THESIS®

BY THE SUSTAINABILITY CONSORTIUM

THESIS Methodology

The Sustainability Consortium (TSC) has a rigorous methodology to evaluate available scientific knowledge, identify environmental and social hotspots, and identify improvement opportunities for many different types of consumer products **using this knowledge to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** for completing and communicating product category-level sustainability performance.

THE LIFE CYCLE PERSPECTIVE

The KPIs are designed with manufacturers, suppliers, and retail buyers in mind, but address more than sustainability in manufacturing. Social and environmental hotspots throughout the product category life cycle are included.

THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROCESS

Members of The Sustainability Consortium include stakeholders from business, civil society, government, and academia convened by TSC to collaboratively develop the THESIS KPIs. The process is focused on creating credible, scalable, and effective tools.

RESULTING BUSINESS TOOLS

THESIS details the hotspots, improvement opportunities, and KPIs in product category assessments. Including referenced scientific resources, definitions, resources and action recommendations, THESIS helps TSC Members and licensed users respond to the KPIs.

Sustainability Snapshots are 1-page quick references that include the sustainability issues, also available to members and THESIS licensees.

Main Steps to Produce Assessments

1 TSC members, staff, and invited experts select a category of products to examine.

2 TSC reviews scientific sources to identify hotspots in the life cycle of a product and improvement opps that can address the hotspots.

3 The evidence is evaluated against several criteria to determine if it will be included in the KPIs.

4 THESIS is updated to include the new category assessment and is available for use by suppliers and retailers.

5 All the elements are assembled into THESIS assessments sets and go through member and stakeholder review.

7 During the annual process, KPIs are updated as needed based on new research, feedback from users, and analysis of reporting results.

6 Key Performance Indicators are designed that allow measurement of manufacturers' progress against the hotspots.
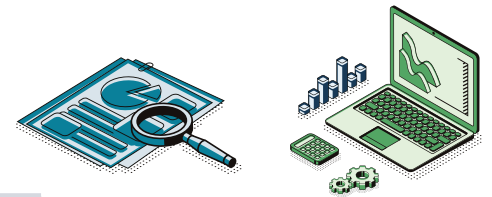
THESIS is the gateway to creating more sustainable products for a more sustainable planet.

Need additional help and guidance?
Our THESIS Impact Team offers support, solutions, and engagement for THESIS users to maximize impact and reach their sustainability goals.

Appendix

1. DEFINE THE PRODUCT CATEGORY

— Each THESIS KPI set addresses a unique product category, (e.g., computers, tomatoes, or plush toys) rather than individual products or entire organizations. Defining the category involves deciding:

What types of products are included and excluded,

What components, materials and ingredients will be considered, and

The major process that occur in the product life cycle.

— These decisions are based on research industry norms, the similarity of supply chains, and feedback from stakeholders

— Priority is given to categories with significant environmental and/or social impact

2. REVIEW RELEVANT SCIENTIFIC SOURCES

— TSC researchers, collect scientific publications that describe the sustainability impacts of the entire product category life cycle.

— Publicly available life cycle assessments (LCAs) are particularly sought after because they can directly compare impacts across the product category life cycle

— The quality of each individual scientific source is assessed by TSC researchers based on its scientific review process, the transparency of the research, and the type of data used to draw conclusions

— TSC researchers carefully review the scientific studies to identify hotspots and improvement opportunities

3. RESEARCH HOTSPOTS

TSC researchers identify **hotspots**, which are activities within a single life cycle stage of a product category that creates materially significant social or environmental impacts.

4. RESEARCH IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

TSC researchers identify in the sources **brands and improvement opportunities,** which are specific actions that manufacturers can take to address the hotspots.

5. EVALUATE THE EVIDENCE

— The **materiality** of the hotspots is determined by considering the number and quality of the sources, or the largest impacts identified by life cycle assessment.

— Improvement opportunities must meet criteria for the number and quality of the sources, or derive from transparent, multi-stakeholder processes.

— Hotspots and improvement opportunities must be **actionable;** meaning a typical brand or manufacturer in the product category is to have visibility into the supply chain to gather information and sufficient influence to effect a change.

— At least one valid improvement opportunity must be identified for each hotspot (see below).

— There is a maximum of three improvement opportunities per hotspot.

6. DESIGN KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

— **Key Performance Indicators** (KPIs) are questions that allow decision makers to quickly assess the performance of manufacturers against the identified sustainability hotspots.

— The KPIs are designed to be answered by brand manufacturers either at the request of a customer or for self-assessment.

— Several design principles require the KPIs to:

Be **traceable** back to the original scientific research;

Maintain an **objective** tone;

use **clear** and unambiguous wording

Be **actionable** by a brand manufacturer

Be **measureable** by being quantitative and outcome oriented wherever possible, otherwise using a rational qualitative scale

Be **differentiating** by covering a range of performance that allows low performing, average, and high performing companies and leading companies to report progress over time

Be **strategic** by having the set of KPIs for a product category address the hotspots and improvement opportunities as concisely and logically as possible

Have **consistent**, repeatable forms and use the same metrics for the same hotspots to create a smooth user experience.

7. MULTI-STAKEHOLDER REVIEW

— Members of The Sustainability Consortium are stakeholders from business, civil society, government, and academia who collaboratively develop THESIS.

— The process for developing high quality content relies heavily on regular workshops, discussions, and commenting in which all members are welcome to participate.

8. PUBLISH THE KPI SET

— THESIS assessments, supply chain diagrams and Sustainability Snapshots are published and are available for manufacturer to customer reporting.

— The **Snapshots** include short descriptions of the major themes arising from the hotspots, improvement opportunities, and KPIs.

9. UPDATE AND REVISE THESIS KPIS

THESIS KPIs are updated based on new research, feedback from users, and analysis of reporting results, balancing the need to improve usability with the value of having consistent reporting over time.