

Swiss research institutions launch «ecoinvent», a cooperative LCI database

## Spotlight on an ecological black hole

***The Swiss Centre for Life Cycle Inventories is bringing light into environmental darkness with the «ecoinvent» project. It has recently made high-quality Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) data available via the internet. This new ecological inventory database is setting a new standard on the international stage in terms of coverage, consistency, quality-assurance, transparency and cost.***

After several years of preparation and development, the Swiss Centre for Life Cycle Inventories has reached its target, as today's presentation at the ETH Zurich demonstrated. Under the leadership of the EMPA, several institutes and departments within the ETH Domain together with a range of federal organizations are working together to form the «Swiss Centre for Life Cycle Inventories – ecoinvent Centre» which will combine their separate LCI data into a common, harmonized database.

As part of a project lasting several years, more than 2500 data sets have been recompiled, updated and unified by the cooperating organizations. This means that high quality, harmonized LCIs are available today covering the energy, transport, waste disposal, building material, chemical, detergent, paper and agricultural sectors. The data is based on the production and supply situation in the year 2000 and is valid for Swiss and Western European conditions.

To create a life cycle inventory for a product or a firm requires a great deal of basic information about the background processes. This data is now available through ecoinvent in a uniquely high quality, user-friendly form, reducing the effort necessary to conduct LCI studies and facilitating their implementation. The format used in the database has gained international approval and has

already been adopted by suppliers of LCI software. Users include specialists in industry, service providers, local and federal government administration and scientists.

A key feature of «ecoinvent» is the facility to download data sets for individual processes via the internet ([www.ecoinvent.ch](http://www.ecoinvent.ch)). A license fee of EURO 1200.– (plus VAT) allows members unlimited access, while a «guest» mode gives interested visitors a limited look at the data on offer at no charge.

**Further information:**

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Access to ecoinvent data & registration:

[www.ecoinvent.ch](http://www.ecoinvent.ch)

*Further reading in German:*

- Umwelt Focus 4/03: «ecoinvent» – die neue nationale Ökobilanz-Datenbank der Schweiz"
- BUWAL Magazin Umwelt 3/03: «Scheinwerfer im ökologischen Dunkel»