Climate Change Jargon Busters

In today's digital age, we are inundated with a deluge of information about climate change from various sources on the internet and the media. While this heightened awareness undoubtedly represents a positive step towards addressing the climate crisis, it is also overwhelming, particularly for businesses seeking to act but are unsure where to start.

Fortunately, we have prepared a set of "jargon busters" designed to help IP businesses and professionals navigate the complex landscape of climate change information, equipping you with the knowledge need to make informed decisions.

Adaptation: Adjusting to the actual or expected future climate. The goal however is to act now to reduce our future vulnerability to the harmful effects of climate change.

Carbon Accounting: Refers to a wide range of techniques that are used to estimate how much carbon and other greenhouse gases a business or actor emits.

Carbon Offset: Carbon offsetting is where a company can purchase units (carbon credits), to compensate for greenhouse gas emissions released through their activities. Carbon offsetting should be used as a last resort where organisations have been unable to avoid carbon intensive activities, operate more efficiently or replace or mitigate any residual emissions.

Carbon Negative: Carbon negative is when an organisation/business/product removes more carbon than it emits.

Carbon Neutral: Carbon neutral is the term used to define a company who has measured their scopes 1 & 2 emissions (as a minimum) and offset these emissions using gold standard verified offsetting schemes, thus removing the same amount of GHG emissions that they emit into the atmosphere.

Circular Economy: A circular economy is based on the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. Basically, a system where nothing really gets thrown away, and everything is re-used and recycled. Also known as a ‘closed-loop’ economy.

Climate Change: This encompasses the long-term changes we are seeing to weather conditions and the natural world, driven by global warming and the human activities which are causing it.

Climate Resilience: Our ability to deal with climate change's effects.

COP: COP stands for 'Conference of Parties' and the Parties are the 197 nations and territories that have signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. They meet once a year to decide how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally, and tackle climate change.

Decarbonisation: The process of removing the emissions associated with activities or sectors. For example, there is a current focus on decarbonising electricity generation by phasing out coal and gas plants and building renewable sources such as offshore wind farms.

Emissions: This is the release of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere, mainly from burning fossil fuels, such as coal, gas and oil. Livestock and changes to how we use land, including cutting down or burning forests, industrial processes such as cement making, and refrigerants are among other sources of greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activity.

Emissions Footprint: The total set of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused directly and indirectly by an individual event, organisation, or product expressed as Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO2e). A more accurate term would be Green House Gas (GHG) Emissions Footprint.

Environmental Injustice: A phrase underscoring the broad idea that the people who did the least to cause climate change and pollution are often the most at risk from its consequences. For example, developing nations have lower emissions but they are most at risk from climate damage, whilst the richer, more developed countries account for the most carbon emissions and are affected less.

GHG: Greenhouse Gases are gases in the Earth's atmosphere that trap heat. They let sunlight pass through the atmosphere, but they prevent some of the heat that the sunlight brings from leaving the atmosphere.

These have increased at a rapid rate in recent years. The main greenhouse gases are:

- Water vapor
- Carbon dioxide
- Methane
- Ozone
- Nitrous oxide
- Chlorofluorocarbons

According to ISO Net Zero Guidelines, we should consider all greenhouse gases, not just carbon, when reducing emissions. Additionally, our efforts should also focus on preserving biodiversity and promoting equity for all stakeholders whenever possible.

Greenwashing: Greenwashing is when an organisation promotes themselves and/or their goods and services in a way that sounds more eco-friendly or environmentally safe than they actually are, so that consumers who care about the environment believe they are ethical, sustainable, and eco-friendly. Greenwashing promotes unstainable practices and is a huge reputational risk for organisations, given customers increasingly expect companies to play their part in saving the environment.

GHG Reductions: Actions that reduce the quantity of GHGs attributable to an entity or actor.

GHG Removals: Actions that remove GHGs from the atmosphere relative to baseline. Some examples include afforestation, carbon capture and storage and marine fertilisation.

Like for Like: When a source of emissions and an emissions sink correspond in terms of their warming impact, and in terms of the timescale and durability of carbon storage.

Mitigation: Actions that reduce the volume of GHG's in the atmosphere.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): An outline of what each country has resolved to do to reduce its emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, as part of the United Nations process for tackling climate change. These plans are submitted every five years.

Net Zero: Net zero is the removal and reduction of all possible emissions (realistically) from business operations with only the remaining residue emissions being offset by a verified scheme. Net zero is similar in principle to carbon neutrality. However, with net zero, a company is committed to achieving net zero emissions across all its operations and supply chains (scopes 1, 2 & 3).

Scopes 1, 2 & 3: Greenhouse gas emissions are categorised into three groups or 'Scopes' by the most widely used international accounting tool, the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol.

- Scope 1 covers direct emissions from your owned or controlled sources. Scope 1 emissions include emissions associated with fuel combustion in boilers, furnaces and transport.
- Scope 2 covers indirect emissions from the generation of the electricity, steam, heating and cooling your business purchases/consumes.
- Scope 3 includes all other indirect emissions that occur across your company's value chain. Scope 3 emissions can include leased assets, investments, use of sold products, franchises, business travel to name a few.

There are currently 15 categories of Scope 3 emissions as defined by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. They are currently:

1. Purchased Goods and Services
2. Capital Goods
3. Fuel- and Energy-Related Activities (not Included in Scope 1 or Scope 2)
4. Upstream Transportation and Distribution
5. Waste Generated in Operations
6. Business Travel
7. Employee Commuting
8. Upstream Leased Assets
9. Downstream Transportation and Distribution
10. Processing of Sold Products
11. Use of Sold Products
12. End-of-Life Treatment of Sold Products

13. Downstream Leased Assets
14. Franchises
15. Investments

To achieve this long-term temperature goal, countries must reach global peaking of GHG emissions as soon as possible. The Paris Agreement is a multilateral binding agreement that brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.

For many companies, the majority of their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and cost reduction opportunities lie outside their own operations. there is an increasing focus on being able to understand your Scope 3 emissions.

UN Sustainable Development Goals: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". The SDGs were adopted in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030.

Paris Agreement: The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 countries at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016. The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels.

Paris-Aligned: Targets are considered 'Paris-aligned' if they are in line with what the latest climate science deems necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement – limiting global warming to well-below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C, with no or low overshoot.

Science-Based: Targets: are considered 'science-based' if they are in line with what the latest climate science deems necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement – limiting global warming to well-below 2°C above preindustrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C, with no or low overshoot.

About CAFA

Climate Action for Associations (CAFA) provides the information, guidance and certified solutions that membership organisations need internally and to support their members they represent. CAFA has a tailored service to help members of trade associations to measure, report and reduce their emissions in line with science-based targets.

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