



**LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT COMPARISON  
BETWEEN PEFACTANT<sup>®</sup> AND CHEMICAL  
SURFACTANT PRODUCTION**

**MASTER THESIS**

**By**

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## **Declaration**

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# Contents

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 SUMMARY	1
1.2 PEPTIDE SURFACTANTS	2
1.2.1 <i>Novel Surface Theory</i>	2
1.2.2 <i>Novel Peptide Surfactants</i>	4
1.2.3 <i>Pepfactants<sup>®</sup> Manufacture</i>	5
1.3 CHEMICAL SURFACTANTS	8
1.3.1 <i>Definition and Classification of Surfactants</i>	9
1.3.2 <i>Chemical Surfactants Production</i>	10
1.3.3 <i>Applications of Chemical Surfactants</i>	11
1.4 RESEARCH GAP	11
1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH	12
<b>2 METHODOLOGY- LCA</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 STEPS AND PHASES	13
2.2 GOAL AND SCOPE DEFINITION	15
2.3 LIFE CYCLE INVENTORY (LCI)	16
2.4 LIFE CYCLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (LCIA)	18
2.5 LIFE CYCLE INTERPRETATION	23
2.6 LCA IMPLEMENTATION	23
<b>3 LCA ON PEFACTANT<sup>®</sup> AND CHEMICAL SURFACTANT MANUFACTURE</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1 BACKGROUND	25
3.2 SCOPE OF THE LCA	26

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3.2.1	<i>Function of Surfactants</i>	26
3.2.2	<i>Functional Unit, Assumptions and Limitations</i>	27
3.2.3	<i>System Boundaries</i>	29
3.3	LIFE CYCLE INVENTORY	31
3.3.1	<i>Procedures for Data Collection</i>	31
3.3.2	<i>AM1 Manufacture Model and Process Assumptions</i>	32
3.3.3	<i>LAS Production Process and Assumptions</i>	41
3.3.4	<i>Life Cycle Inventory</i>	42
3.4	IMPACTS ASSESSMENT	50
3.4.1	<i>Impact Categories</i>	50
3.4.2	<i>Classification and Characterisation</i>	50
3.4.3	<i>Processing the Inventory and Assessment</i>	53
3.5	EXTENDED LCA FOR PEPFACTANT <sup>®</sup> AM1	63
3.6	CONCLUSIONS	69
<b>4</b>	<b>FOAMING TESTS ON SURFACTANTS</b>	<b>70</b>
4.1	BACKGROUND	70
4.2	METHODOLOGY	71
4.2.1	<i>Foaming Experiment Overview</i>	71
4.2.2	<i>Determination of Foaming Experiment Method</i>	72
4.3	MATERIALS AND TESTS	73
4.3.1	<i>Materials</i>	73
4.3.2	<i>Tests</i>	74
4.4	RESULTS	76
4.5	CONCLUSIONS	77
<b>5</b>	<b>RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>79</b>
5.1	COMPARISON RESULTS TOWARDS LCA PROFILES	79
5.1.1	<i>Raw Materials</i>	79
5.1.2	<i>Energy Requirements</i>	82
5.1.3	<i>Atmospheric and Aqueous Emissions</i>	83
5.1.4	<i>CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions (for energy requirements)</i>	86
5.1.5	<i>LCA Comparison</i>	87
5.2	FOAMING ABILITY COMPARISON	89

5.3 LCA IMPROVEMENT	91
<b>6 CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>93</b>
6.1 CONCLUSIONS	93
6.2 FUTURE WORK	95
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>APPENDIX A CHEMICAL SURFACTANTS PRODUCTION</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>APPENDIX B APPLICATIONS OF CHEMICAL SURFACTANTS</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>APPENDIX C SHORT DESCRIPTION OF LCIA METHODS</b>	<b>114</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Flow sheet of purification process of AM1	8
Figure 2.1 Phases and applications of an LCA (AS/NZS ISO 14040, 1998)	15
Figure 2.2 A “from cradle to grave” LCA system boundary	16
Figure 3.1 Assessment Boundary of LCA on Pepfactant® AM1 Manufacture	30
Figure 3.2 Assessment Boundary of LCA on LAS production	30
Figure 3.5 Percentage contributions of AM1 production across all LCA impact categories	56
Figure 3.6 Percentage contributions of LAS production across all LCA impact categories	61
Figure 3.7 Direct carbon dioxide emission trace with raw materials	64
Figure 3.8 Indirect carbon dioxide emission trace with energy depletion	65
Figure 3.9 Relative public power generation by sources in 2003 (IEA, 2005)	66
Figure 3.10 Energy reduction potential with highest efficiencies included countries (Graus <i>et al</i> , 2007)	67
Figure 3.11 CO <sub>2</sub> savings potential with highest efficiencies included countries (Graus <i>et al</i> , 2007)	67
Figure 3.12 Scenario of Pepfactant® AM1 manufacture model with recycling water	69
Figure 4.1 Schematic of apparatus used for foaming tests	74
Figure 4.2 Experimental set up of foaming tests	75
Figure 4.3 Concentration dependence of Pepfactant® AM1 foams (25mM HEPES pH 7.4 200µM Zn)	76
Figure 4.4 Concentration dependence of LAS foams (25mM HEPES pH 7.4)	77
Figure 5.1 Raw materials depletion for Pepfactant® AM1 production	80

Figure 5.2 Raw materials depletion for LAS production	81
Figure 5.3 Energy requirement comparison between Pepfactant® AM1 and LAS production	82
Figure 5.4 Atmospheric and aqueous emissions for Pepfactant® AM1 production	83
Figure 5.5 Atmospheric and aqueous emissions for LAS production	84
Figure 5.6 CO <sub>2</sub> emissions for energy requirements	86
Figure 5.7 LCA comparison between Pepfactant® AM1 and LAS production	87
Figure 5.8 Extended LCA comparison between Pepfactant® AM1 and LAS taking account of usage	90



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Classification of chemical surfactants	10
Table 2.1 LCIA methods and software	19
Table 3.1 Process Conditions for the production of 1000 kg AM1	39
Table 3.2 Raw material, energy and products including emissions data for AM1 manufacture on industrial scale and functional unit	43
Table 3.3 Raw materials, energy and emissions process data for discrete processes in AM1 manufacture	45
Table 3.4 Breakdown of Electricity Requirements for AM1 Manufacture	46
Table 3.5 Raw materials, Energy and Emissions Process Data for Discrete Operations Involved in LAS Production (Pittinger <i>et al</i> , 1993)	48
Table 3.6 LCA Characterisation factors for AM1 manufacture (Heijungs, 1992)	51
Table 3.7 LCA Characterisation factors for LAS production (Heijungs, 1992)	52
Table 3.8 LCA impact indicators for 1000 kg of AM1 manufacturing process (CML 1992)	54
Table 3.9 LCA impact indicators for 1000 kg of LAS manufacturing process (CML, 1992)	59

## Abstract

Recently designed Pepfactants<sup>®</sup> are an innovative type of nano-technological products, which could potentially replace conventional surfactants in broad-ranging applications. Currently, Pepfactants<sup>®</sup> technology is still in an initial design period at the laboratory scale. In order to develop the industrial-scale production of Pepfactants<sup>®</sup>, the design group has proposed simulated strategies for industrial-scale Pepfactants<sup>®</sup> manufacture and a desire to improve these strategies with regards to sustainability.

This project aimed to assist Pepfactants<sup>®</sup> designers to understand the environmental footprint of simulated Pepfactant<sup>®</sup> AM1 manufacturing process, using the methodology of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) – a comprehensive tool to quantify the environmental impacts from products and processes. To find the environmental shortcomings of the proposed manufacturing process for Pepfactant<sup>®</sup> AM1, the LCA outcomes were compared with published life cycle information of traditional chemical surfactant Lineal Alkylbenzene Sulphonate (LAS) production. Following LCA methodology, a life cycle inventory was compiled based on the simulated AM1 manufacture, which determined the environmental impact assessment for both AM1 and LAS production. In the LCA boundaries disregarding the usage of both surfactants, the quantitative LCA comparison results indicated that raw material and energy requirements of AM1 manufacture were much higher than LAS production, estimated to be 3,186 t/t AM1 against 31.1t/t LAS and 1,564,000MJ/t AM1 against 69,870MJ/t LAS respectively. Additionally, compared with LAS production, enormous water consumption (2,651 t/t AM1) and CO<sub>2</sub> emission (522 t/t AM1) were also shown to be severe environmental problems for AM1 manufacture. Furthermore, the AM1 manufacture presents apparent problems with environmental impacts of eutrophication, human toxicity, photochemical oxidant formation and acidification in comparison with LAS production.

Other than providing the optimisation point in the view of environmental impacts for Pepfactant<sup>®</sup> AM1 manufacture, the results of experimental work in this project

showed that as the surfactant concentration increases a greater foam height of Pepfactant® AM1 was achieved than when (from 7mm to 52mm between 15µM and 100µM) compared with LAS (from 8mm to 53mm between 31.3µM and 2,000µM) in the same aeration duration. This result demonstrated the great potential of AM1 to replace LAS based on the LCA functional unit – 1 tonne of products. The experiments results implied that 1 tonne of AM1 is able to have the same foaming ability as approximate 25 tonnes of LAS. Consequently, the environmental impacts from Pepfactant® AM1 manufacture are reduced by 25 times in the extended LCA boundaries linked to the quantitative usage comparison of these two surfactants.