REPORT

Life Cycle Assessment of Copper Wire Rod (Aurubis ROD/RheinROD)

What is Life Cycle Assessment?

LCA is a decision-making tool used to identify environmental burdens and evaluate the potential environmental impacts of goods or services over their life cycle.

The benefit of using an LCA approach means that negative impacts can be identified and possibly minimized while avoiding the transfer of these impacts from one life cycle stage to another. When applied to product design, production processes, and a decision-making aid, LCA is a meaningful tool for implementing effective sustainability strategies.

Goal

To evaluate our environmental performance and contribution to sustainable development, we carried out a life cycle assessment (LCA) for the copper wire rod (Aurubis ROD/ RheinROD).

This study helps in tracking the improvement progress and identifying opportunities for further improving our environmental performance. The results are intended to be published and disclosed to the public. This study is an update of the previous LCA. We updated the cathode input with 2022 data and used 2022 data for the melting, casting, and rolling process.

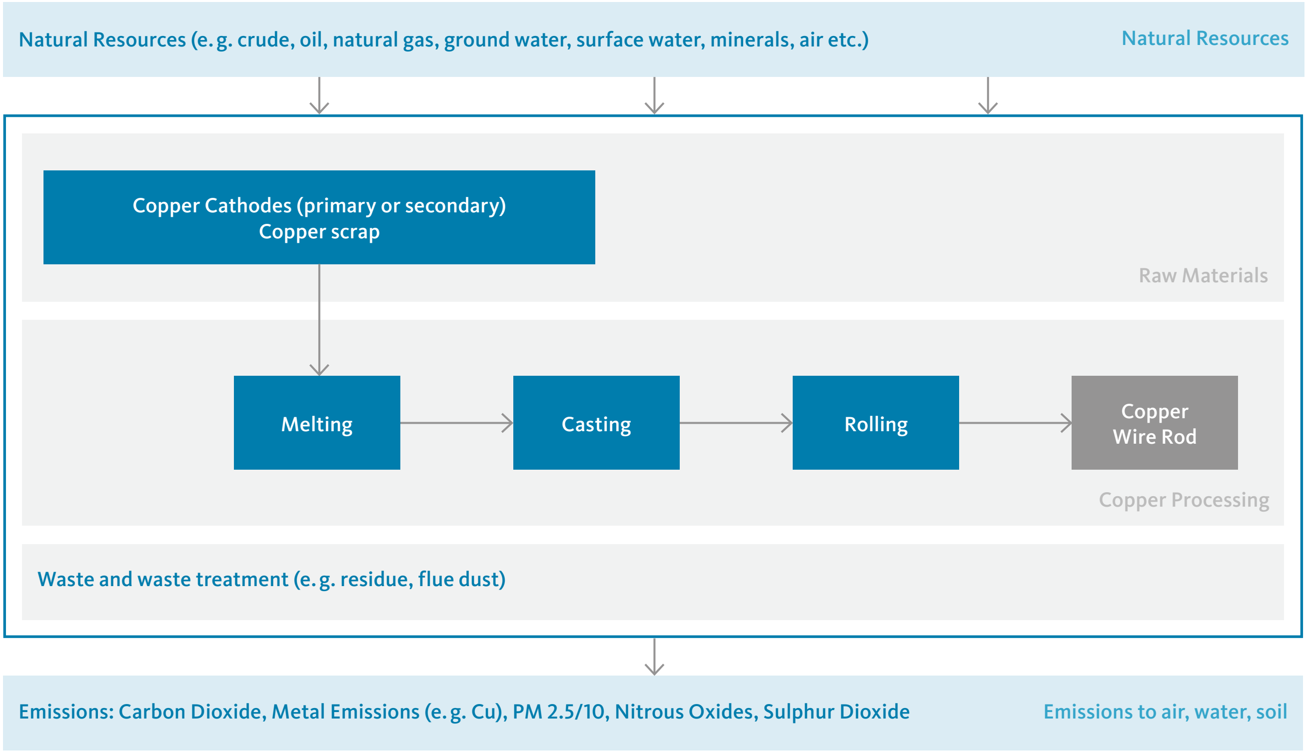
This study was performed with the help of Sphera.

Scope

The study was conducted in conformance with the standards ISO 14040 (ISO 14040:2021 Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Principles and framework) and ISO 14044 (ISO 14044:2021 Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Requirements and guidelines) on LCA.

Product and declared unit	Copper Wire rod (ETP, low alloyed), 1 ton
Aurubis profile	The weighted average of wire rods produced at the Aurubis plants in Hamburg, Olen, Avellino and Emmerich
Considered production system (system boundaries)	Cradle-to-gate, production of copper wire rod
Time coverage	Reference calendar year 2022

The system boundary of the study included a cradle-to-gate life cycle inventory from the extraction of the copper ore at the mine, the production of copper cathode to the production of copper wire rods. It does not include the manufacture of downstream products, use, end-of-life, or secondary copper-containing materials recovery schemes.



Process description

Wire-rod is manufactured from high-purity copper cathodes, copper scrap or low alloyed copper through continuous processes such as CONTIROD® process, SCR® (Southwire Continuous Rod) process. The process steps include melting, casting, rolling, and cleaning/pickling. The copper cathodes with a copper content of more than 99.99 % are first melted down in a shaft furnace. The molten copper is then transferred via channels to the casting machine, the heart of the casting plant, where the copper is cast into an endless bar. There are two main casting machine technologies: Hazelett casting machines and Southwire casting machines both of which are utilized in Aurubis. The bar then enters the rolling line, which is made up of many roll stands. Diameters between 23.5 mm and 8 mm can be attained by constantly reducing the cross-section. The wire is then surface-treated and cooled at a constant speed. After it is dried and treated with a protective wax coating, the rod is wound into coils.

Life cycle inventory

Aurubis produces wire rod via continuous casting and hot rolling processes.

Specific primary data were collected for all Aurubis wire rod production sites —Hamburg, Olen, Avellino, and Emmerich. We used the data for 2022 for the processes associated with wire rod production:

- Melting
- Casting
- Rolling
- Cleaning/pickling
- All related auxiliary processes: On-site waste water treatment, Gas cleaning systems (for primary and secondary off-gases)

The data included all known inputs and outputs for the processes. Inputs are the use of energy (fuels, electricity, steam), water, primary and secondary raw materials, fluxes, reagents, etc. Outputs are the products, intermediates, emissions to air and water, and waste.

The upstream processes include:

- Production of raw materials: copper cathode, scrap
- Production and supply of fuels
- Production and supply of electricity
- Production and supply of chemicals, auxiliaries
- Transport of raw materials

Production and maintenance of capital goods is excluded from the study. It is expected that these impacts are negligible compared to the impacts associated with running the equipment over its operational lifetime. Packaging is also excluded. As this is a cradle-to-gate study, transport to the customer is outside the system boundary.

For the processing of Aurubis copper cathodes, specific data were used for all cathode-producing sites for the reference year 2022. The modeling considered the actual origin of copper cathodes from different Aurubis sites.

For the input of copper cathodes purchased from third parties, no specific data were available, therefore the global average data set from the International Copper Association was used, with the reference year 2019.[1]

Purchased electricity is assessed based on specific market-based CO_2 equivalent emission factors where available. Steam is assessed based on background data for steam production with natural gas. Background processes e.g. fuels, and auxiliary materials were modeled using the LCA for Experts MLC database 2023.1 (former GaBi database)

For the transport of copper cathode and scrap materials, primary activity data were collected for delivered raw materials during the calendar year 2022, including mode of transport (truck, ship, rail cars), region /country, and approximated distance. Secondary data sets for truck, rail, and container ship carriers from the MLC database 2023.1 were used.

Data for fuels and auxiliary materials such as lubricants, chemicals, etc. were obtained from the MLC database 2023.1. The direct CO_2 emissions from the combustion of fuels and carbon present in the raw materials are calculated based on specific information about fuel consumption by source, net calorific value and emission factor (in accordance with reports on greenhouse gas emissions pursuant to Directive 2003/87).

The Life cycle inventory is not included in the report due to confidentiality reasons.

Treatment of CO products

Filter dust and copper scale generated during wire rod production leave the product system. They are further processed for copper recovery in the copper smelter and therefore cut-off approach was applied.

Sensitivity

The study by the International Copper Association on the raw material cathode copper (ref. year 2013[2]) performed sensitivity checks on key methodological choices. No additional sensitivity check was performed in the 2022 study. It is deemed that the conclusions from the sensitivity analyses conducted in the previous study remain valid for this study.

Data quality

Data quality is judged by its completeness, reliability, consistency, and representativeness. To cover these requirements and to ensure reliable results, specific primary data in combination with consistent background LCA information from the MLC database 2023.1 were used.

Completeness: Data has been collected for all relevant processes. To ensure data consistency, all primary data were collected with the same level of detail. Each unit process was checked for mass balance and completeness of the emission inventory.

Reliability: All gate-to-gate data for the Aurubis production sites have been collected from verified sources and measured data such as emission declarations, and technical and metal balances. The environmental profile of global copper cathode was obtained from the most recent and reliable dataset from the International Copper Association.

Representativeness: Data for the most contributing process of cathode production were collected for the year 2022. For melting, casting, and rolling process primary data for the 2022 calendar year were used. All secondary data come from the MLC database 2023.1 and are representative of the years 2019-2023. The data represented the technological and geographical location of the operations. All primary and secondary data were collected specifically for the countries or regions under study and were modelled to be specific to the technologies under study. Where country/region-specific or technology-specific data were unavailable, proxy data were used.

The LCA model was created using the LCA For Expert Software system for Life Cycle Assessment, developed by Sphera Solutions GmbH. The MLC database 2023.1 provides the life cycle inventory data for all background data including materials and energy/electricity.

[1] copperalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ICA-LCI-GlobalSummary-202305-F.pdf

[2] https://copperalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ICA-EnvironmentalProfileHESD-201803-FINAL-LOWRES-1.pdf

Life Cycle Impact Assessment

The key environmental aspects were assessed with the Environmental Footprint impact assessment method (3.0) along 16 impact categories.

The Environmental footprint method (3.0) is the most advanced impact assessment method adopted by the European Commission. The previous version of our LCA study used the now-outdated characterization method from the Centre for Environmental Studies (CML) at Leiden University in the Netherlands. For comparability throughout this transition, both CML and EF 3.0 impact assessment methods were reported in last year's life cycle assessment.

The following key impact categories were selected because they represent a broad range of relevant environmental impacts and are each determined by a well-established scientific approach: Global warming potential, Acidification potential, Eutrophication potential, Photochemical Ozone creation potential, Resource use fossil, and Water use.

Results for all 16 indicators are included in the report. However, it is important to note that "abiotic depletion potential" and "toxicity" impacts are not sufficiently robust and accurate to be used for metals.

Table 1: Life Cycle Assessment Impact Categories

Impact Category	Description
Global Warming Potential	A measure of greenhouse gas emissions, such as CO_2 and methane. These emissions are causing an increase in the absorption of radiation emitted by the earth, increasing the natural greenhouse effect. This may in turn have adverse impacts on ecosystem health, human health and material welfare.
Eutrophication Potential	Eutrophication covers all potential impacts of excessively high levels of macronutrients, the most important of which nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P). Nutrient enrichment may cause an undesirable shift in species composition and elevated biomass production in both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. In aquatic ecosystems increased biomass production may lead to depressed oxygen levels, because of the additional consumption of oxygen in biomass decomposition.
Acidification Potential	A measure of emissions that cause acidifying effects to the environment. The acidification potential is a measure of a molecule's capacity to increase the hydrogen ion (H+) concentration in the presence of water, thus decreasing the pH value. Potential effects include fish mortality, forest decline and the deterioration of building materials.
Photochemical Ozone Formation	A measure of emissions of precursors that contribute to ground level smog formation (mainly ozone O_3), produced by the reaction of VOC and carbon monoxide in the presence of nitrogen oxides under the influence of UV light. Ground level ozone may be injurious to human health and ecosystems and may also damage crops.
Ressource use, fossil	A measure of the total amount fossil resources non-renewable (e.g., petroleum, natural gas, etc.) extracted from the earth used for the primary energy production.
Water use	Deprivation water consumption.

Study Results

The life cycle impact results for the key impact categories for copper wire rod (Aurubis ROD/RheinROD) as Aurubis weighted average for the reference year 2022 (right bar) are presented below and compared to results for the year 2021 (left bar).

Figure 1: Results for 1 ton of Aurubis average copper wire rod (2021) and (2022), (Environmental footprint EF 3.0)

The impacts are also split to analyse the contribution into direct emissions, copper cathode production, upstream energy, transports, purchased electricity, and others (auxiliary materials, water input, waste).

The results for all impact categories for the copper cathode are presented below:

Table 2: Results for 1 ton of Aurubis average copper Wire Rod (2022), (Environmental footprint EF 3.0)

Acidification	Mole of H+ eq./t Cu	2.39E+01
Climate Change - total	kg CO_2 eq./t Cu	2.236E+03
Climate Change, biogenic	kg CO_2 eq./t Cu	5.45E+00
Climate Change, fossil	kg CO_2 eq./t Cu	2.21E+03
Climate Change, land use and land use change	kg CO_2 eq./t Cu	2.99E+01
Ecotoxicity, freshwater - total	CTUe/Cu	1.60E+04
Ecotoxicity, freshwater inorganics	CTUe/t Cu	1.24E+04
Ecotoxicity, freshwater metals	CTUe/t Cu	3.25E+03
Ecotoxicity, freshwater organics	CTUe/t Cu	2.62E+02
Eutrophication, freshwater	kg P eq./t Cu	1.45E-02
Eutrophication, marine	kg N eq./t Cu	4.08E+00
Eutrophication, terrestrial	Mole of N eq./t Cu	4.43E+01
Human toxicity, cancer - total	CTUh/t Cu	1.23E-04
Human toxicity, cancer inorganics	CTUh/t Cu	3.92E-17
Human toxicity, cancer metals	CTUh/t Cu	1.16E-06
Human toxicity, cancer organics	CTUh/t Cu	1.22E-04
Human toxicity, non-cancer - total	CTUh/t Cu	7.47E-05
Human toxicity, non-cancer inorganics	CTUh/t Cu	1.15E-05
Human toxicity, non-cancer metals	CTUh/t Cu	6.31E-05
Human toxicity, non-cancer organics	CTUh/t Cu	2.37E-07
Ionising radiation, human health	kBq U235 eq./t Cu	1.01E+02
Land Use	Pt/t Cu	6.52E+03
Ozone depletion	kg CFC-11 eq./t C	6.18E-09
Particulate matter	Disease incidences/t Cu	3.03E-04
Photochemical ozone formation, human health	kg NMVOC eq./t Cu	1.19E+01
Resource use, fossils	MJ/t Cu	2.71E+04
Resource use, mineral and metals	kg Sb eq./t Cu	1.01E+00
Water use	m^3 world equiv./t Cu	1.37E+03

Interpretation

The impact of the copper wire rod is dominated by the upstream copper cathode. Emissions associated with purchased electricity and grid mix also play an important role.

For the Carbon footprint /Global warming potential, the copper cathode production is the most contributing factor. Emissions from purchased electricity and transport also contribute.

For the Acidification potential, results are mainly driven by the copper cathode production, as well as SO_2 emissions from transport and purchased electricity.

Results for Eutrophication potential are driven by NOx emissions associated with copper cathode production.

Conclusion

The goal of the study was to update the environmental profile of the copper wire rod and allow tracking of the progress and further improvement.

The updated environmental impact of Aurubis's wire rod is lower than the profile from 2021 for some of the impact categories such as Acidification and Climate Change.

The operations have taken continuous efforts for the reduction of direct emissions of pollutants such as dust as well as greenhouse gas emissions. We also invested in energy-efficient technologies at all sites across Aurubis Group.

The results for water use for 2022 cannot be compared with the 2021 results because of different modeling of rain water and application of regionalized flows.

The results for Resource use, fossil are higher for 2022, mainly related to the environmental impacts of the upstream natural gas energy carrier that changed due to the update of the country specific consumption mixes, update of the pipeline distances, and changes in the background data. Moreover, in Europe there is a significant trend in the increase of LNG imports.

At the same time, our recycling as well as the efficiency of metal recovery has an important role in the results of our life cycle assessment.

The recycled content of Aurubis ROD/RheinROD for Aurubis Group for fiscal year 2021/22 was 33 %

Critical review

An independent, external auditor reviewed the methodology, data quality, and modelling aspects of the study.

Name and contact information of the auditor:

Dr. Winfried Hirtz
Alejandro Ibanez Cuesy

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The review was performed according to ISO 14040 (2021) and ISO 14044 (2021).

Note:
The Certificate of Validity can be found as an Annex to this document.

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CERTIFICATE OF VALIDITY

DIN EN ISO 14040:2021 / DIN EN ISO 14044:2021
(product-related life cycle assessment - LCA)

Evidence that the application conforms to the regulations was delivered, and is herewith certified according to the TÜV NORD CERT Prüf- und Umweltgutachtergesellschaft mbH - procedure for

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Range of application

Life Cycle Assessment „Production of Copper Wire Rod“ (Vers. 3, 12/04/2023)

The requirements of the above-mentioned standards were evidently fulfilled by a critical review with regard to

- the scientifically justified and technically valid methods used in carrying out the LCA;
- the appropriateness of the data used in relation to the objective of the study;
- the consideration of the objective of the LCA and the identified limitations in the interpretations.

The LCA report (Ref: Report LCA Copper Wire Rod 12/04/2023) is transparent and self-consistent.

This declaration of validity refers exclusively to the functional unit at point in time of the LCA report.

Report No. 3536 1273-2

TÜV NORD CERT Prüf- und Umweltgutachtergesellschaft mbH

Hannover, 2023-12-05

Mr. Dr. Hirtz
Environmental verifier