Life cycle assessment in corporate sustainability reporting: Global, regional, sectoral, and company-level trends

Large companies now commonly release corporate sustainability (CS) reports in which they describe their approach to handle sustainability challenges. To guide environmental sustainability efforts in the industry, the life cycle assessment (LCA) methodology has been recognized as an important tool by researchers and policy makers. But to what extent has the LCA methodology been present in companies' narratives through their CS reports up to now? To answer this question, we map references to the LCA methodology in CS reports over the past two decades at geographical, sectoral, and company levels through keyword searching within an extensive database (~45,000 CS reports), analyze trends, and highlight challenges, opportunities, and recommendations to strengthen the presence of LCA in CS reports. The results show that LCA generally remains weakly present in CS reporting, with some geographical and sectoral variations. Recommendations to strengthen LCA presence in CS reports are derived for method developers, policy makers, and companies.