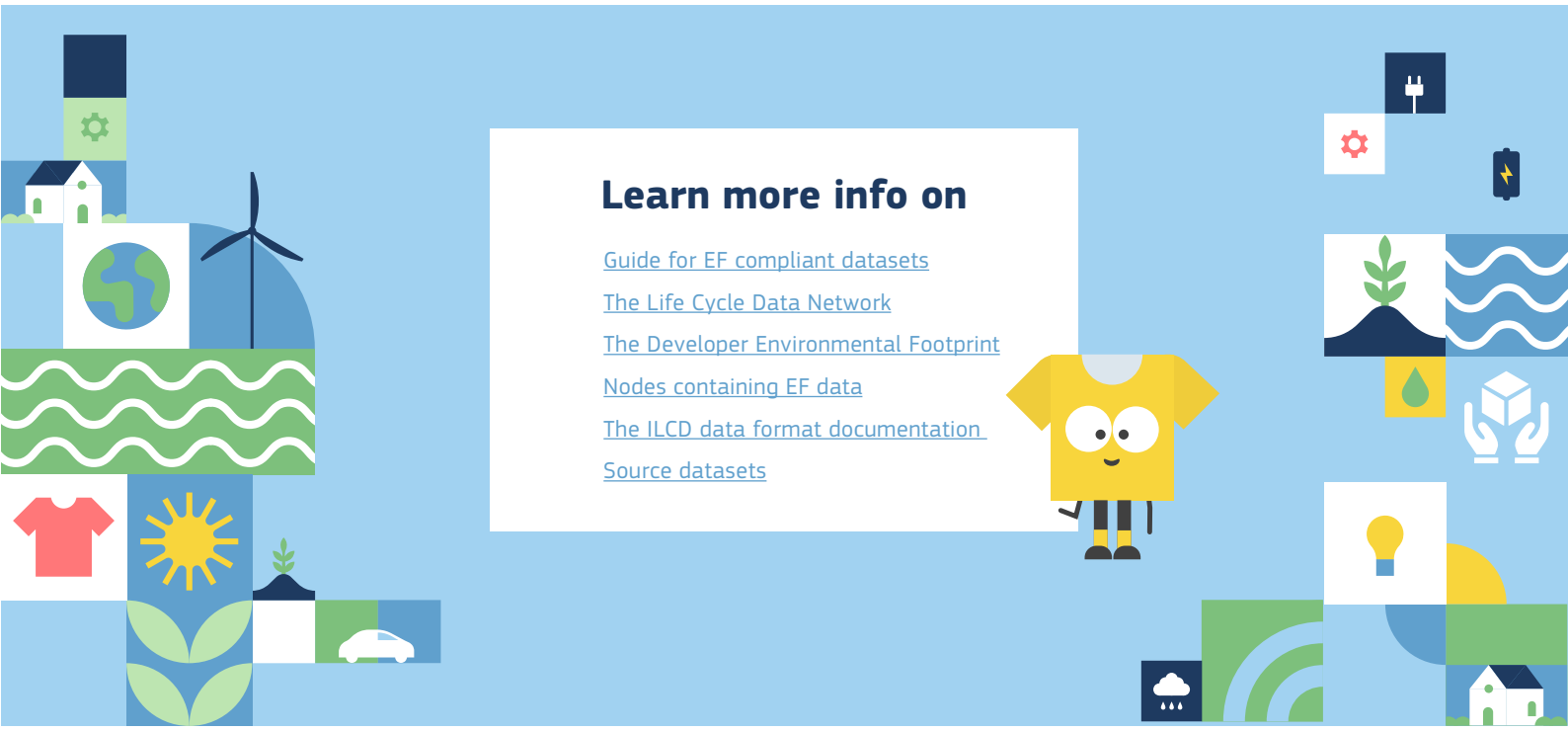
An EF-compliant dataset contains the necessary information about a process, material or energy source to be used in EF studies. They follow a specific format and their quality requirements are explained in the Guide for EF compliant datasets. For example, the datasets should cover all of the EF impact categories.

! Read all about the impact categories on the EF webpage at green-business.ec.europa.eu!

These datasets are also reviewed by qualified professionals, to make sure you can trust the data you use!

Where to find the secondary data you need?

Most of the commercial LCA softwares offer EF-compliant databases in their libraries. The European Platform on LCA holds information on the EF-compliant datasets and ILCD databases, including links to the nodes where you can access the datasets you need to complete your EF calculations: www.epcla.jrc.ec.europa.eu



Learn more info on

- Guide for EF compliant datasets
- The Life Cycle Data Network
- The Developer Environmental Footprint
- Nodes containing EF data
- The ILCD data format documentation
- Source datasets

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