



# EcoProfile of recycled HDPE pellets EU27+3, cradle-to-gate, post- consumer

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**May 2025**

<b>LCA method overview</b>	
<b>Background database</b>	Ecoinvent v3.10
<b>Dataset type</b>	Cut-off, unit processes
<b>Declared unit</b>	'Production of 1 kg of mechanically recycled HDPE pellets'
<b>ISO conformity</b>	ISO 14040 and 14044 structure, internal review
<b>LCIA method</b>	Environmental Footprint 3.1
<b>Software</b>	openLCA 2.4
<b>System boundary</b>	Cradle-to-gate



## 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The primary purpose of this document is to present an average life cycle inventory (LCI) and impact assessment (LCIA) for mechanically recycled high-density polyethylene (rHDPE) pellets as result of the Horizon Project PRIMUS. The project seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of and data for the environmental impacts associated with mechanically recycled plastics.
- rHDPE is a widespread material known for its rigidity, commonly used in containers, pipes, and household products. The usage of mechanically recycled HDPE reduces the use of fossil fuels and energy compared to the production of primary HDPE.
- Mechanical recycling of HDPE plastic waste involves cleaning to remove residues, shredding, density separation and reprocessing into rHDPE pellets. Prior to extrusion and pelletising, HDPE flakes can undergo a process called air elutriation to remove labels and sleeves that could impede recycling.
- The documentation of the method followed in the herein presented EcoProfile follows the main principles of the ISO 14040-14044 standards and was internally reviewed by PlasticRecyclersEurope and experts from the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland. It is intended for LCA practitioners and sustainability researchers and stakeholders in the field of plastic recyclates.
- Details for the methodology used for this EcoProfile can be found in the accompanying methodology publication. Datasets can be downloaded from openLCA Nexus in JSON-LD and ILCD formats.

## 2 MODEL DESCRIPTION

- This EcoProfile represents an average of European industry for mechanical rHDPE production. Data was collected from 10 sites in 2022 in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland, represents the recycling of post-industrial and post-consumer packaging, agricultural and construction wastes, and 2.86% of the European installed mechanical recycling capacity of those waste streams. The European coverage has been calculated per waste-stream, as displayed in Table 2 of the accompanying methodology document.
- The herein generated EcoProfile embodies a life cycle inventory in a 'cradle-to-gate' fashion for collection, sorting of waste, and production of HDPE plastic recycle pellets. The product under investigation is 1 kg of recycled HDPE pellets. The main production steps in mechanical recycling are included in the system boundaries of the EcoProfile are visualised in Figure 1.

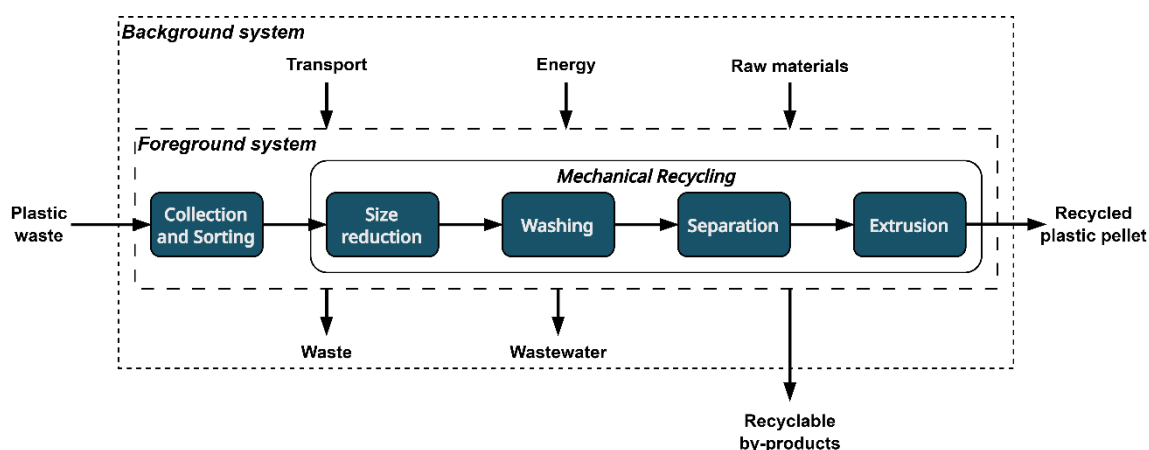


Figure 1: System description and boundaries. Following the PRE recycling scheme.

- The functional unit of the rHDPE EcoProfile is **'Production of 1 kg of mechanically recycled HDPE pellets, obtained from post-industrial and post-consumer packaging, agricultural and construction wastes after collection and sorting, at gate, unpackaged, representing 2.86% of European production'** where the reference flow of the rHDPE EcoProfile provided is **'1 kg of rHDPE pellets, unpacked'**.
- Generally, a complete LCI was aimed for, though some neglectable amounts of secondary outputs had to be cut-off. For multi-output processes, physical allocation was used, as described in our methodology.
- The collected primary data was combined with secondary data (for transport, energy, chemicals, and water) from the ecoinvent 3.10 cut-off LCA database. The life cycle inventory and impacts were calculated using the CED and EF 3.1 method.

### 3 LCI RESULTS

Table 1. Summary of material and energy in- and outputs of an exemplary secondary material production process for recycled HDPE pellets with a cradle-to-gate boundary

<b>Incoming Material</b>	<b>Flow Quantities per 1 kg</b>
Mixed plastic waste including impurities <sup>1</sup>	1.38 kg
<b>Material inputs</b>	
air filter, central unit, 600 m3/h	7.98E-06 Item(s)
calcium carbonate, precipitated	5.50E-04 kg
chemical, organic	7.38E-03 kg
Cleaning consumables, with water	3.63E-05 kg
Colour masterbatch	4.35E-03 kg
containerboard, linerboard	2.89E-05 kg
fleece, polyethylene	6.92E-09 kg
hydrochloric acid, without water, in 30% solution state	8.25E-06 kg
iron(III) chloride, without water, in 40% solution state	2.76E-03 kg
lubricating oil	1.77E-06 kg
magnesium sulfate	1.70E-04 kg
polyacrylamide	1.97E-06 kg
polyaluminium chloride	4.47E-05 kg
polydimethylsiloxane	1.90E-04 kg
polyethylene, high density, granulate	2.56E-05 kg
polyethylene, low density, granulate	2.31E-02 kg
polypropylene, granulate	1.70E-04 kg
sodium hydroxide, without water, in 50% solution state	1.07E-03 kg
steel, low-alloyed	6.25E-03 kg
Talcum powder	3.30E-04 kg
tin plated chromium steel sheet, 2 mm	3.17E-06 m <sup>2</sup>
waste collection lorry, 21 metric ton	8.05E-08 Item(s)
<b>Service inputs</b>	
drawing of pipe, steel	2.82E-06 kg
extrusion, plastic film	2.30E-02 kg
injection moulding	2.56E-05 kg
wire drawing, steel	6.25E-03 kg
<b>Water consumption</b>	
tap water	1.90 kg
water, completely softened	9.39E-06 kg
<b>Energy</b>	
diesel, burned in building machine	0.101 MJ
electricity, low voltage	2.43 MJ
heat, central or small-scale, other than natural gas	3.63E-02 MJ
heat, district or industrial, natural gas	0.112 MJ
petrol, unleaded, burned in machinery	2.85E-03 MJ
Infrastructure	
waste preparation facility	4.23E-09 Item(s)
<b>Transportation</b>	
municipal waste collection service by 21 metric ton lorry	6.59E-03 t*km
Transport, forklift, propane-driven	2.90E-04 t*km
transport, freight train	4.36E-06 t*km
transport, freight, lorry 16-32 metric ton, EURO3	1.87E-02 t*km
transport, freight, lorry 16-32 metric ton, EURO4	1.17E-02 t*km
transport, freight, lorry 16-32 metric ton, EURO5	0.128 t*km
transport, freight, lorry 16-32 metric ton, EURO6	2.20E-02 t*km
transport, freight, lorry, unspecified	2.41E-02 t*km

<sup>1</sup> This value expresses an aggregation of all polymer waste streams contributing to the EcoProfile inputs. Please find the disaggregated input values per-waste stream in the disaggregated datasets.

transport, passenger car	6.30 m
<b>Solid Waste</b>	
municipal solid waste	0.204 kg
raw sludge	0.147 kg
waste mineral oil	7.74E-06 kg
waste plastic, mixture	3.58E-02 kg
waste polyethylene terephthalate	1.10E-04 kg
Secondary material outputs	
Waste fraction - diverse - recycling cut-off	1.28E-03 kg
Waste fraction - metal - recycling cut-off	2.52E-03 kg
<b>Wastewater treatment</b>	
wastewater, average	1.62E-03 m <sup>3</sup>
Water	7.47E-05 m <sup>3</sup>
<b>Probability to litter plastic</b>	
plastic litter	1.23E-03 kg

Table 2. Primary energy demand by carrier using CED method for an exemplary secondary material production process for recycled HDPE pellets with a cradle-to-gate boundary

Energy carrier	Total energy input for 1kg of rHDPE pellets
Gas, natural	2.73 MJ-Eq
Uranium	2.67 MJ-Eq
Oil, crude	2.49 MJ-Eq
Coal, hard	1.36 MJ-Eq
Coal, brown	0.76 MJ-Eq
<b>Energy resources: non-renewable</b>	10.05 MJ-Eq
<b>Energy resources: renewable</b>	1.62 MJ-Eq
<b>Total</b>	11.67 MJ-Eq

## 4 LCIA RESULTS

Table 3. Life cycle impacts of the cradle-to-gate rHDPE model related to 1 kg of pellets

Impact Category	Impact assessment <sup>2</sup>	Unit
Acidification	2.47E-03 ± 3.97E-04	mol H <sup>+</sup> -Eq
Climate change	0.823 ± 0.105	kg CO <sub>2</sub> -Eq
Ecotoxicity: freshwater	4.74 ± 0.80	CTUe
Energy resources: non-renewable	9.52 ± 2.30	MJ, net calorific value
Eutrophication: freshwater	2.80E-04 ± 3.47E-05	kg P-Eq
Eutrophication: marine	6.90E-04 ± 8.58E-05	kg N-Eq
Eutrophication: terrestrial	5.18E-03 ± 8.42E-04	mol N-Eq
Human toxicity: carcinogenic	3.79E-09 ± 1.34E-09	CTUh
Human toxicity: non-carcinogenic	8.89E-09 ± 1.24E-09	CTUh
Ionising radiation: human health	0.153 ± 0.018	kBq U235-Eq
Land use	4.02 ± 1.87	dimensionless
Material resources: metals/minerals	5.23E-06 ± 1.12E-06	kg Sb-Eq
Ozone depletion	2.28E-07 ± 1.81E-08	kg CFC-11-Eq
Particulate matter formation	2.45E-08 ± 4.37E-09	disease incidence
Photochemical oxidant formation: human health	1.99E-03 ± 4.78E-04	kg NMVOC-Eq
Plastic litter	2.47E-02 ± 2.10E-03	kg

<sup>2</sup> The uncertainty value presented here has been calculated on the foreground data. Details are described in the methodology.

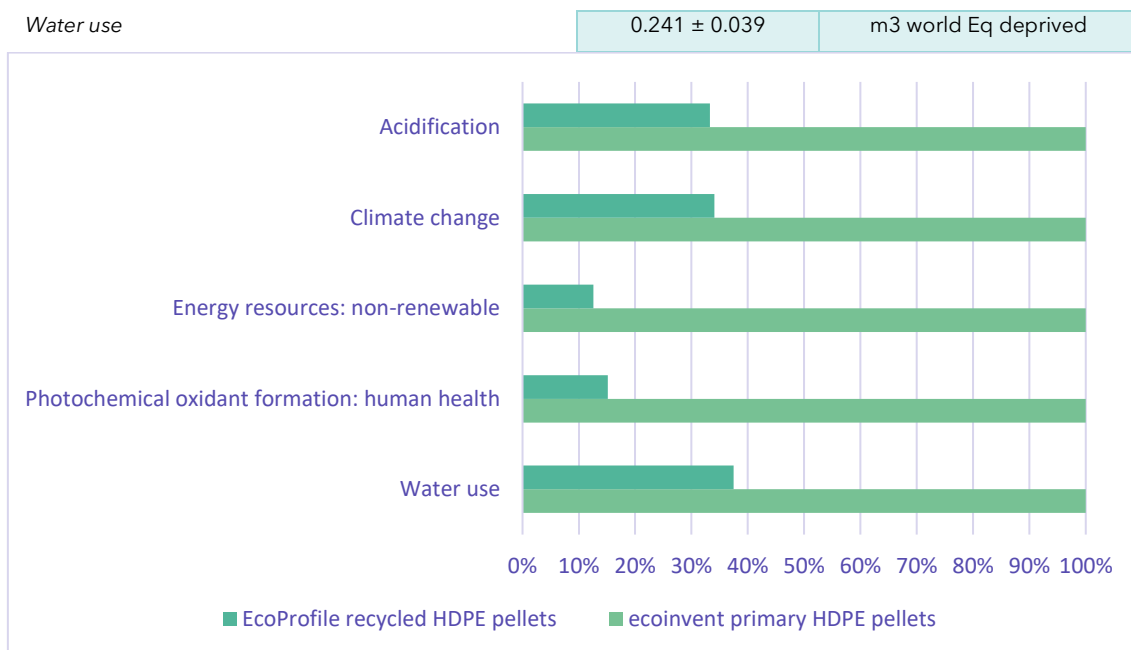


Figure 2: Comparison of primary<sup>3</sup> and secondary HDPE pellet production impacts for selected impact categories.

<sup>3</sup> For this comparison, the ecoinvent v3.10 process "acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene copolymer production | acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene copolymer | Cutoff, U - RER" was used.