

Written communication

CH4 emissions from effluents - Damian Dominguez 2023

Cited as: Dominguez 2023

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Date and type of communication:

Several E-mails and Skype calls (2023) are summarized in this written communication

Text:

Introduction

For Switzerland's GHGI submission 2023 CH₄ and N₂O emission estimates for 5D Wastewater treatment and discharge have been recalculated. Studies by Gruber (2021, 2022) and Vuna (2023) re-evaluated centralized and decentralized wastewater treatment in Switzerland, respectively. Gruber et al. evaluated data compiled by VSA/SVKI 2023, a report also known as "Kennzahlenbericht". On the same data basis and following IPCC (2019), emission estimates for CH₄ from effluents can be performed. Useful advice on valid assumptions as well as necessary hints are given here.

Centralized wastewater treatment – CH₄ emissions from effluent

Data for most Swiss centralized wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) are available for 2020 (VSA/SVKI 2023) showing chemical oxygen demand (COD) as measured in the outflow of WWTP ("AbFrachtCSB" given in kg COD / day) attributable to a known number of connected persons. An average for chemical oxygen demand (COD) of 10.24 g COD/(person*day) of treated water discharged can be derived. Together with the assumed inflow of 120 g COD/(person*day) (FOEN 2023) a C removal rate around 91.5 % can be deduced for Switzerland. For comparison: using data for COD inflow and COD outflow (VSA/SVKI 2023), scaled by the number of connected persons, results in a C removal rate of 93.9 %. This comparison supports the validity of the applied method. It is suggested to use measurements of the COD of the outflow only, because data quality for COD inflow to plants is considered lower, especially for small centralised wastewater treatment plants. The chosen approach is considered representative, as more than 84% of Swiss inhabitants (in 2020) are included in this estimate. In addition, all relevant (large) WWTPs are counted in.

On the same data base (VSA/SVKI 2023), different types of receiving waters can be attributed to and weighted with the number of connected persons. As a result, 84.5 % of treated water is fed to rivers and 15.5 % is fed to lakes. Accordingly, Tier 2 emission factors from IPCC (2019, Volume 5 Waste, [Chapter 6 Wastewater Treatment and Discharge](#), Table 6.3) can be used to estimate CH₄ emissions from effluents: for rivers “Discharge to aquatic environments other than reservoirs, lakes, and estuaries (Tier 2)”, for lakes “Discharge to reservoirs, lakes, and estuaries (Tier 2)”.

Decentralized wastewater treatment – CH₄ emissions from effluent

In order to calculate remaining organics in the outflow of small-scale wastewater treatment plants (SSWWTP) it is necessary to estimate the reduction potential for total organics in wastewater (COD) of such systems.

Concerning SSWWTP in Switzerland, it is reasonable to assume that COD reduction in primary treatment amounts to 30 %, as primary settlers are usually designed to achieve this elimination rate. The same fraction (30 %) is used by Vuna (2023) to estimate CH₄ emissions from SSWWTPs. Furthermore, it is required by Federal legislation that COD is reduced by 80 % in SSWWTPs with primary and secondary treatments (90% elimination of the BOD in the influent, respectively) (Swiss Confederation 1998b). The carbon removal rate of individual SSWWTP is regularly controlled by cantonal authorities and therefore considered plausible. Numbers presented here compare well to values given by IPCC (2019, Volume 5 Waste, [Chapter 6 Wastewater Treatment and Discharge](#), Table 6.6).

It is reasonable to assume that all SSWWTPs in Switzerland discharge into streams. Accordingly, the Tier 2 emission factor from IPCC (2019, Volume 5 Waste, [Chapter 6 Wastewater Treatment and Discharge](#), Table 6.3) for rivers can be used to estimate CH₄ emissions from effluents: “Discharge to aquatic environments other than reservoirs, lakes, and estuaries (Tier 2)”.

Transfer from COD to TOC

In order to derive total organic carbon (TOC) from chemical oxygen demand (COD) in typical wastewater the relation TOC = 1/3 COD is suggested based on reflections in Metcalf and Eddy (2003).

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Calculation of Swiss COD outflow of WWTP and differentiation of receiving waters:

[VSA Kennzahlen ARA 2019 2020_final_LDA.xlsx](#)

Attachments:

Linked data and calculation files are available on request.