Study on the life cycle assessment of the bio - ethanol in case of different manufacture scenarios

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ABSTRACT

With the gradual decrease of energy reserves, many countries have been seeking for clean and renewable energy resources. Among various energy resources, biofuel has great development potentials. Biodiesel and bioethanol are types of biofuel, with environmental advantages of non-toxicity and biodegradability, thus are expected to bring significant influences in the future. Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) studies the environmental concerns and potential impacts of products throughout the life cycle of products, from raw material collection, production and use to treatment. This study aims to conduct LCA on the production of biofuel under different scenarios, including biofuel produced from imported foreign material source and raw oil, and direct import of foreign biofuel. The LCA was conducted based on literature review and investigation of domestic inventory data. This study investigated domestically produced bioe-thanol made with sugarcane imported from Thailand and Brazil, and imported bioe-thanol made with sugarcane from Thailand and Brazil; and domestically produced biodiesel made with palm oil imported from Malaysia, soybean oil from the U.S., and jatropha curcas oil from Thailand, as well as imported biodiesel made with palm oil from Malaysia, soybean oil from the U.S., and jatropha curcas oil from Thailand. Life Cycle Inventory (LCI) and Impact Assessment were conducted on the energy demand and pollutant discharge throughout the product life cycle, from raw material collection, transportation, biofuel production, biofuel transportation, and use. The functional unit was based on producing 1 ton or 1 MJ biofuel, and the substance required to be input-ted or pollutant discharge per functional unit was calculated. The impact degree of biofuel to the environment in each life stage was evaluated by Simapro7.1. Results of comparison of ten biofuel production scenarios, the energy gain of the biodiesel produced with palm oil from Malaysia was the highest (3.17), as the energy input of 12,551MJ is lower. However, the energy input for the imported bioethanol produced with sugarcane from Brazil was higher (86,989 MJ), resulting in the lowest energy gain of 0.25. Among the ten scenarios, the usage stage of biofuel is the main impact source, while the most significant impact type is inhalable organic substances and acidification/eutrophication. According to the results of Impact Assessment, among the ten scenarios, the total environmental impact points (Pt) of bioethanol situ-ations are lower than those of biodiesel, and that of the imported bioethanol produced with sugarcane from Brazil was the lowest. However, the average energy gain of bio-diesel is higher than that of bioethanol. Therefore, when producing biodiesel and bio-ethanol, the integrative and sustainable efficiency of environmental impact and energy gain should be considered simultaneously.

Keywords: Bioethanol, Biodiesel, Life Cycle Assessment, Environmental Impact Analysis, energy gain

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