Environmental Issues in Korea

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I. Environmental Issues

Environmental pollution has become a serious problem in recent years as a result of rapid industrialization. The environmental policies in Korea are in the midst of shifts from “end-of-pipe” towards “front-of-pipe” solutions.

Air quality management
- SO2 emissions have significantly decreased thanks to alternative fuels; however, the concentration levels of NOx, TSP, CO and HC are found to be on the rise due to the rapid increase in the number of automobiles on the streets.
- Attention is being paid to green house gases to prepare for UNFCCC.

Water quality management
- The levels of pollution in main streams river flows and water levels have been improving from their peak in 1988 because of the substantial investments made in environmental infrastructure.
- The water shortage in Korea may cause the concentration of the various pollutants to rise again. The government therefore switched its water management policy from the supply-oriented approach to demand-management in order to secure usable water.

Waste management
- Korea is facing to serious problems on the shortage of landfill sites. The policy for waste management is to expand sanitary waste treatment facilities, cut down the amounts of waste and promote recycling.
- To encourage recycling, the government implemented the Extended Producer Responsibility System (EPRS) which impose waste recycling obligations on producers or importers of high waste-generating products and packaging materials.

II. LCIA Status

- The researches related with LCIA are still rather weak in Korea. Most LCIA studies have been done by using European impact models for Korean products.
- It is essential to develop LCIA methods that consider Korean backgrounds. While most researches on LCIA methodology have dealt with the emission or mid-point level approaches, endpoint approaches will have to be investigated in the future, since endpoint based approaches are gaining popularity to improve the reliability.
- Several weighting methodologies have been used to produce weighting factors for each impact categories. Those included distance-to-target approach, Delphi-like panel method and AHP method.