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Techno-economic assessment and comparison of CO₂ capture technologies for industrial processes: preliminary results for the iron and steel sector

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Abstract

This paper presents the methodology and the preliminary results of a techno-economic assessment of CCS implementation on the iron and steel sector. The results show that for the short-mid term, a CO₂ avoidance cost of less than 50 €/tonne at a CO₂ avoidance rate of around 50% are possible by converting the conventional blast furnace (BF) to Top Gas Recycling Blast Furnace (TGRBF). However, large additional power consumption for CO₂ removal and oxygen generation, and reduction in BF gas export, makes the economic performance of the technology very sensitive to energy prices. Add-on CO₂ capture for conventional BF may achieve similar costs (40 – 50 €/tCO₂ avoided), but the CO₂ avoidance rate will be only about 15% of the specific CO₂ emissions. For the long term future, although there are large uncertainties, advanced CO₂ capture technologies do not seem to have significant economic advantages over conventional technologies. The results also indicate that in a carbon-constrained society, when considering new plants, smelting reduction technologies such as the COREX process, may become a strong competitor to conventional blast furnace based steel making process when equipped with CO₂ capture. Although conventional iron and steel making using BF is expected to dominate the market in the long term, strong need for drastic CO₂ emissions reduction may drive the sector towards large scale implementation of advanced smelting reduction technologies.

© 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).Keywords: CO₂ capture; industry; techno-economic; iron and steel

1. Introduction

Industry and petroleum refineries are among the largest contributors to anthropogenic CO₂ emissions. In 2006 these sectors together emitted more than 11Gt of CO₂ directly and indirectly², accounting for nearly 40% of total global CO₂ emissions [1-3]. CO₂ capture and storage (CCS) is considered a promising option to achieve significant reduction in CO₂ emissions from industry and petroleum refineries, not only because of their total CO₂ emissions

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² Industry accounted for 10.6Gt of direct and indirect emissions, and petroleum refineries accounted for 0.8Gt of direct emissions.

but also because there are many industrial processes that generate gas streams rich in CO₂, or in some cases pure CO₂, which may enable CCS at low energy penalty and economic costs.

There are a number of literature reviews on the CO₂ capture technologies for industrial processes available in the open literature, e.g. [2, 4-6]. These literature reviews, however, are incomplete in one way or another. Firstly, some reviews only cover a limited number of publications [4, 6]. Secondly, these reports do not look into the assumptions behind the CO₂ capture performance calculations of each publication. For economic performance assessments, assumptions on system boundaries, fuel price, capital cost estimation, interest rate, and economic lifetime, have a large impact on the results. Without standardizing key parameters, a fair comparison of economic performance of CO₂ capture published in the literature is not possible. The objective of this paper is to assess and compare the technical and economic performance of CO₂ capture from industrial processes on a consistent basis.

This research project investigates the following industrial sectors: cement, iron and steel, chemicals and petrochemicals, and petroleum refining. The first three sectors account for nearly three-fourths of global total industrial CO₂ emissions [2]. Petroleum refineries account for an additional 0.8Gt of CO₂ per year. Industrial processes that generate pure CO₂ streams, e.g. ammonia production and gasification, are not investigated as CO₂ capture is already practiced in an economical manner.

In this paper the methodology and preliminary results for one of the sectors (iron and steel) are presented. The complete assessment for all sectors will be presented in a research paper which is under preparation.

2. Methodology

2.1. Timeframe

The focus in this research is on the implementation of CO₂ capture in the short-mid term future (5 – 15 years) and in the long-term future (20 years or more). Short-mid term technologies are defined here as those that are either in pilot plant, demonstration or commercialization phase today [7]. Technologies are also categorized to be short-mid term technologies when all equipment required is commercially available today, even if the process as a whole has not yet been tested or demonstrated. All other technologies, either in proof-of-concept or laboratory phase today, are considered to be long-term future options [7].

2.2. System boundaries and performance indicators

Figure 1 shows the system boundaries of an industrial process as defined for this study. Besides direct emissions from the industrial process, the CO₂ emissions accountable for the import/export of process gas, electricity and steam are also taken into account. This approach enables to incorporate the effect of changes in material and energy flows of the industrial process due to process modification as a result of CO₂ capture.

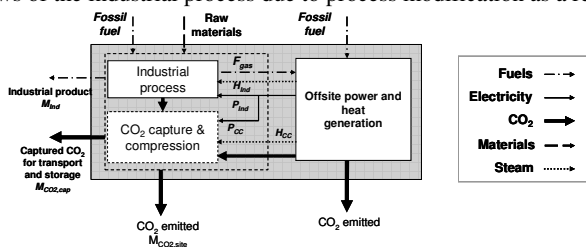


Figure 1 System boundaries of an industrial process defined for this study.

2.2.1. Technical indicators

This study uses specific CO₂ emissions $Em_{Sp,Ind}$ (tCO₂/t product) as the main technical indicators of CO₂ capture performance. $Em_{Sp,Ind}$ is defined as:

$$Em_{Sp,Ind} = \frac{M_{CO_2,site} + \left\{ (P_{Ind} + H_{Ind} * \eta_{ST,Ind}) + (P_{CC} + H_{CC} * \eta_{ST,CC}) - F_{gas} * \eta_{PP} \right\} * Em_{Sp,Elec}}{M_{Ind}} \quad (1)$$

where:

$M_{CO_2,site}$: onsite CO₂ emission rate (tCO₂/s),

M_{Ind} : production rate of the industrial product (tonne/s),

E_{imp} : total imported energy (MW electricity-equivalent),

P_{Ind} : electricity import for the industrial process (MW),

P_{CC} : electricity import for CO₂ capture and compression (MW),

H_{Ind} : steam import for the industrial process (MW);

H_{CC} : steam import for CO₂ capture and compression (MW),

η_{ST} : steam turbine electricity generation efficiency,

F_{gas} : net process gas export from the industrial process to power plants (MW),

η_{PP} : gas-fired power plant efficiency, and

$Em_{Sp,Elec}$: CO₂ emission factor of grid electricity (tCO₂/MJ_e).

Subscript symbols *CC* and *Ref* indicate the CO₂ capture case and the reference (no CO₂ capture) case, respectively. An important assumption here is that the exported process fuel gas and the imported/exported process steam are converted to electrical terms.

2.2.2. Economic indicator

We use *CO₂ avoidance cost* (C_{CO_2}) as the main economic indicator for CO₂ capture (Eq.(2)):

$$C_{CO_2} = \frac{\alpha * \Delta I + \Delta C_{energy} + \Delta C_{O\&M} + \Delta C_{Mat}}{(Em_{Sp,Ref} - Em_{Sp,CC}) * M_{Ind,annual}} \quad (2)$$

where α is the annuity factor (a⁻¹), ΔI is the incremental capital requirement (€), ΔC_{energy} is the additional annual cost of energy due to CO₂ capture (€/a), $\Delta C_{O\&M}$ is the incremental operation and maintenance (O&M) costs (€/a), $\Delta C_{O\&M}$ is the additional annual cost of raw materials due to CO₂ capture (€/a), and $M_{Ind,annual}$ is the annual production of the industrial product (t/a).

In some industrial sectors a variety of manufacturing routes can be found for a single product, e.g. steel production. In such cases, costs of manufacture (€/t industrial product) are also calculated (Eq.(3)):

$$C_{CO_2} = \frac{\alpha * I + C_{energy} + C_{Mat} + C_{O\&M}}{M_{Ind,annual}} \quad (3)$$

2.2.3. Other indicators

Additional indicators that are used in the research include, e.g. possibilities for retrofitting and the influence of CO₂ capture on the process operations.

2.3. Data collection and standardization of key parameters

An extensive literature review was performed to assess the technical and economic performance of the three industrial processes with and without CO₂ capture. To enable a fair comparison of technologies, some underlying parameters need to be standardized. We follow the procedure suggested by Damen et al. [8]:

- Normalization of technical parameters: CO₂ compression pressure, grid electricity CO₂ emission factor,
- Normalization of economic parameters: capital investment, fuel and electricity prices, indexation (all cost figures presented in €₂₀₀₈)

With regard to capital investment, we consider total capital requirement (TCR), which includes the following cost components:

- Process plant cost (costs for the equipment pieces and their installation) plus engineering fees and contingencies;
- Owner costs (royalties, preproduction costs, inventory capital, land costs and site preparation) and interests during construction
- Normalization of plant scales. For instance, in the case of iron and steel production, the scale has been normalized to 4Mt crude steel production per year.

Table 1 presents the key parameters used for the technical and economic indicator calculations.

Table 1 Parameters standardized for technical and economic performance calculations in this study.

Parameters	Unit	Value	Range
Annualized capital cost	%- total capital requirement	11.7	7.7 – 15.7
Non-coking coal	€/GJ	2.5	2 – 3
Natural gas	€/GJ	8	5 – 11
Electricity price	€/MWh	50	30 – 100
Grid electricity CO ₂ emission factor	g/kWh	380	160 – 600
Conversion factor: steam → electricity	High temperature steam ($\eta_{ST,ind}$)	40%	
	Low temperature steam ($\eta_{ST,CC}$)	20%	
Gas turbine combined cycle power plant efficiency (η_{pp})		50%	
CO ₂ compression pressure	bar	110	

3. Assessment of CO₂ capture technologies for the iron and steel sector.

Table 2 presents an overview of CO₂ capture technologies for the iron and steel sector proposed in the literature. In this section a brief overview of key aspects related to the technologies are presented

Table 2 Various CO₂ capture options for blast furnace and other steelmaking processes reported in the literature.

CO ₂ capture technologies		References	
Short-mid term	Air-blown BF	MEA	[9]
		MDEA	[10]
		Selexol	[11]
		Shift + Selexol	[9, 11]
	TGRBF	MEA	[12]
		VPSA	[12]
		Selexol	[12]
	COREX	MEA	[9]
		Selexol	[9, 13, 14]
		Shift + Selexol	[9, 15]
Long term	Air-blown BF	Shift membrane reactor + Selexol	[15]
		Selective carbon membrane	[16]
		Hydrate crystallization	[17]
	TGRBF	Selective carbon membrane	[12, 16]
		Hydrate crystallization	[17]
	Advanced smelting reduction	Purification only	[18]

3.1. Short-mid term technologies

Conventional integrated steelmaking process (Figure 2 (a)) has around 70% of the carbon introduced into the process flows through a blast furnace (BF) [10]. BF gas exits the BF at 2-3 bar [10] and contains CO₂ (17-25%), CO (20-28%), H₂ (1-5%), N₂ (50-55%) [19]. After dust removal, BF gas flows through expansion turbines to recover

some power before being distributed as a fuel [10]. Some BF gas is used for other processes within the iron and steel plant, and the rest is sold to other industries or power plants.

Chemical absorption CO₂ capture is generally considered as a short-term technology. A major limitation of CO₂ capture directly from BF gas is that it captures less than 50% of the total carbon contained in the BF gas because about half the carbon is in the form of CO. The capture of CO₂ directly from BF gas is deemed more expensive compared to other options [20]. A potentially feasible technology for BF in the short-mid term is to capture CO₂ after CO in the BF gas is converted to CO₂ via a shift reaction [15], enabling a higher carbon removal rate (85–99.5% of the carbon in the BF gas). The BF gas after shift reaction and CO₂ removal is H₂-rich, which could be both advantageous and disadvantageous. The main advantage is that a higher electrical efficiency can be achieved when the H₂-rich BF gases are used in a power plant. The major disadvantage regarding the use of shift reaction is that the energy plant using the BF gas may require important modifications in the gas turbines [14].

Another promising technology in the short-mid term is the Top Gas Recycling Blast Furnace (TGRBF) (Figure 2 (b)) technology, which enables a more energy efficient blast furnace operation when CO₂ capture is to be incorporated [12, 20]. TGRBF is oxygen-blown so its top gas contains little nitrogen and is rich in CO (40–50 vol.%), thus enabling the top gas to be recycled as a reducing agent after CO₂ is removed. Consequently, the coke consumption can be reduced by up to 30% compared to conventional air-blown BF. With CO₂ capture, onsite CO₂ emissions can be reduced up to 76% compared to the conventional BF [21]. The overall CO₂ emissions reduction will be somewhat smaller because the reduced BF gas export needs to be compensated for, and a large amount of electricity is required to produce high-purity oxygen. TGRBF can be retrofitted to conventional blast furnaces, although it may require major modifications to the furnace.

Smelting reduction process (Figure 2, bottom left) is the latest development in pig iron production, which omits coke production by combining the gasification of non-coking coal with the reduction of iron ore in a liquid bath [22]. The smelting reduction reactor resembles the lower part of a blast furnace, and the reduction process generates a large amount of residual gas which, in the most effective designs, is used for pre-reduction of the solid ore (IEA, 2009). Smelting reduction facilitates CO₂ capture because the flue gas has a higher CO₂ concentration than conventional blast furnace gas as the furnace is blown with pure oxygen (some nitrogen needs to be injected in order to maintain momentum and heat transfer within the furnace). As of 2008, the COREX process is the only smelting reduction process commercially operating around the world [23]. CO₂ capture from the smelting reduction process gas (Figure 2 (c)) is considered to be more cost-effective than that from air-blown BF gas because of higher CO₂ concentration, around 25–35 vol%. CO₂ capture from smelting reduction process gas is already in operation at commercial scale. At Saldanha steel plant in South Africa, CO₂ is removed from the COREX gas by vacuum pressure swing adsorption (VPSA) before being used as reduction gas for DRI production [24]. When the COREX gas is used for power generation, a study suggests that the energy penalty for CO₂ capture using physical absorption is marginal because the COREX gas has to be compressed anyway for the combustion in a power plant [14]. This study also shows a small increase in the electrical output of the CHP due to fuel quality improvement.

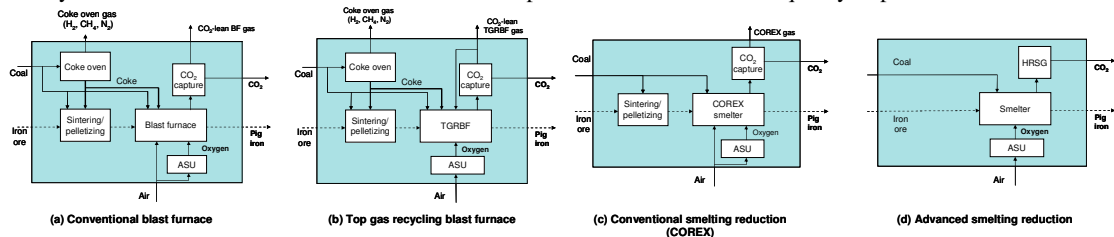


Figure 2 Schematics of different ironmaking processes with CO₂ capture.

3.2. Long-term technologies

The integrated steelmaking process using BF is expected to keep on playing a dominant role in the industry in the longer term [25]. The production efficiency of BF is not expected to improve significantly because it is already very

efficient [26]. Regarding CO₂ capture, some advanced technologies are proposed in the literature. Water gas shift membrane reactor with CO₂ capture using Selexol has been proposed for BF and TGRBF gases by [15]. Other advanced CO₂ removal technologies for BF and TGRBF found in the literature are: selective carbon membranes [16] and hydrate crystallization [17].

A number of innovative iron and steel production technologies with low CO₂ emissions may become available in the long term. One of them is advanced smelting reduction (Figure 2 (d)) [20, 27]. The main characteristics of a potentially promising advanced smelting reduction process, called Hisarna, are that both iron ores and non-coking coal can directly be put into the smelter, the input carbon is fully oxidized within the smelter so that CO₂ removal unit is unnecessary. Some heat is recovered from the off-gas to generate steam. The Hisarna process will be developed in a pilot plant at Corus steelworks in IJmuiden (the Netherlands) in the next couple of years [28], and is expected to capture 95% of the carbon input to the iron making process [29].

4. Preliminary results

Figure 3 presents the production costs for one tonne of crude steel from various steelmaking processes and their respective specific CO₂ emissions. Regarding the BF-based process, specific CO₂ emissions is nearly halved when the CO in the BF gas is shifted or the BF is converted to TGRBF. Advanced CO₂ capture technologies do not seem to have significant economic advantages over conventional technologies. The figure also shows that the COREX process with CO₂ capture enables lower crude steel production cost and lower specific CO₂ emissions compared to the reference BF-based process. However, the reduction in specific CO₂ emissions compared to the reference BF-based process is of only 15%. Advanced smelting reduction process shows very promising results: reducing crude steel production cost by 15% and specific CO₂ emissions by 90% compared to the reference BF-based process.

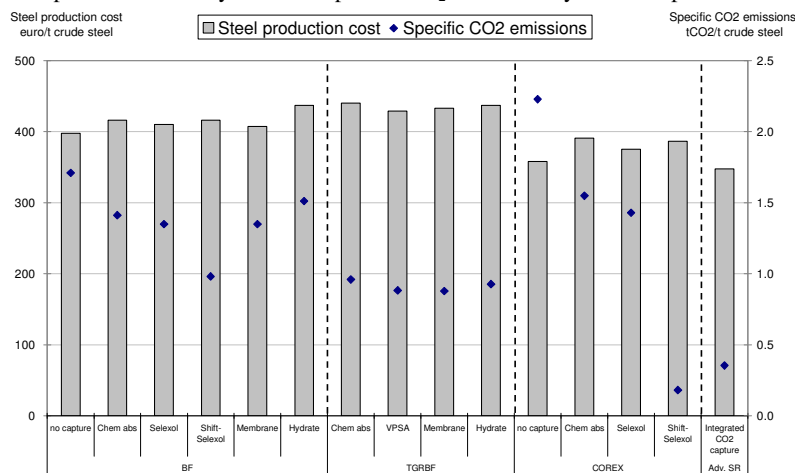


Figure 3 Production costs for one tonne of crude steel from various steelmaking processes and their respective specific CO₂ emissions.

Figure 4 shows CO₂ avoidance costs calculated for different steelmaking processes with CO₂ capture in the short-mid term. The uncertainty of the economic performance is found to be significant, especially for the TGRBF options. This is mainly because the modification from air-blown BF to TGRBF reduces the process gas export significantly, leading to a considerable reduction in electricity production. Our preliminary results also indicate that CO₂ avoidance potential is also largely affected by the CO₂ emission intensity of the grid electricity.

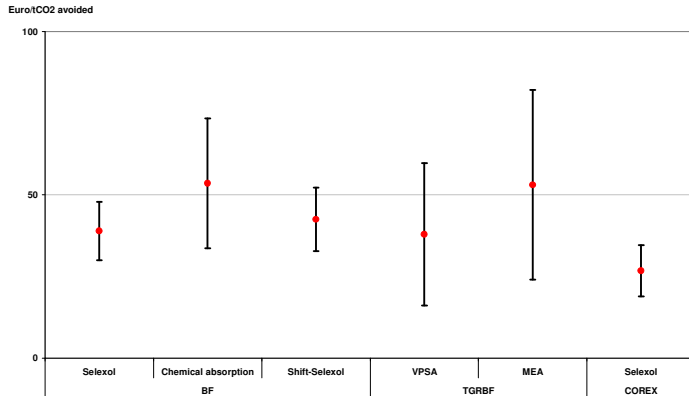


Figure 4 CO₂ avoidance costs (compared to identical plant) for different steelmaking processes with CO₂ capture. The error bars show the influence of key parameters (annualized capital cost, coal price, natural gas price, electricity price, and grid electricity CO₂ emission factor). The range of parameter values are presented in Table 2.

5. Preliminary conclusions

The technical and economic assessment and comparison of CO₂ capture from industrial processes based on a consistent basis has been performed. We presented the methodology and the preliminary results of the assessment on the iron and steel sector.

Our results have shown that for the short-mid term, a CO₂ avoidance cost of less than 50 €/tonne at a CO₂ avoidance rate around 50% are possible. TGRBF with VPSA seems to be the best option from an economic point of view. TGRBF showed a potential for relatively low-cost CO₂ capture because of significant reduction in coking coal consumption. However, large additional power consumption for CO₂ removal and oxygen generation, and reduction in BF gas export, makes the economic performance of the technology very sensitive to energy prices. Add-on CO₂ capture for air-blown blast furnace using VPSA or Selexol will also enable CO₂ capture at similar costs (40-50 €/tCO₂ avoided), but the CO₂ avoidance rate will be only about 15% of the specific CO₂ emissions.

For the long term future, although there are large uncertainties, advanced CO₂ capture technologies do not seem to have significant economic advantages over conventional technologies. Selective carbon membranes will enable CO₂ capture from air-blown BF at around 30 €/tonne, but this still was found to be more expensive than using VPSA for oxygen-blown BF.

When a new plant is considered, smelting reduction technologies such as the COREX process may become a strong competitor to conventional blast furnace based steel making process in a carbon-constrained society when equipped with CO₂ capture. Moreover, our results show that smelting reduction technologies can achieve considerable reduction in CO₂ emissions compared to the BF process, while keeping the steel production cost on par. Although conventional iron and steel making using BF is expected to dominate the market in the long term, strong need for drastic CO₂ emissions reduction may drive the sector towards large scale implementation of advanced smelting reduction technologies.

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