KARBUNWISE™

Product Carbon Footprint Readiness Checklist

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(ISO 14067–Aligned)

Before product carbon footprints are shared with buyers, regulators, or customers, it is worth stepping back to check whether the foundations are truly in place.

ISO 14067 does not just require a carbon number. It requires a structured, transparent and reproducible approach so results are consistent, comparable and defensible.

This checklist is intentionally industry-agnostic

The examples below are illustrative and reflect common Product Carbon Footprint use cases across multiple sectors. They are not intended to represent any single industry or product category.

This checklist helps teams sense-check their Product Carbon Footprint (PCF) or LCA approach before product carbon data is used externally in procurement, reporting, certifications or customer-facing communications.

1. Functional unit clearly defined

What to check?

Is the footprint expressed per unit of function rather than per unit of mass, volume or cost?

Why it matters?

Products are rarely used simply “by weight”. Functional units reflect how customers actually use products and enable fair comparison

Examples:

- kg CO_2e per litre of product applied to deliver a defined performance outcome
- kg CO_2e per 1,000 units processed or filled
- kg CO_2e per tonne of finished product delivered at a specified quality or specification

Common pitfall

Reporting kg CO_2e per kg of product when performance, concentration or lifetime varies

2. System boundary explicitly stated

What to check?

Have you clearly defined whether the footprint is cradle-to-gate, cradle-to-grave or another boundary, and communicated this clearly?

Why it matters?

Different boundaries answer different questions and should not be compared without context

Examples:

- Cradle-to-gate footprint covering raw materials, inbound transport and manufacturing
- Cradle-to-grave footprint including use-phase assumptions and end-of-life treatment

Common pitfall

Sharing a cradle-to-gate number without stating that use and disposal are excluded

3. High-impact life cycle stages identified

What to check?

Have the most carbon-intensive materials, processes or life cycle stages been identified?

Why it matters?

In most PCFs, a small number of inputs drive the majority of emissions

Examples:

- One raw material contributes more than half of total product emissions
- Energy use in a single process step dominates the footprint
- Differences in electricity mix explain variation between sites

Common pitfall

Treating all inputs as equally important instead of focusing on key drivers

4. Primary data prioritised where it matters

What to check?

Is primary, site-specific or supplier-specific data used for the most significant contributors?

Why it matters?

ISO 14067 expects higher data quality where emissions materially influence results

Examples:

- Actual site energy and fuel consumption used instead of generic averages
- Supplier-specific data used for key raw materials
- Secondary datasets limited to low-impact or minor inputs

Common pitfall

Using generic database values for high-impact inputs even when better data exists

5. Data sources and assumptions documented

What to check?

Are all data sources, emission factors, assumptions and calculation choices clearly recorded?

Why it matters?

PCFs are often reviewed, updated or challenged long after they are first calculated

Examples:

- Dataset sources and versions clearly referenced
- Allocation methods explained and justified
- Transport distances based on actual logistics routes

Common pitfall

Being unable to explain how a number was calculated when questioned by a buyer

6. Cut-off rules justified and transparent

What to check?

Have any exclusions been based on defined significance thresholds and clearly justified?

Why it matters?

Small exclusions can become material if not assessed carefully

Examples:

- Excluding inputs contributing less than 1 percent individually and less than 5 percent cumulatively
- Explicitly listing excluded flows and the rationale for exclusion

Common pitfall

Excluding difficult-to-measure inputs without checking their potential impact

7. Results interpreted, not just reported

What to check?

Do the results explain what drives the footprint and where reduction opportunities exist?

Why it matters?

A single number rarely supports decision-making on its own

Examples:

- Switching to renewable electricity at one site could reduce total emissions by a defined percentage
- Raw material substitution offers greater reductions than packaging changes

Common pitfall

Sharing a PCF value without context, insight or explanation

8. Claims aligned with evidence

What to check?

Are any external statements or comparisons fully supported by the scope, boundary and data used?

Why it matters?

Misaligned claims increase regulatory, reputational and greenwashing risk

Examples:

- Improvement claims based on like-for-like assumptions and boundaries
- Avoiding absolute claims when only partial life cycle data is available

Common pitfall

Marketing language that overstates what the PCF actually demonstrates

9. Review or verification approach defined

What to check?

Has the PCF been internally reviewed or prepared for third-party verification?

Why it matters?

Many buyers now expect PCFs to be reviewable and audit-ready

Examples:

- Internal review by a separate practitioner
- Documentation prepared to support independent verification if required

Common pitfall

Only addressing review readiness after external scrutiny begins

Final sense-check

If any of these checks raise uncertainty, the next step is usually to strengthen scope definition, data quality or documentation before sharing product carbon results externally.

Platforms like KarbunWise support this process by keeping PCF and LCA data structured, traceable and consistent, helping ensure product carbon footprints are credible, comparable and ready for external use.

Get in touch with us!

