

# Life Cycle Assessment for the iFIT system with multilayer pipes, metal- and plastic fittings

Taken from the TEPPFA LCA comparison  
studies following the principles of ISO 14040  
and ISO 14044

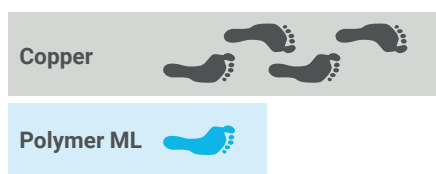


# Polymer/aluminium/polymer multi-layer pipe systems vs copper environmental impact comparison

An independent study following EN 15804 methodology by the world-renowned Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO), and validated by the Denkstatt sustainable development institute in Austria, is conclusive in its findings that plastic plastic pipe systems made from polymer-aluminium-polymer multi-layer plastic pipes for plumbing hot and cold solid wall applications have a lower environmental impact than those made from copper.

## Relative size of environmental footprint

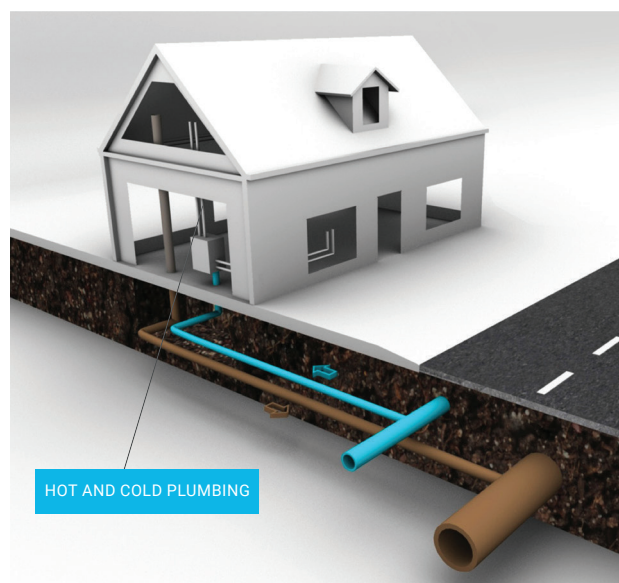
To make a fair comparison between these two different materials and determine the environmental impacts of both, each stage of their lifecycle was analysed. "Environmental footprints" can be either adverse or beneficial. Adverse effects such as emitting greenhouse gases may arise in either the product's production or disposal process; beneficial effects help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by saving energy whilst the product is in use.



## Determining a product's environmental footprint

A scientifically-based full Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is the standardised method for fairly comparing the environmental impacts of different products or services. This type of assessment involves systematically collecting and evaluating quantitative data on the inputs and outputs of material, energy and waste flows associated with a product over its entire life cycle. Therefore a whole range of processes

need to be assessed to calculate overall impacts, beginning with the manufacturing of raw materials, to transforming them into products; continuing through the product's transportation and installation, the product's lifetime of use, and ultimately, the product's disposal or re-processing at the end of life.



The findings of LCA assessments are typically published in the form of Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) to help communicate a product's overall environmental impact.

The VITO study involved collecting data on plastic pipe systems from companies covering more than 50% of the European market. Data for copper was based on publicly available information.

## Environmental impact criteria

The environmental impact of each pipe material was assessed against seven different criteria across its full life cycle.



### Abiotic Resources Depletion (non-fossil)

**ADPn:** the over-extraction of minerals, fossil fuels and other non-living, non-renewable materials which can lead to exhaustion of natural resources.



### Abiotic Resources Depletion (fossil) ADPf:

the over-extraction of fossil fuels including all fossil resources.



**Acidification Potential AD:** emissions, such as sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from manufacturing processes, result in acid rain which harms soil, water supplies, human and animal organisms, and the ecosystem.



**Eutrophication Potential EP:** increased concentrations of nitrates and phosphates can encourage excessive growth of algae and reduce oxygen levels. This increases mortality in aquatic fauna and flora, leads to loss of species dependent on low-nutrient environments, reduces biodiversity and has knock-on effects on non-aquatic animals and humans.



**Global Warming Potential GWP:** the insulating effect of greenhouse gases (GHG) - CO<sub>2</sub> and methane - in the atmosphere preventing the earth losing heat gained from the sun. As global temperature rises, it is expected to cause climatic disturbance, desertification, rising sea levels and spread of disease.



**Ozone Depletion Potential ODP:** depletion of the ozone layer (O<sub>3</sub>) in the atmosphere caused by the emission of chemical foaming and cleaning agents allows the passage of greater levels of UV from the sun, causing skin cancer, damage to the immune system and reducing crop yields.



### Photochemical Ozone Creation Potential

**POCP:** creation of ozone in the presence of sunlight, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds. Ozone leads to chemical smogs that affect human health, food crops and the ecosystem in general. The effects vary according to geography and climate and are especially problematic in heavily urbanised areas with existing pollution.

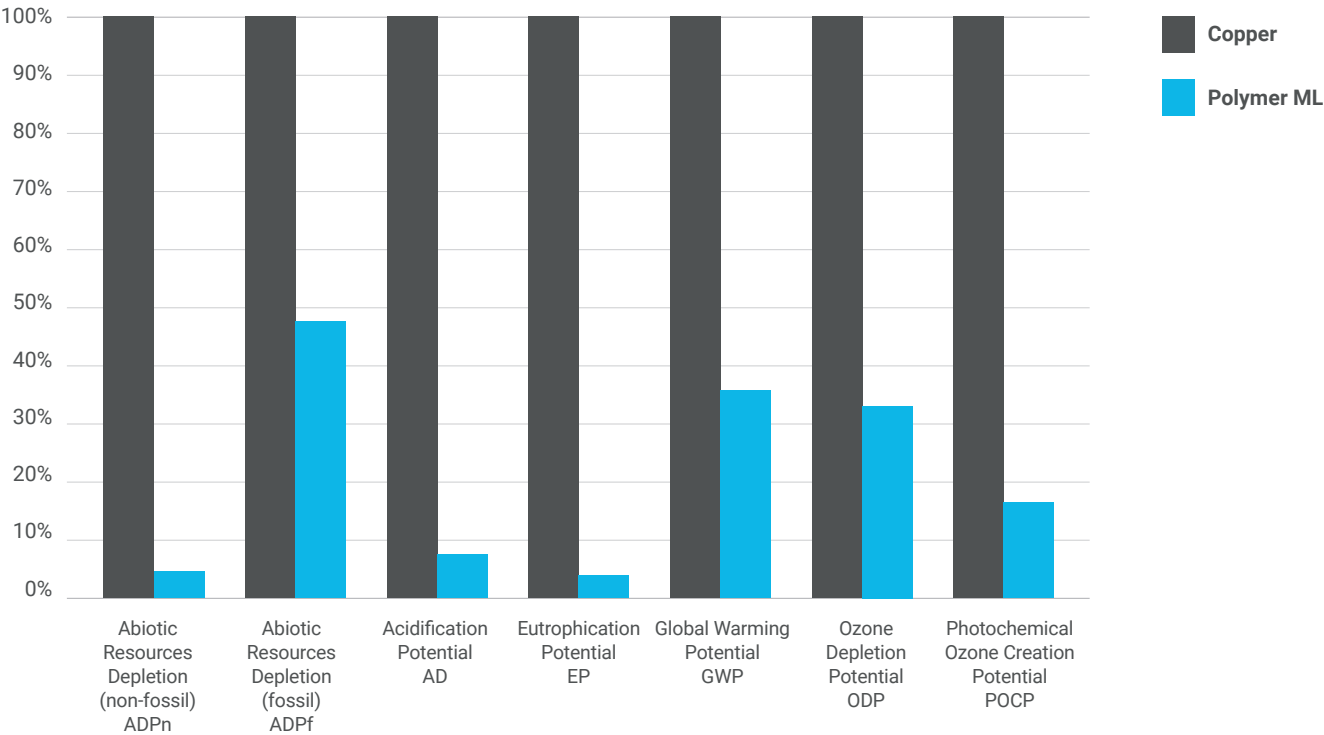
## Comparison based on identical functional units

For the purposes of a direct fair comparison between alternative materials the following identical functional units were used in the LCA study for plumbing hot and cold solid wall systems:

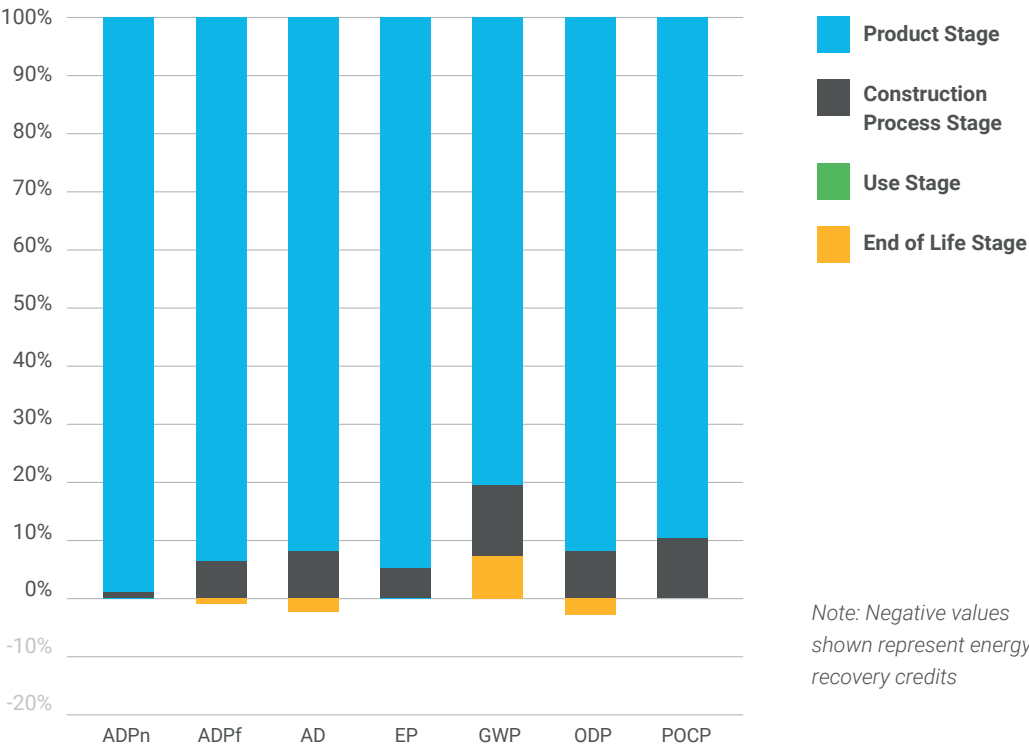
- the pressure supply and transport of hot and cold drinking water from the entrance of an apartment of 100 m<sup>2</sup> to the tap
- a 50 year service life has been assumed which aligns with the normal lifetime expectancy of a building.

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Comparison of Polymer/Al/Polymer to Copper for the 7 environmental impact criteria



Environmental profile of the Polymer/Al/Polymer composite pipe system for hot and cold water in the building from cradle-to-grave per functional unit



Note: Negative values shown represent energy recovery credits

**Environmental profile of the Polymer/AL/Polymer composite pipe system for hot and cold water (cradle-to-grave) in absolute figures per functional unit**

| IMPACT CATEGORY            | Abiotic Resources Depletion (non-fossil) ADPn | Abiotic Resources Depletion (fossil) ADPf | Acidification Potential AD | Eutrophication Potential EP | Global Warming Potential GWP | Ozone Depletion Potential ODP | Photochemical Ozone Creation Potential POCP |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Life cycle phases          | kg Sb eq                                      | MJ                                        | kg SO <sub>2</sub> eq      | kg PO <sub>4</sub> --- eq   | kg CO <sub>2</sub> eq        | kg CFC-11 eq                  | kg C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>4</sub> eq         |
| Product Stage              | 4.45E-05                                      | 1.60E+01                                  | 5.18E-03                   | 1.16E-03                    | 8.66E-01                     | 8.42E-08                      | 4.77E-04                                    |
| Construction Process Stage | 2.48E-07                                      | 1.25E+00                                  | 5.16E-04                   | 6.54E-05                    | 1.30E-01                     | 8.32E-09                      | 5.20E-05                                    |
| Use Stage                  | 0.00E+00                                      | 0.00E+00                                  | 0.00E+00                   | 0.00E+00                    | 0.00E+00                     | 0.00E+00                      | 0.00E+00                                    |
| End of Life Stage          | -1.40E-09                                     | -2.17E-01                                 | -7.95E-05                  | 6.00E-07                    | 8.00E-02                     | -1.63E-09                     | -1.73E-06                                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>4.47E-05</b>                               | <b>1.70E+01</b>                           | <b>5.62E-03</b>            | <b>1.22E-03</b>             | <b>1.08E+00</b>              | <b>9.09E-08</b>               | <b>5.27E-04</b>                             |

More detailed information about this material comparison can be obtained via [www.teppfa.eu](http://www.teppfa.eu) or by contacting TEPPFA at: [info@teppfa.eu](mailto:info@teppfa.eu).

## TEPPFA Environmental Product Declarations

The TEPPFA EPDs are aimed at demonstrating the value that plastic pipe systems offer for a sustainable future. We commissioned an independent study by the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO) to measure the environmental footprint of various plastic pipe systems based on life-cycle assessment. The work was validated by the Denkstatt sustainability consultancy in Austria.

An important objective was to provide transparency about the impact of plastic pipe systems on our environment. It was also an important step in the development of the Environmental Product Declarations for plastic pipes.

Data for the plastic systems is provided by the TEPPFA member companies using the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) method. Data for the non-polymer alternative materials (ductile iron, copper, concrete) is based on the publicly available figures.

Contributors to this study consist of numerous companies, institutes and associations, which among others include PlasticsEurope, TNO and PVC4Pipes. Data was collected from 60% of companies within the European pipe industry.

### Registered Office:

Avenue de Cortenberg, 71  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

tel: +32 2 736 24 06

e-mail: [info@teppfa.eu](mailto:info@teppfa.eu)

*The European Plastic Pipes and Fittings Association (TEPPFA) is the leading voice of plastic pipe and fittings manufacturers in Europe. Being a trade association, we are actively involved in the promotion of plastic pipe systems for all applications. Through our work, TEPPFA wants to raise awareness of the value that plastic pipe systems offer for a sustainable future.*

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## Argentina / Southern South America

Georg Fischer Central Plastics Sudamérica S.R.L.  
Buenos Aires / Argentina  
Phone +54 11 4512 02 90  
Fax +54 11 4512 02 93  
gfcentral.ps.ar@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/ar

## Australia

George Fischer Pty Ltd  
Riverwood NSW 2210  
Phone +61 (0) 2 9502 8000  
Fax +61 (0) 2 9502 8090  
australia.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/au

## Austria

Georg Fischer Rohrleitungssysteme GmbH  
3130 Herzogenburg  
Phone +43 (0) 2782 856 43 0  
Fax +43 (0) 2782 856 64  
austria.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/at

## Belgium / Luxembourg

Georg Fischer NV/SA  
1600 Sint-Pieters-Leeuw / Belgium  
Phone +32 (0) 2 556 40 20  
Fax +32 (0) 2 524 34 26  
be.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/be

## Brazil

Georg Fischer Sist. de Tub. Ltda.  
04571-020 São Paulo/SP  
Phone +55 (0) 11 5525 1311  
br.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/br

## Canada

Georg Fischer Piping Systems Ltd  
Mississauga, ON L5T 2B2  
Phone +1 (905) 670 8005  
Fax +1 (905) 670 8513  
ca.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/ca

## China

Georg Fischer Piping Systems Ltd  
201319 Shanghai  
Phone +86 21 3899 3899  
Fax +86 21 3899 3888  
china.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/cn

## Denmark / Iceland

Georg Fischer A/S  
2630 Taastrup / Denmark  
Phone +45 (0) 7022 1975  
Fax +45 (0) 7022 1976  
info.dk.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/dk

## Finland

Georg Fischer AB  
01510 Vantaa  
Phone +358 (0) 9 586 58 25  
Fax +358 (0) 9 586 58 29  
info.fi.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/fi

## France

Georg Fischer SAS  
95932 Roissy Charles de Gaulle Cedex  
Phone +33 (0) 1 41 84 68 84  
Fax +33 (0) 1 41 84 68 85  
fr.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/fr

## Germany

Georg Fischer GmbH  
73095 Albershausen  
Phone +49 (0) 7161 302 0  
Fax +49 (0) 7161 302 25 9  
info.de.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/de

## India

Georg Fischer Piping Systems Pvt. Ltd.  
400 076 Powai, Mumbai  
Phone +91 22 4007 2000  
Fax +91 22 4007 2020  
branchoffice@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/in

## Indonesia

PT Georg Fischer Indonesia  
Karawang 41371, Jawa Barat  
Phone +62 267 432 044  
Fax +62 267 431 857  
indonesia.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/id

## Italy

Georg Fischer S.p.A.  
20864 Agrate Brianza (MB)  
Phone +39 02 921 86 1  
Fax +39 02 921 86 24 7  
it.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/it

## Japan

Georg Fischer Ltd  
530-0003 Osaka  
Phone +81 (0) 6 6341 2451  
jp.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/jp

## Korea

Georg Fischer Piping Systems  
463-824 Seoul  
Phone +82 31 8017 1450 3  
Fax +82 31 8017 1454  
kor.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/kr

## Malaysia

George Fischer (M) Sdn. Bhd.  
41200 Klang, Selangor Darul Ehsan  
Phone +60 (0) 3 3122 5585  
Fax +60 (0) 3 3122 5575  
my.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/my

## Mexico / Northern Latin America

Georg Fischer S.A. de C.V.  
CP 66636 Apodaca, Nuevo Leon / Mexico  
Phone +52 (81) 1340 8586  
Fax +52 (81) 1522 8906  
mx.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/mx

## Argentina / Southern South America

Georg Fischer Central Plastics Sudamérica S.R.L.  
Buenos Aires / Argentina  
Phone +54 11 4512 02 90  
Fax +54 11 4512 02 93  
gfcentral.ps.ar@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/ar

## Australia

George Fischer Pty Ltd  
Riverwood NSW 2210  
Phone +61 (0) 2 9502 8000  
Fax +61 (0) 2 9502 8090  
australia.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/au

## Austria

Georg Fischer Rohrleitungssysteme GmbH  
3130 Herzogenburg  
Phone +43 (0) 2782 856 43 0  
Fax +43 (0) 2782 856 64  
austria.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/at

## Belgium / Luxembourg

Georg Fischer NV/SA  
1600 Sint-Pieters-Leeuw / Belgium  
Phone +32 (0) 2 556 40 20  
Fax +32 (0) 2 524 34 26  
be.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/be

## Brazil

Georg Fischer Sist. de Tub. Ltda.  
04571-020 São Paulo/SP  
Phone +55 (0) 11 5525 1311  
br.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/br

## Canada

Georg Fischer Piping Systems Ltd  
Mississauga, ON L5T 2B2  
Phone +1 (905) 670 8005  
Fax +1 (905) 670 8513  
ca.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/ca

## China

Georg Fischer Piping Systems Ltd  
201319 Shanghai  
Phone +86 21 3899 3899  
Fax +86 21 3899 3888  
china.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/cn

## Denmark / Iceland

Georg Fischer A/S  
2630 Taastrup / Denmark  
Phone +45 (0) 7022 1975  
Fax +45 (0) 7022 1976  
info.dk.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/dk

## Finland

Georg Fischer AB  
01510 Vantaa  
Phone +358 (0) 9 586 58 25  
Fax +358 (0) 9 586 58 29  
info.fi.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/fi

## France

Georg Fischer SAS  
95932 Roissy Charles de Gaulle Cedex  
Phone +33 (0) 1 41 84 68 84  
Fax +33 (0) 1 41 84 68 85  
fr.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/fr

## Germany

Georg Fischer GmbH  
73095 Albershausen  
Phone +49 (0) 7161 302 0  
Fax +49 (0) 7161 302 25 9  
info.de.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/de

## India

Georg Fischer Piping Systems Pvt. Ltd.  
400 076 Powai, Mumbai  
Phone +91 22 4007 2000  
Fax +91 22 4007 2020  
branchoffice@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/in

## Indonesia

PT Georg Fischer Indonesia  
Karawang 41371, Jawa Barat  
Phone +62 267 432 044  
Fax +62 267 431 857  
indonesia.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/id

## Italy

Georg Fischer S.p.A.  
20864 Agrate Brianza (MB)  
Phone +39 02 921 86 1  
Fax +39 02 921 86 24 7  
it.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/it

## Japan

Georg Fischer Ltd  
530-0003 Osaka  
Phone +81 (0) 6 6341 2451  
jp.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/jp

## Korea

Georg Fischer Piping Systems  
463-824 Seoul  
Phone +82 31 8017 1450 3  
Fax +82 31 8017 1454  
kor.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/kr

## Malaysia

George Fischer (M) Sdn. Bhd.  
41200 Klang, Selangor Darul Ehsan  
Phone +60 (0) 3 3122 5585  
Fax +60 (0) 3 3122 5575  
my.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/my

## Mexico / Northern Latin America

Georg Fischer S.A. de C.V.  
CP 66636 Apodaca, Nuevo Leon / Mexico  
Phone +52 (81) 1340 8586  
Fax +52 (81) 1522 8906  
mx.ps@georgfischer.com  
www.gfps.com/mx

## Middle East

Georg Fischer Piping Systems (Switzerland) Ltd  
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Hauptstrasse 130

CH-4450 Sissach/Switzerland

Telefon +41 (0) 61 975 22 22

info.jrg.ps@georgfischer.com

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