

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Scope of the Research	1
1.2	Biodegradable Polymers	2
1.2.1	Conventional Polymers Versus Bio-Degradable Polymers Based on Renewable Resources	2
1.2.2	Starch-Based Polymers	4
1.2.3	Starch-Based Blends	5
1.2.4	Polyvinyl Alcohol	5
1.2.5	Biodegradation of Starch/PVOH Blends Under Different Conditions	6
1.3	LCA of Starch-Based Bio-Composites	9
1.3.1	LCA Framework and Approach	9
1.3.2	LCI and LCIA	12
1.3.3	LCA of Biopolymers	21
1.3.4	LCA of Agro-Ecosystems	23
1.4	End-of-Life	28
1.4.1	Waste Treatment Options	28
1.4.2	LCA and End-of-Life Scenarios	37
1.5	Data Quality Analysis in LCA	42
1.6	Aims and Objectives of this Study	42
	References	44
2	Materials and Methods	63
2.1	LCA Modelling Methods	63
2.1.1	Goal of LCA Study	63
2.1.2	Scope of Study	64
2.2	Agro-Eco-System Modelling Methods	73
2.2.1	IPCC Approach	73
2.2.2	Process-Oriented Model DNDC	74

2.3	Sensitivity Analysis and Uncertainty Analysis of the LCA Results	79
2.3.1	Sensitivity Analysis	79
2.3.2	Uncertainty Analysis	80
2.4	Experimental Methods	82
2.4.1	Experimental Set-Up	82
2.4.2	Analytical Methods	83
2.4.3	Physical–Chemical Methods	85
2.4.4	Statistical Methods	90
2.5	Composition and Properties of Materials Studied	90
2.5.1	Composition of Product Systems	91
2.5.2	Characterisation of Materials	91
	References	97
3	LCA of Wheat Agro-Eco-System	103
3.1	Introduction	103
3.2	Product System and System Boundary	104
3.2.1	Function and Functional Unit	104
3.2.2	Product System and System Boundary	104
3.3	Life Cycle Inventory Analysis	106
3.3.1	Inventory for Soil Properties	106
3.3.2	Inventory for Climate	108
3.3.3	Inventory for Fertilizer and Chemicals	109
3.3.4	Inventory for Wheat Grain Farming	113
3.3.5	Inventory for Crop Rotation	128
3.4	Agricultural Eco-System Modeling	129
3.4.1	DNDC-Simulated Results from 2003 to 2007	129
3.4.2	Gas Emissions/Leaching Inventory for Soisson	131
3.4.3	Comparison of DNDC and IPCC Model Outputs	134
3.5	LCIA Results for Wheat Farming System	136
3.5.1	Contribution Analysis for Soisson Grain	136
3.5.2	LCIA Comparison of the Six Fields	139
3.5.3	Normalized LCIA Profiles for Wheat Grain	142
3.6	Sensitivity Analysis	143
3.6.1	Sensitivity Analysis on N ₂ O Modelling Approach	143
3.6.2	Liming-Induced CO ₂ and P Loss	145
3.7	Discussion	146
3.7.1	Key Findings	148
	References	148
4	LCA Case Studies of Starch-Based Foam	153
4.1	Introduction	153
4.2	Product System and System Boundary	154
4.2.1	Flour Milling	154

4.2.2	Foam Production.	155
4.2.3	PVOH	157
4.2.4	Corrugated Board Box Production.	157
4.2.5	WBF/LDPE Foam Conversion and Insulated Coolbox Production.	160
4.2.6	The Production of EPS/WBF Trough Mould and Concrete Formwork.	160
4.2.7	Production of Display Board	161
4.3	Inventory Analysis.	162
4.3.1	Data Collection and Data Sources.	162
4.3.2	Flour Milling	162
4.3.3	WBF/PSBF/MSBF Production	164
4.3.4	PVOH Production	164
4.3.5	Specifications of Case Studies	166
4.3.6	C/N/S Content of Modelled Products.	167
4.3.7	Distribution Stage	169
4.3.8	Other Processes	169
4.4	LCIA Results	170
4.4.1	Contribution Analysis of WBF Production	170
4.4.2	Normalisation of WBF Production	177
4.4.3	Coolbox Case Study	180
4.4.4	Display Board Case Study	187
4.4.5	Case Studies on Trough Mould and Concrete Formwork.	190
4.4.6	Comparison of WBF and PSBF/MSBF	197
4.5	Sensitivity Analysis	201
4.5.1	Sensitivity Test on N ₂ O Modelling Approach.	202
4.5.2	Sensitivity Analysis on PVOH Model	205
4.5.3	Sensitivity Analysis on Infrastructures	208
4.5.4	Sensitivity Analysis on Conversion Process	211
4.5.5	Sensitivity Analysis on WBF Coolbox Scenario	214
4.6	Discussion	215
4.6.1	Key Findings	219
	References	219
5	End-of-Life Scenarios.	221
5.1	Introduction	221
5.2	Product System and System Boundaries	222
5.2.1	Anaerobic Digestion	222
5.2.2	Composting	225
5.2.3	Landfill	227
5.2.4	Recycling and Incineration.	228

5.3	Anaerobic Digestibility of WBF/MSBF/PSBF Based Products . . .	228
5.3.1	Activity of Inocula	228
5.3.2	Biodegradability of WBF/PSBF/MSBF Products	231
5.3.3	Discussion: Biodegradability and Element Flow	243
5.4	Anaerobic Digestion Scenarios	245
5.4.1	Inventory for BFMSW Treatment in AD Plant	246
5.4.2	Inventory for Digestion of WBF, PSBF/MSBF Products	249
5.5	Composting Model	253
5.6	Landfill Model	254
5.7	Discussion	257
5.7.1	Key Findings	260
	References	260
6	LCA of WBF Products Over Whole Life Cycles	265
6.1	Introduction	265
6.2	Product System	265
6.3	Inventory Data	266
6.3.1	End-of-Life Scenarios	266
6.3.2	Transportation	267
6.4	Cradle-to-Grave LCIA Results	268
6.4.1	Display Board Case Study	268
6.4.2	Coolbox Case Study	273
6.4.3	Case studies of Trough Mould and Concrete Formwork	281
6.5	Comparisons of WBF with PSBF/MSBF	288
6.5.1	Comparison of WBF and PSBF/MSBF	288
6.5.2	Comparison of PSBF/MSBF and Petrochemical Polymers	290
6.6	Sensitivity Analysis	293
6.6.1	Sensitivity Analysis on N ₂ O Modelling Approach	293
6.6.2	Sensitivity Analysis on Composting Scenario	295
6.6.3	Sensitivity Analysis on AD Scenario	302
6.6.4	Sensitivity Analysis on Landfill Scenario	304
6.6.5	Sensitivity Analysis on Infrastructures	309
6.7	Discussion	315
6.7.1	Key Findings	318
	References	318
7	Sensitivity and Uncertainty Analysis	321
7.1	Introduction	321
7.2	Sensitivity Analysis	322
7.2.1	Sensitivity Analysis on Characterisation Models	322
7.2.2	Sensitivity Analysis on Normalization Methods	324
7.2.3	Sensitivity Analysis on Time Horizon	325

7.3	Uncertainty Analysis	331
7.3.1	Uncertainty Analysis of LCI.	331
7.3.2	Uncertainty of LCIA Results	336
7.4	Discussion	342
7.4.1	Key Findings	343
	References	343
8	General Discussion and Conclusions	345
8.1	Discussions.	345
8.1.1	Cradle-to-Grave LCIA Profiles of WBFs	345
8.1.2	Environmental Advantages for WBFs Over Petrochemical Polymers?	346
8.1.3	Generic Environmental Advantages of Starch-PVOH Blends Over Petrochemical Polymers?	348
8.1.4	LCA System Boundary	348
8.1.5	Data Quality Analysis of LCA Model	349
8.2	Further Observations	351
8.3	Future Work	353
8.4	Conclusions	354
	References	356
	Appendix A: Pedigree Matrix Method	357
	Appendix B: Inventory for Crop Rotation	361
	Appendix C: Inventory for Composting Model	367
	Appendix D: Landfill Model	381
	Appendix E: Further Discussion on GWP 100 Profiles of WBF	399