

Closing the Loop for Aluminium Cans - DTU Orbit (08/11/2017)

Closing the Loop for Aluminium Cans: Life Cycle Assessment of progression in Cradle-to-Cradle certification levels

Despite their different scopes, both the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methodology and the Cradle to Cradle (C2C) Certified™ Product Standard can support companies in the implementation of circular economy strategies. Considering the case of aluminum cans, the objectives of this paper are twofold: (i) to compare the environmental impact associated with different levels of two C2C certification requirements by using LCA; and (ii) to identify the main challenges and drawbacks in the combined use of LCA and C2C for packaging within the circular economy framework. Twenty different scenarios were developed and compared, according to three C2C certification levels, in terms of % renewable energy and % recycled content. The results show that increasing the recycled content provides more improvements to environmental impacts than increasing renewable energy usage. Furthermore, receiving a higher certification level does not necessarily mean environmental burden reduction in LCA sense. From a methodological point of view, the main challenge for LCA is to address the continuous loop of materials and account for the benefits from recycling in a consistent way. Meanwhile for C2C the challenge is to guarantee a proper translation of the C2C principles into the C2C certification program, avoiding burden shifting and to find a balance between the different certification requirements.

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