Revealing its Recipe for Low Carbon Products

Carbon footprinting case study

- In 2007, Coca-Cola began working in partnership with the Carbon Trust to calculate the carbon footprint of some of its most popular products in Great Britain.
- As part of this work, Coca-Cola piloted the Carbon Trust’s product carbon footprinting methodology (PAS 2050).
- In March 2009, the carbon footprint of four brands (Coca-Cola, Diet Coke, Coke Zero and Oasis Summer Fruits) was published at www.cokecorporateresponsibility.co.uk.
- Coca-Cola is now using the Carbon Trust’s Footprint Expert tool to extend this work to a further 36 products in 2011.
- Coca-Cola has launched Trace Your Coke, a new online tool to help consumers understand the journey and carbon footprint of some of its most popular products.

Taking a lead

In 2007, Coca-Cola was among a group of nine leading companies to pilot the Carbon Trust’s draft product carbon footprinting standard – now BSI PAS 2050. This included work to calculate the carbon footprint of some of its most popular soft drinks in Great Britain. This work was undertaken in order to:

- Undertake a detailed analysis of the greenhouse gas emissions that are embodied in selected products.
- Help identify cost effective opportunities to reduce emissions generated across the full product lifecycle.
- Support and guide the development of the Carbon Trust’s product carbon footprinting methodology so that it could become an internationally recognised and agreed standard.

Coca-Cola calculated the carbon footprint of four brands (Coca-Cola, Diet Coke, Coke Zero and Oasis Summer Fruits) in a variety of packaging formats. This was the first time that the carbon footprint of any brand of sparkling drink had been certified by the Carbon Trust.

What we learnt

The work has had a considerable impact in helping Coca-Cola to take action to make its business more sustainable. In particular, the work helped to identify the opportunities for greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced across the full product lifecycle – including the manufacturing of packaging, distribution and chilling of products, as well as the consumer use and disposal of the package.

The work highlighted that:

- Packaging is responsible for between 30 to 70 percent of a soft drink’s carbon footprint.
- The carbon footprint of soft drinks can be reduced by using more recycled content in primary packaging and by reducing the weight of primary packaging.
- Recycling a bottle or can will reduce the carbon footprint of the individual product by up to 40% and make a major difference to the environmental footprint of the product.
Designing out emissions

Coca-Cola used the work to inform its corporate responsibility and sustainability (CRS) strategy and decision making related to packaging design, new product development and recycling. Specifically, Coca-Cola has:

- Introduced a new glass bottle design which reduces carbon emissions by up to 2,200 tonnes per year in Great Britain.
- Worked in partnership with WRAP and Beverage Can Makers Europe (BCME) to set a new standard and launch a new design for 300ml aluminium cans which will save approximately 76,000 tonnes of CO2 each year.
- Ensured that carbon footprint measurement and reduction is now a part of its packaging design and new product development process.
- Launched a comprehensive programme of work to encourage consumers to recycle their products. This work has included:
  - a consumer advertising campaign in Great Britain.
  - a partnership with WRAP and RECOUP to establish 120 on-the-go Recycle Zones by the end of 2011. Recycle Zones are located in busy places like shopping centres, sports arena, airports and universities.
- Launched a joint venture with ECO Plastics to develop a new purpose-built recycling facility in Lincolnshire. This initiative will mark a step change in the GB plastic reprocessing industry and will more than double the amount of high-quality rPET (PET that is recycled to make food-grade, sustainable packaging) currently produced in Great Britain. The state-of-the-art plastics reprocessing plant will supply CCE with enough GB-sourced, high-quality rPET to help CCE achieve its target of including 25% recycled PET in all its plastic packaging in Great Britain by 2012.
- Engaged employees at Coca-Cola on the topic of carbon emissions by running a 4-week employee Carbon Challenge in partnership with The Carbon Trust. As part of the project, employees tracked and aimed to reduce their own personal carbon emissions for a month. Participants were invited to share their carbon reduction experiences online with other employees.

Looking ahead

The work that the Carbon Trust has undertaken with Coca-Cola in Great Britain is now being applied to a wider range of products and across European markets. The Carbon Trust has now licensed its Footprint Expert tool to Coca-Cola. During 2011 Coca-Cola will use the tool to repeat the carbon footprinting of the 14 products originally selected, as well as extending it to a further 36 products.

The Chief Executive of the Carbon Trust, Tom Delay praised Coca-Cola’s efforts to measure and reduce their energy use. He said: “Coca-Cola was one of the first companies to sign up for carbon footprinting with the Carbon Trust. As part of its ongoing commitment to reducing its carbon impact, it has made an important contribution to our work to create the product carbon footprinting standard.”

Simon Baldry, Vice President General Manager of Coca-Cola Enterprises in Great Britain said: “Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do and we are working hard to reduce the carbon footprint of both our business operations and our products, across the full product lifecycle. Our ongoing partnership with the Carbon Trust has been instrumental in helping us to drive forward our carbon reduction agenda and inform our approach on sustainable packaging and recycling.”

Find out more about Carbon Trust Certification
http://www.carbontrust.com/certification