



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
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Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication DETEC

**Federal Office for the Environment FOEN**

Economics and Environmental Monitoring Division

# **Green Economy**

## **The Method of Ecological Scarcity in Policy making**

Ittigen, 5 december 2013



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- Role of the method of ecological scarcity (MES) in policy making
- Advantages of the MES for policy making
- Examples of application:
  - Law on Mineral oil tax
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# Role of MES in policy making

- **Waste policy:** MES has a longstanding tradition as a basis for decision for policy measures e.g. for the selection of recycling pathways.
- **Biofuels:** MES is part of the biofuels life cycle assessment ordinance (BLCAO). A novelty in 2009
- **Green Economy:** MES is a key tool for supporting decision making



# Advantages of MES for policy making

- **Single score:** a clear answer to complex questions.
- Based on **politically and legally defined** environmental **goals** → representative for Swiss policy objectives.
- **Comprehensive** range of environmental indicators are included → complete picture.
- **Transparent** weighting, **independent** of particular interests.
- **Regionalisation** for water scarcity and biodiversity allows comparison of Swiss and foreign products.



## Example 1: Law on Mineral Oil Tax – exemption of biofuels from Mineral Oil Taxes

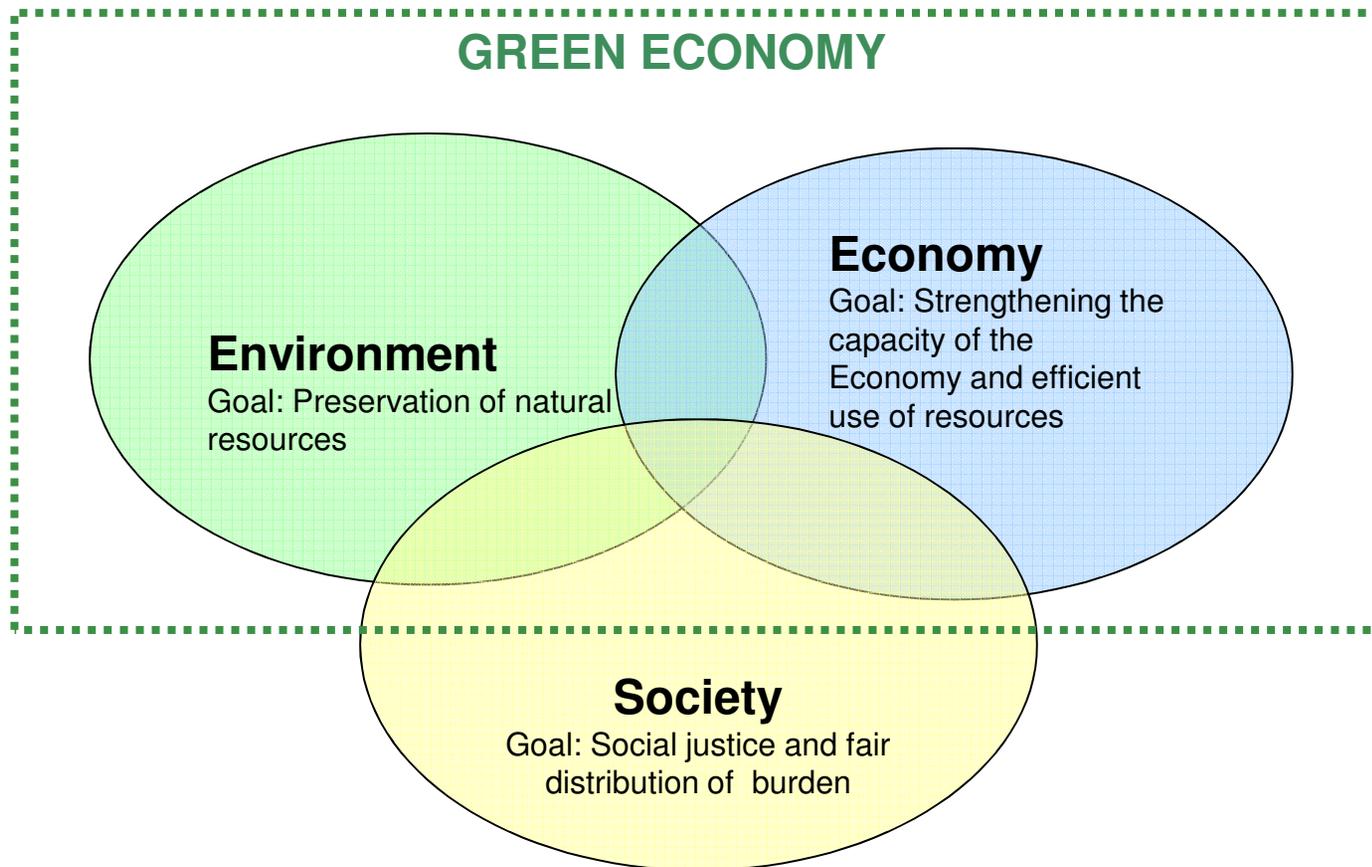
- Biofuels life cycle assessment ordinance is the first legislative act that is based on the MES.
- tax reduction only for biofuels with proven positive aggregated environmental impact.

### Assessment procedure

- The FOEN compiles greenhouse gas and environmental impact inventories, based on the information provided by the applicant
  - ecoinvent and other equivalent databases
  - **ecological scarcity method** or other equivalent methods
- The FOEN assesses whether rainforests and biological diversity are endangered



# Example 2: The Swiss Green Economy Approach





# Action plan and Initiative of Green Party

- Federal Council **approved Action Plan for Green Economy** on march 8 2013
- Action plan is base for a change of the Environmental Law as **a counterproposal to Initiative of Green Party in favour of Green Economy**
- Implementation in 4 core areas:
  1. Consumption and Production
  2. Waste and raw materials
  3. International engagement
  4. Measurement and Information



# The Role of LCA in the action plan



**Measures in the domain of waste and raw materials:**

**LCA as a basis for decisions** upon resource efficient packaging and waste scenarios.



**Negotiated Agreements:**

**LCA supports** identification of environmental impacts of resources and products.



**Product environmental information:**

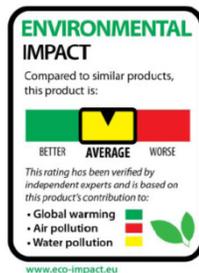
**LCA as a tool** to calculate the important impacts of products.



# Environmental Information of Products



- Information of environmental effects of **products with significant impacts on the environment**
- **Recommendations for analysis and assessment** are provided by the government
- Guidance for **communication** of the results
- Environmental Information is **voluntary!**  
=> Mandatory regulations only in accordance with international regulations (EU)





# Environmental Information of Products



## Recommendations for environmental information on products

- **General principles:** completeness (relevant environmental aspects, whole lifecycle), transparency, etc.
- **LCA-methodology** recommended for assessment of products, use of ecoinvent or equivalent database
- **Communication** of **global impact** and main impact categories, distinction between main and background information

MES as recommended method



# Benefits of using LCA for companies



## Using LCA in companies leads to

- Better understanding of the **ecological impact** of the **value chain**
- Identifying the **Hot-Spots within the value chain** for effective and efficient measures to reduce ecological impact
- **Base** for relevant and well based product information (B2B or B2C)



## Outlook: technical

- Broad stakeholder consultation phase for the **FOEN Recommendations for product environmental declaration**
- Ongoing support of **methodological improvements**:
  - Development of impact assessment method for biodiversity and soil quality (FiBL and ETH)
  - World Food LCA Database (Quantis Intl. & ART)
  - Analysis of the European guidance for the development of product category rules regarding the requirements of FOEN (ART)
- Collaboration in the technical secretariats of EU pilot projects for the development of PCRs for T-Shirt, non-leather shoes and detergents. (2013-2016)



## Outlook: Political

- Adoption of the **revision of the environmental law** through federal council until 6<sup>th</sup> march 2014.
- Publication of FOEN **Recommendations for environmental information on products** (Spring 2014)
- European commission decides after pilot phase (until 2016) about further political steps.

### Important:

Switzerland coordinates it's activities on product environmental information with the European commission.



# Summary

- LCA has become an accepted instrument for policy making
- The method of ecological scarcity is a up-to date scientific method that meets the needs of policy makers
- Within the activities to enhance a Green Economy the importance of the method of ecological scarcity has grown
- The new release of the MES is a good base to promote the use in companies