



Carbonlabels.org is an initiative by The Carbon Labeling Institute, a Canadian nonprofit that houses the publicly-available North American carbon label standard for the organic food industry. The life cycle assessment (LCA) of greenhouse gas emissions of goods and services standard is currently being developed by the consultancy Conscious Brands™ with guidance from the nonprofit Zerofootprint. It is based on the developing UK carbon label standard, pioneered by the government sponsored Carbon Trust, working in conjunction with BSI Group, the UK's National Standards Body. See the [www.carbonlabels.org](http://www.carbonlabels.org) for more information.

### **What is a carbon label?**

A carbon label is a good (but imperfect) measure of the total greenhouse gas emissions (all converted to grams of carbon dioxide) a food product is responsible for over its life cycle – all the way from the farmer's field to the retailer's loading dock.

### **Why would a company want to carbon label their product?**

In order for a company to get better, they have to know where they stand. A carbon label provides a quantitative benchmark for the current global warming impact of their product's supply chain. It also tells a company the relative importance of each emissions source in the product's total footprint. And unlike the latest green marketing scheme, a carbon label follows a third party standard, demonstrating a company's commitment to staying at the forefront of transparency.

### **What use is a carbon label to a consumer?**

Consumers can reference the carbon label to see if food producers are making real reductions in the global warming impact of their product. Seeing the carbon label on a food's packaging also tells consumers that a producer is truly committed to transparency. Because the carbon label is a quantitative measurement, it informs consumers about the relative environmental impact of different foods.

### **The Carbon Label Standard (in brief)**

Carbonlabels.org's Carbon Label Standard follows four simple principles

#### **1. Measure the actual product**

This means setting appropriate boundaries – which emissions are included, which ones are not – and using the ingredients consumers will actually find in the product bearing the carbon label.

#### **2. Use fair data**

This principle says the carbon label quantifier is required to be consistent in the use of emissions factors and to always choose the best data source according to a hierarchy with direct observation at the top.

#### **3. Perform accurate calculations**

This means following best practices in product life cycle analysis, like making sure to adjust for changes in product mass and allocating emissions from multi-product processes according to their economic value.

#### **4. Verify your results**

A simple but important principle: have a neutral third party (like [www.Zerofootprint.net](http://www.Zerofootprint.net)) verify the data sources and calculation steps in the carbon label measurement process.

The standard is not written in stone tablets. The Carbon Labeling Institute is evolving just as best practices for doing carbon labels are evolving. It's our intent that the carbon label standard will be a living collaborative initiative, improving with time and stakeholder feedback. Our next step is the establishment of an advisory board to further develop and refine the standard for an official public launch in late 2008.

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