

Interview Transcript, Paul Smith
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My name is Paul Smith. I am the Project Leader for Carbon Footprinting and Labelling of Products for LRQA. I have been involved with the PAS 2050 now for the best part of a year and involved with the certification bodies under consultation of the development of that PAS.

PAS 2050 Definition

PAS means "Publicly Available Specification" and PAS 2050 is aligned with the UK government's aim to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to the year 2050 by 80%. To give it its full title PAS 2050 is the "Specification for the assessment of the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of goods and services," and in this context we mean products.

Who developed PAS 2050?

The PAS 2050:2008 was co-sponsored by the Carbon Trust and DEFRA and prepared by the British Standards Institution following a formal consultation process which involved a steering committee of academics, NGO's, business and government.

What does PAS 2050 mean to an organisation?

What it really means to an organisation is that it provides a consistent method and process for the determination of the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions associated with their products. From this analysis organisations can identify what we call the "hotspots" in these lifecycle greenhouse emission supply chains, and the idea behind the PAS is to ensure that reductions can be made to improve their environmental performance.

What are the benefits of PAS 2050 certification?

PAS 2050 certification follows verification, and that in itself allows organisations to make claims of conformity in to the public domain. The certification process allows organisations to get the assurance that the data which they are going to put into public domain has been verified.

How does PAS 2050 relate to existing environmental standards?

The PAS 2050 ties in with other international standards, primarily through the lifecycle assessment standards which were in the series 14000, and 14001 provides an opportunity for organisations to include lifecycle assessment within the standard, though it's not a mandate. But for organisational carbon footprints one would tend to use 14064 as the standard, but for products now we have this specific PAS which allows for lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of the product to be determined.

Walker's Crisps and the Carbon Trust PAS 2050 work

A very good example of the application of the PAS 2050 was in the pilot phase conducted by the Carbon Trust with Walkers Crisps, part of the PepsiCo group, who determined the carbon footprint of their crisps and looked at ways in which to could reduce their footprint by identifying those hotspots.

PAS 2050 and the Carbon Label

PAS 2050 is applicable to any organisation in determining its carbon footprint of its products. The carbon label is a separate product offered by the Carbon Label Company, part of the Carbon Trust,

and they have a specification for going beyond PAS 2050 and applying their own standard to ensure that there is comparability between products before the label can be applied. The label itself infers that the organisation is also addressing the need for reductions over a two year period.

Steps to PAS 2050 certification

The steps to certification of PAS 2050 are numerous and I'll take you through them one at a time. First and foremost of course, you need to get a hold of a copy of the PAS and have a read through it and identify whether it is the right standard for you; secondly you need to get buy-in and commitment from senior levels in the organisation.; the next thing to do of course is to make early contact with your certification body to help you go through the process of verification and certification.

PAS 2050 certification process

The certification process is at least a two-phase process. The initial phase is to allow us to look at how you have addressed the requirements of the standard and not at that stage to verify all of the data, but to plan a detailed verification for the next phase.

The second phase of the verification and certification process is where the certification body follows its verification plan and determines whether the organisation has implemented fully the requirements of PAS 2050 and that its greenhouse gas emissions of its products are valid.

This provides stakeholders with the confidence that the information that is put into the public domain by organisations on their lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions is valid.

PAS 2050 and brand reputation

Without the assurance of verification and certification that follows verification, organisations maybe placing themselves at some risk and it could damage their brand image if information going into the public domain about their greenhouse gas emissions has not been validated.

Further information on PAS 2050 and contact details

If you are interested in pursuing PAS 2050 then by all means contact any of the organisations that are involved in the development of the PAS. Of course you can also contact me at paul.smith@lrqa.com.