

Sheet 25 - Reduce my carbon footprint

Reduce by half by 2030

The longer you wait to do it, the harder it is to do! The UN has just pointed out that we have lost a decade (2009-2019), during which the States " *collectively failed* ", and the emissions of greenhouse gases have continued to increase (+ 3.2% between 2017 and 2018). To reach the goal of the Paris agreement (well below 2 ° C and if possible 1.5 ° C) within the next 10 years, we must succeed in [reducing emissions by 45 %](#), which is a considerable effort. And we will have to reach neutrality in 2050, knowing that the last percentage points are the hardest to win. Greenhouse gases are mainly CO₂ (lifespan 100 years), methane (25 times more powerful, due in particular to ruminant farming, lifespan 10 years), and N₂O , nitrous oxide (300 times more powerful, due in particular to fertilizers). For convenience, we aggregate everything into "CO₂ equivalent". Carbon neutrality includes the possibility of capturing CO₂ emissions that cannot be reduced. However, this will only be possible, just and viable if the emissions have been greatly reduced.

Stop emitting as soon as possible

Apart from a small portion which is absorbed by plants and seas, everything that has already been emitted as CO₂ in the atmosphere remains there and suddenly will increase the temperature every decade a little more. Every single kilogram of CO₂ that we add today to the atmosphere will contribute to the rising temperatures already programmed. We therefore need to stop emitting CO as quickly as possible!

We, the biggest polluters, first

Today every French or Belgian emits on average 10 to 12 tonnes of CO₂ per year. To have no impact on the climate, each one must reduce their emissions to a level of 1.5 to 2 tonnes. This corresponds to what the plants can absorb. Each one of us can stop emissions; there is no need to wait for the others. A Bangladeshi emits on average 1.3 tonnes, and yet they are the ones bearing the brunt of global warming, losing their land by floods and salinization, because of rising in sea levels. Furthermore, some countries will take longer to reduce their emissions, so if we want the overall result to be achieved, we must do it as soon as possible.

How many tonnes of CO₂ per year do I emit?

We recommend the [WWF Switzerland calculator](#). It's easy, it takes 20 minutes, with around 30 questions. This can be done by several, or even at a community meeting. With each response, you can see the carbon impact. You will need to know the area and the number of people in the community. At the end, you will have the bonus of a small audit which will show you where you can make efforts. Of course it is a simulation, with approximations, targeted for families, and marked by the Swiss context. Note also that part of the emissions are beyond our individual control, being linked to the community (see interesting study by [Carbone 4](#)). It is a very good way to become aware of what CO₂ emissions mean in concrete terms, and to link all these general figures with our daily life. This can help everyone to set reduction targets, in line with the overall perspective.

It's up to you. Today you can make decisions which in ten years time can half the omissions linked to your lifestyle. You will also be doing your bit for carbon neutrality.