

Product name: Our Impacts, v1.1.1
Company name: Ecometrica
Product review date: October 2010



SOFTWARE EVALUATION SUMMARY



Features	Outcome	Assessment Highlights
Set-up, navigation and consolidation of organization and sources	●	<p>Ecometrica organizes the initial data gathering plan in the course of an initial call, or series of calls, to assess the structure, activities and boundaries of the customer organization.</p> <p>The set-up of an organizational structure within the system is done by Ecometrica's team, who also sets up the 'Activities' taking places within each entity. The system allows users to aggregate and disaggregate GHG emissions along a hierarchy of entities and sub-entities that can be set up to mimic a variety of organizational structures.</p> <p>The system can define different consolidation approaches, GHG program requirements, etc. The consolidation approach is set up, and can be changed, by Ecometrica, following the requirements received by the users. The consolidation approach cannot be changed by users (i.e. users cannot switched from control to equity share or combinations). At the time of review the system did not support Joint Ventures</p>
GHG gases, sources and scopes	●	<p>The software covers all Kyoto GHGs, supports common emissions sources and enables separate calculations for scope 1, scope 2 and scope 3 emissions.</p> <p>The possible activity types that can be set up in the system are very large in count</p>



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Activity data	●	<p>Once activities are set up (by Ecometrica) the following steps take place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients embark on data entry for all activities and key performance indicators. The data entry module includes dynamic dropdown for unit selection, allows specifying the frequency and the time period to which the data apply and allows the upload of files (e.g. copy of invoices) and comments for evidence. When required the system performs data extrapolations automatically • When client has finished data entry, they mark the data as ready for <i>QA Review</i> • Ecometrica QA/QC analyst inspects the data for reasonableness, and queries client for any suspected problems. • Once resolved and coordinated with the client, the data is marked complete by the QA/QC analyst • Data marked complete can no longer be changed and the full reporting capabilities including generation of pdf reports and export of Excel spreadsheets from Our Impacts is enabled <p>The method described above is straightforward and requires little training and a very brief learning curve.</p>
Availability and use of emission factors and GWPs	●	<p>Ecometrica maintains an extensive and well-documented database of emissions factors. The company has dedicated professionals who curate the data and an internal quality assurance process with an <i>approved</i> flag which must be set before the value can be used in a calculation.</p> <p>The internal quality assurance process requires that a different analyst than the one who entered the factors verify it and sign off. All factor edits and approvals are recorded by the system.</p> <p>Users can define custom GHG emission factors, but the factors must be entered by Ecometrica and subject to their quality assurance / quality control process.</p> <p>GWPs implemented in Our Impacts 'out-of-the-box' are factors from the Fourth Assessment Report, AR4. When pressed, Ecometrica will defer to a client request to use SAR. Ecometrica implemented and demonstrated an instance of calculations using SAR GWP during the test.</p>
GHG emissions calculations	●	<p>Using a case study dataset we calculated emissions for a fictitious company and benchmarked the software's output against the output of GHG Protocol tools. Upon testing the software produced accurate results in accordance with the methods in the GHG Protocol</p>
GHG emissions reporting	●	<p>The software enables users to report GHG emissions by common emission source categories and to report separately by gas and scope, at different levels of aggregation. Offsets are summed and reported separately from the inventory. The software has the ability to account for and report emissions by <i>protocol</i> and may have multiple <i>protocols</i> defined for a client. The software enables users to calculate and report additional indicators, such as efficiency or GHG emission intensity ratios (e.g. emissions per unit of production) and to report progress against internal benchmarks/targets. Personalized graphs can be created and downloaded.</p>



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Targets, policies and programs	●	<p>The software includes a module, where users can set GHG emission reduction targets (and target dates) for different organizational units and the systems supports the accounting of emission reductions.</p> <p>Within the system users have a limited ability to document and report a description of the GHG policies, strategies, programs and internal actions designed to reduce emissions.</p>
Uncertainty analysis capability	●	<p>The software includes a feature that allows for a quantified uncertainty to be maintained for all data elements in an emissions calculation. Further, a cumulative uncertainty is computed for the calculated emissions result. This can be used for selecting emissions factors and for managing uncertainty of the inventory over a period of years</p>
Workflow management functionality	◐	<p>Limited</p> <p>The software allows the user to report the person responsible for the inventory. Users and user rights can be set up on the client's page, either by Ecometrica or by users with sufficient privileges. The roles are viewer, editor, admin. They can be defined separately for each company unit.</p> <p>At the time of review the software did not enable users to document or reference information management and record-keeping procedures.</p>
Quality assurance & quality control	●	<p>After users enter data in the system, a QA/QC analyst from Ecometrica inspects the data for reasonableness, and queries client for any suspected problems. At the time of review this step was done manually, while Ecometrica was creating benchmarks (e.g. energy consumption for square meter) to support (automatic) checks.</p> <p>Implementing, documenting and referencing additional procedures to routinely and consistently check for GHG inventory accuracy and completeness remains outside the software, except to the extent they are captured in the data hierarchy, protocol definition and comments at the activity level</p> <p>The software allows users to prepare for verification, especially through the generation of a report disclosing activity data, emission factors, assumptions, sources and calculations for every question set up in the assessment.</p>
Tracking and documenting choices and changes	●	<p>The software records the user, date and time of all data entry and data changes. At the time of review this audit trail data was only available to administrators at Ecometrica and not to end users. Ecometrica was working at adding this functionality.</p> <p>When entering inputs for their activities, users have available a field where they can add explanations or upload supporting evidence, at their discretion. At the time of review the documentation of changes affecting multiple activities, such as changes in operational boundaries or base year, were not apparent in the system.</p>



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Ease of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>The method deployed by Ecometrica is straightforward and requires little training and a very brief learning curve. The software's navigation choices are clear and few in number. There is little chance of a user getting lost or failing to find locations where they can enter required data.</p> <p>As the software is tightly structured a possible drawback is that if the system is set up to expect data and KPIs which are not readily available or appropriate, users are effectively blocked from continuing and must contact Ecometrica to modify the set up.</p> <p>In practice this may not be a problem as an Ecometrica analyst is assigned and already interacting with the client user. In the test case, the Ecometrica analyst was very attentive and responsive and gaps in data expected by the system and available from the test company were resolved quickly. The takeaway for a potential Our Impacts user is to expect and plan some interaction with Ecometrica during the data entry process.</p>
Training, documentation and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 	<p>Ecometrica provides services with the license of Our Impacts, which places a person or persons "in the loop" during implementation. Their services include system set-up, quality assurance of client-entered data, review of emissions factors and calculations, and review of reported results. The help function inside Our Impacts allows free-format questions and generates an email to an Ecometrica analyst assigned to the client.</p> <p>Ecometrica provide a data gathering guide to their clients. It is an excellent guide and recommended reading for anyone considering developing an inventory – whether using Our Impacts or not. Content from the guide is also implemented as <i>extended help</i> in Our Impacts.</p>



GENERAL COMMENTS:

All aspects of Our Impacts are consistent with the principles of the GHG Protocol. Highlights of the evaluation are summarized as follows:

- Our Impacts is straight-forward and requires a minimal learning curve for a typical user to begin entering activity data.
- Our Impacts includes all emissions and conversion factors with every emissions calculation, demonstrating a high level of transparency and which is distinctive in enterprise carbon accounting software.
- Ecometrica provides an extensive and well-documented emissions factor database and has competent professionals assigned to maintain it.
- Behind the scenes, Ecometrica demonstrated Our Impacts ability to return multiple emissions factors valid for a specific activity in the GHGMI test data set, and to select the 'best' according to a set of criteria developed by Ecometrica. At the time of review this was a novel and powerful capability not mentioned in the promotional or descriptive materials.

Implementing Our Impacts includes communication with Ecometrica people. Interaction with Ecometrica people during the test protocol produced the following observations:

- Every interaction demonstrated competence and confidence. The company has experience with hundreds of greenhouse gas assessments, and the know-how is apparent.
- Ecometrica's confidence was high enough to challenge the tester with good rationale and to spot inconsistencies in the test data.
- Proactive customer care was demonstrated when Ecometrica contacted the tester to inquire if assistance was required. Ecometrica's technical support people observed multiple errors generated by the tester and had the customer contact communicate with an offer to assist.



ECOMETRICA COMMENTS:

This space is made available to the software provider to add, if desired, comments on GHGMI's review process or outcome. The statements below reflect the views of the software provider alone. GHGMI cannot express any opinion on the comments below, as they were not assessed by GHGMI during the software review process.

Our Impacts is built and maintained by GHG experts with strong international experience in the field. It is continuously improved and new features are regularly added to integrate new methodological and market requirements. The following list provides additional information to complete the evaluation summary prepared by the GHG Management Institute and highlights new features implemented since the evaluation took place (version reviewed: v1.1.1, current version: v2.1.5). For more information and the full list of available features, see <http://ecometrica.com/products/our-impacts/>.

- ***PwC review – audit-ready outputs:***
Our Impacts is the first system to have sought independent assurance on its “audit-ready outputs”. The report review carried out by PwC can be found here: <http://ecometrica.com/products/our-impacts/audit-ready-output/>.
- ***Additional sustainability metrics recorded:***
Other outputs for results include water, waste, energy and paper, as applicable.
- ***Bulk data entry enabled:***
Data entry can be done by API and spreadsheet upload (through upload templates).
- ***Enables capturing additional details and explanations:***
Text answers allow for additional information to be recorded, whether it is mandated by a protocol or not. This allows users to provide relevant details, such as: information management and record-keeping procedures and other routine procedures, documenting changes affecting multiple activities (e.g. changes to operation boundaries or to base year), documenting and explaining data quality, assumptions made, and results analysis, etc.
- ***Ability to choose the GWP group to apply:***
The GWP group to apply can be selected upon set up. If required, several protocol-specific reports can be generated from a single questionnaire, using different sets of GWPs.
- ***Multilingual interface facilitates international data collection:***
Current languages supported: English, French, Spanish; more to come.
- ***Several protocols supported: ISO 14064-1, CDP, GHG Protocol, private protocols:***
The system can automatically generate multiple reports from a single questionnaire to comply with different reporting requirements.
- ***Ability to set targets and follow performance over time:***
Functionalities to facilitate following emissions and sustainability performance over time include: historical uploads, base year selection, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), target setting and time series charts.



- **Fully automated calculations and reporting supported by an extensive global database of emission factors:**
All calculations and reporting are done automatically and transparently, pulling from an expert-maintained international database of emission and conversion factors that is continuously updated and expanded