

Life cycle perspective from a consumer point of view

- The City of Gothenburg's work to reduce its public-sector consumption

This example from the City of Gothenburg shows how the life cycle perspective can be used from a consumer perspective to help make climate-smart decisions regarding consumption in public-sector companies and authorities.

The City of Gothenburg joined forces with SP Technical Research Institute of Sweden – to create a tool that can compare the carbon footprint of various meals. With this as a guide, municipal employees can make more climate-smart choices in public-sector consumption and thereby reduce the city's carbon footprint.

The food we consume accounts for a third of our global climate impact and is linked to several key environmental issues. This means that smart choices in the food we eat can make a significant difference.

1. City of Gothenburg 2016: /Miljö och klimat /Det gör Göteborgs stad/Miljömåttider (Downloaded in August 2016)

As home to half a million people, the City of Gothenburg is Sweden's second-largest city. With 52,000 employees and an annual turnover of SEK 34 billion, the city's public companies and authorities also constitute a major consumer. This has also become an important starting point in the environmental work of the City of Gothenburg. The city's politicians have decided that the city will focus on sustainable food. By applying the life cycle perspective from a consumer angle, the city can make a considerable difference and set an inspiring example. The life cycle perspective is used as a method of reducing public-sector consumption.

To find out more about the City of Gothenburg's application of the life cycle perspective, we interviewed Ulla Lundgren, Process Manager for Sustainable Meals at the Environmental Administration of the City of Gothenburg.

How does the City of Gothenburg apply the life cycle perspective?

- We are currently applying this perspective in two ways:

One is directly in our activities, within the meals organisation, with a type of climate module in the food planning system, in which the people who plan the menus can see what happens when they replace one food with another. They receive data showing the carbon footprint per lunch expressed as kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalents (kg CO₂e).

The other way is that we monitor the entire city's climate impact from food via the city's purchasing statistics using a tool called Klimatkompassen (the Climate Compass).

The City of Gothenburg must also produce life cycle data for all purchases that it makes; for example, a major project is now under way to obtain life cycle data for construction materials, a sector in which about 75% of purchases are made outside of agreements.

How has the life cycle perspective advanced environmental issues?

- Within the framework of developing the city's local food strategy, we will investigate needs and opportunities for obtaining additional parameters for the life cycle perspective concerning the actual environmental and climate impact of the food, so that we can perform suitable assessments of which foods are best to procure and serve from a sustainability perspective.

What is the most important thing about working with a life cycle perspective?

- It is important in terms of reducing the negative environmental and climate impact that is associated with a large city's consumption. As food accounts for 25% of total consumption-driven climate impact in Sweden, it is an important tool with which to facilitate climate-smart choices in kitchens and the city's restaurants. Results have

"It is important in terms of reducing the negative environmental and climate impact that is related to a large city's consumption."

been consciously improved since the city began monitoring the proportion of organic food in public-sector kitchens. The figure is currently about 25%. This surge in organic food is one factor that has encouraged better monitoring of the climate aspect.

What have been the biggest challenges in applying the life cycle perspective?

- The meals organisation at the City of Gothenburg is divided into 10 city districts, the Administration for Upper Secondary Schools and Adult Education and the Administration for Allocation of Social Welfare. That's a total of 12 different meal organisations that all have to work in the same way even though they have different conditions.

The biggest challenge regarding the climate module in the food planning system is therefore to ensure that everyone uses it. It also took a long time to input data into the climate module, and a great deal of manual work was required.

It is also very time consuming to input all foods into the Climate Compass in order to measure the city's total carbon footprint.

Do you have a concrete example of a change that has led to reduced environmental impact thanks to your life cycle perspective?

- Both yes and no, because the city decided back in 2011 that all meat that the municipality procures and serves must be organic; this led to a drop of about 8% in meat consumption from 2014–2015. The change also involves creating awareness of the issue. The climate module tells us the climate impact created by a lunch in 2010.

What is the reason for applying a life cycle perspective in this example?

- The City of Gothenburg aims to achieve a 40% reduction of its food-related climate impact by 2030 compared to levels in 2010.

“...it should be easy to do things right.”

Who initiated the use of life cycle perspectives in the example?

- SP Food and Bioscience and Region Västra Götaland initiated the development of the climate module by launching a project with co-financiers within the municipality, region and county council and the developers of the meal planning tools, Aivo, FoodIT and Mashie.

What parties have been involved in this example?

- SP Food and Bioscience, the City of Gothenburg and Aivo have been involved.

Why is this a good and inspiring example?

- It is a tool that the meal organisation can use and influence per unit, per kitchen and per lunch – it should be easy to do things right. It also highlights the issue for the people eating the food, managers and politicians.

What would you describe as the biggest motivators for you to intensify your life cycle approach?

- The biggest motivator for us to intensify our life cycle approach has consisted of the city's climate objectives regarding the aim to reduce consumption-driven environmental and climate impact.

What tips would you give to others who want to launch or further develop their own efforts to reduce the climate and environmental impact in their organisation?

- It is important to cooperate with various professions so that different aspects are addressed.

Contact

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This article is part of the project titled: Goda exempel – Inspiration till energieffektivisering genom hela värdekedjan (Good examples – Inspiration for energy efficiency through the entire value chain), which was carried out with funding from the Swedish Energy Agency. You can find out about additional examples of applied life cycle thinking, read more about the City of Gothenburg's climate work or learn more about the life cycle perspective via these links:

[The City of Gothenburg's work on climate change](#)
[Sustainable Meals](#)
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