



for a living planet[®]

Climate Compensation

Investing in a cleaner future



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Hot showers, car trips, holiday flights, home heating – all of these everyday activities go hand in hand with the emission of greenhouse gases.

One of these gases is carbon dioxide (CO₂), which is the main cause of the Greenhouse Effect. If there are large quantities of CO₂ in the air, this works like a blanket around the earth. The heat generated by the sun's rays is trapped in the earth's atmosphere and cannot escape into space. This results in higher temperatures on earth, which leads to climate change. This has already caused sea levels to rise, polar caps to melt, disastrous floods and extended periods of drought. If we do not take action, one third of all animal and plant species are threatened with extinction before the end of this century.

Fortunately, we can personally ensure that we emit less CO₂. We can achieve a great deal by using energy conscientiously, saving it where we can and opting for clean energy alternatives where possible. In areas where this is not possible, climate compensation initiatives can help to ensure a better climate.



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What is climate compensation?



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Climate compensation literally means compensating for the emission of CO₂. This can be done, for example, by investing in cleaner energy alternatives. Businesses and government institutions can do this, but individual consumers can also contribute. For instance, by installing a solar energy system or a biogas installation. By generating clean energy, projects can earn so-called 'CO₂ credits'. These credits represent the amount of clean energy that is generated without emitting CO₂. These credits, which are also known as certificates, may be purchased by businesses and institutions seeking to compensate for their impact on the environment. The credits can then be used to compensate for emissions caused by, for instance, a plane trip. In this way, CO₂ emissions are cancelled out by investing in alternative, cleaner energy.



The Gold Standard
Premium quality carbon credits

The Gold Standard is a quality mark for climate compensation projects that meet the very strictest criteria. This seal of approval was established in 2003 by a group of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the World Wildlife Fund.

Projects are awarded the Gold Standard if they continually generate clean energy. These projects are usually located in developing countries, where energy is generated by means of solar panels, hydroelectric plants, windmills, geothermic systems (that use the earth's own heat) or biomass systems. These clean energy projects are usually located in regions that would otherwise have no access to electricity or gas. Apart from the production of clean energy, these projects also strive to ensure sustainable development in these regions. It is essential that the local population benefits from such projects. For instance, a local school may be supplied with electricity to run computers, or a project may create job opportunities for the local community.



Why the Gold Standard?

In addition to Gold Standard projects, there are other climate compensation initiatives. However, to obtain Gold Standard certification, projects must meet strict criteria and undergo a rigorous certification procedure.

In addition to generating clean energy and contributing to sustainable local development, such projects should also be 'additional' – in the sense that the project would not have been realised without investments made via compensation schemes. In short, the project must literally have 'added value'. The allocation and payment of Gold Standard credits is closely monitored. Each credit may only be used once.



To obtain Gold Standard certification, a project must meet the following criteria:

1. It must produce **sustainable energy** or **energy-efficient technology**.
2. It must be **'additional'**.
3. It must contribute to **sustainable development**.



Why not plant trees?

The Gold Standard certifies clean energy projects only. That means it does not certify projects that plant trees to compensate for CO₂ emissions. Although trees do absorb CO₂ from the earth's atmosphere, they also release it when they die or are chopped down. Consequently, tree-planting projects offer no certainty, in the long term, that they will actually compensate for CO₂ emissions. Moreover, tree-planting projects sometimes lead to controversy locally, because of the amount of land required to plant them, which may result in local farmers having to forfeit their fields.



Wind energy project on Bonaire

As advised by the World Wildlife Fund, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines invests in projects that are Gold Standard certified. KLM's CO₂ZERO service compensates for the CO₂ emissions of its passenger services by investing in a wind energy project on the island of Bonaire in the Netherlands Antilles.



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The windmill park is part of a large-scale project on Bonaire, which ultimately aims to supply the entire island (5,000 homes and businesses) with clean energy. Construction of the windmill park began in January 2009 and the first wind energy is set to be generated at the end of 2009. The windmills generate 23 megawatts of electricity, which will reduce CO₂ emissions by 30,000 tons a year. Construction of the windmill park created 20 new jobs. Management of the park will eventually create four new jobs for the local community. The project will also provide local people with tips on how to save energy.

How can I contribute?

You too can compensate by way of Gold Standard projects. If you plan to fly, you could opt to do so with an airline like KLM, whose CO₂ZERO compensation service enables you to invest in sustainable energy projects that have the Gold Standard seal of approval.



Here are some more tips for saving energy:

- Travel by public transport or bicycle, instead of by car
- Switch to clean energy alternatives
- Install a solar-powered geyser or solar panels
- Buy energy-efficient household appliances.