

Everything you wanted to know about carbon offsetting (and might not have thought to ask)

In the last few decades, "climate change" has become a widely used term for explaining the impact of human activities on the environment. It's safe to assume that, in our modern world, most people have a firm grasp on what it means for our planet. "Carbon Offsetting" on the other hand, is an equally important yet considerably more abstract term that's often left out when we break down climate facts. So here's a simple breakdown of what carbon offsetting actually involves, how easy it is to do it and how it can have benefits that reach far beyond the environment.

Every time you use a resource that relies on the burning of fossil fuels (like turning on lights, driving in a car or taking a flight) you are creating greenhouse gas emissions that lock heat into our atmosphere and oceans. Our carbon-intensive habits are a major contributor to climate change and therefore it is important that we take action to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions we cause. But sometimes we can't avoid creating emissions, especially if it's a flight we know we have to take. This is where carbon offsetting can step in.

Put simply, "carbon offsetting" is a process which allows you to invest in a climate protection project or initiative to mitigate the carbon emissions that you produce. The project can be located anywhere in the world, and involves anything from [planting trees to sequester carbon](#) to replacing [carbon intensive fossil fuel power with renewable wind-powered energy](#). "Offsets" simply refer to the way the project's activity results in the reduction of carbon emissions and are quantified in tons of carbon emissions reduced and avoided. The projects are strictly monitored and can only reduce emissions if they receive revenue from the sale of offsets; hence, you are contributing to *additional* climate action.

So by investing in a climate protection project (known as "the purchase of carbon credits"), you can facilitate practices that reduce carbon emissions somewhere else in the world, contributing to emission reductions on a global scale. Thus, depending on how many carbon credits you decide to buy, your own carbon emissions from "that flight" are neutralised or "offset" in the process.

It's a system for creating new pathways within the economy that support sustainable growth while providing an immediate solution for the emission of harmful greenhouse gases warming up our planet. How good is that!

But carbon offsetting isn't just about taking responsibility for your environmental footprint and supporting sustainable development. There is a complex and highly regulated system of standards in place to ensure that projects create the most tangible sustainable outcomes possible.

Project standards set criteria by which projects are chosen and evaluated, and differ depending on whether the carbon credits are traded in the voluntary or compliance carbon market. Standards normally include criteria for the type of project, the project's impact on local communities, and the additional emission reductions it contributes to. For example, voluntary

standards like [Voluntary Carbon Standard](#) (VCS) ensure a project is really producing the amount of carbon that it claims to be. The recently launched [Gold Standard for Global Goals](#) (GSGG) is a label that projects can claim when they meet at least three of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), including SDG 13 (Climate Action), outlined further by the Paris Agreement.

For example, the VCS-verified [Kariba REDD+ forest protection project](#) in Zimbabwe (which also ranks as an LT&C-Example) reduces carbon emissions, prevents animal poaching and ensures ecosystem preservation through a range of holistic reforestation practices. But by doing so, it also creates jobs, better health care, education opportunities and new income streams for local communities, improving the economy and the livelihoods in the project area – all of this made possible because of funding from carbon credits!

So if you're taking that flight, and you want to reduce your carbon emissions *and* create better opportunities for people living in developing communities. [Get in touch with us!](#)