

CARBON OFFSETTING: ANYTHING BUT NEUTRAL!

THREE MULTINATIONALS'
NET-ZERO TARGETS SERVING
CLIMATE INACTION.



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CCFD-TERRE SOLIDAIRE REPORT
OCTOBER 2021



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This climate justice campaign guide is published by the Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement - Terre Solidaire. Publication Director: Sylvie Bukhari-de Pontual. Text: Myrto Tiliadaki, Maureen Jorand. Proofreading: Swann Bommier, Clémentine Baldon, Jean-François Dubost, Manuèle Derolez, Brice Mackosso. Translation: Anna Savage. Edition: Matthieu Chanut. Graphic design: M&C Saatchi Little Stories / Figures Libres. Printing: Sipap-Oudin.

Photos: p. 2 Eric M-ENCRE NOIRE/CCFD-Terre Solidaire, p. 12 Grafissimo, p. 17 Shutterstock/CCFD-Terre Solidaire, p. 21, p. 22 4FR, p. 28 Björn Forenius.

Photos from our reports with our partners: cover, p.6: Éric Garault/CCFD-Terre Solidaire, p.21 William Dupuy/CCFD-Terre Solidaire, p. 27, 34-35 and 44-45 Jean-Claude Gérez/CCFD-Terre Solidaire.

Report printed on a 100% PEFC medium, contributing to sustainable forest management. PEFC (Program for the endorsement of the forest certification schemes)

Reference: 807 02 21

Legal deposit: October 2021 

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A GLOBAL CHALLENGE FOR HUMANITY.



**SYLVIE BUKHARI-DE PONTUAL,
PRESIDENT OF CCFD-TERRE SOLIDAIRE**

Climate change is a global challenge for humanity. Short and long-term actions intertwine. In addition to repeated floods, huge fires, and extensive heat waves, we are also witnessing biodiversity collapse, scarce resources in various parts of the world, and weakening ecosystems. The dignity of humanity is inevitably undermined just as human suffering is amplified. The most basic rights, particularly the right to food, have been profoundly undermined for billions of people.

This unprecedented situation faced by our society requires drawing the consequences of the Earth's degradation. It implies a profound rereading and questioning of the promotion of lifestyles based on the dogma of infinite growth, on a planet with well-defined limits.

The challenge is global because, alongside this review of past mistakes, looking for short or long-term solutions must comply with a fundamental ethic: ensuring that the solutions' proposals and their effects by no means call into question human dignity and its related rights. This quest for justice – climate justice – is at the crossroads of international solidarity, social justice, and political ecology.

Under the seal of equity, climate justice requires taking into account, both in the findings and solutions, the impact on present and future generations, the historical responsibility for climate change of the countries of the North, the common and differentiated responsibility between States with unequal technical and financial capacities, and the mechanisms for redistributing responsibilities within each State. This approach is essential to leave no one on the sideline of now mandatory transitions.

Like Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, CCFD-Terre Solidaire endorses the following statement saying that "a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor".

This report is part of the effort to achieve climate justice. It breaks down the logics at work in carbon offset policies implemented to reach net-zero emissions. It warns of the threats posed to the human rights of populations in the South by the political and economic choices of public and private actors in the North. It identifies responsibilities and formulates proposals for a just and inclusive ecological transition.

This report claims that no one, within their own rights and environment, should be reduced to an adjustment variable for the comfort and ambitions of others. It is a call for better international solidarity on this planet where "everything is connected".

CARBON OFFSETTING: ANYTHING BUT NEUTRAL!

The climate crisis is real, affecting the entire planet and still escalating. Year after year, scientists publish reports tirelessly highlighting the fact that we are not on track. To avoid an intensification of climate change, all these reports reiterate that we must immediately and drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

As part of the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015, States pledged to keep global warming below 1.5 to 2°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100. Six years later, the results are not good enough. In response, several actors, first and foremost corporations and States, are increasing plans and announcements all focused on **net-zero – the ultimate target – and carbon offsets – the essential lever to reach it.**

For several years, CCFD-Terre Solidaire has been documenting what lies behind carbon offset schemes, especially when it involves using the "land sector" (forests, agricultural soils). This report reveals the true face of carbon offsetting, a kind of magical thinking blooming in corporate climate schemes.

Within the transport, energy, and agriculture sectors – accounting for two-thirds of global greenhouse gas emissions – we identified three companies that have placed carbon offsetting as part of a fundamental aspect of their climate strategy.

The goal is to illustrate how these companies, which claim to be carbon neutral on paper, take ownership of carbon offsetting and what advantages are drawn from it: carbon neutrality, in theory.



TotalEnergies and the flip side of net-zero

TotalEnergies has pledged it will reach net-zero emissions by 2050. While pursuing high-emitting activities, the company is committed to developing fast-track carbon offset projects through technological approaches of which the effectiveness is widely contested (Northern Lights Project) and with tree planting projects, such as in the Republic of Congo on over 40,000 hectares of the Batéké Plateau, a territory with rich and essential biodiversity for local and indigenous peoples.



Nespresso has a sinking climate policy

The company communicates proactively on the carbon neutrality of each one of its cups of coffee to seduce consumers who are increasingly sensitive to the impact of their consumption. However, the company is focusing a large part of its net-zero policy on carbon offsetting and not actually on reducing its current emissions. Planting trees does not guarantee a profound transformation of agricultural and food systems, which in turn have a significant impact on the climate.



Air France is not flying to the rescue of the climate

The weight of the aviation sector on greenhouse gas emissions is obvious and documented. Yet, no major actions are being initiated to reduce these emissions. Change of on-board tableware, digitisation of pilot manuals, Air France will stop at nothing! Not even resorting to its passengers and their good conscience. Through donations to an association co-created by Air France, passengers are invited to support carbon offsetting projects that the company can include in its climate reporting thanks to French taxpayers.

Carbon offsetting, as regarded and already implemented by many multinational corporations, is a real impasse from a climate, environment, and human rights point of view.



Offsetting is not reducing: carbon compensation strategies (natural or technological) are a masquerade for GHG emissions to stay exactly as they are (or change ever so slightly). Faced with the known effects of GHG emissions, offsetting offers a neutralisation policy, of which the outcome, for its part, is quite unknown! The quest to achieve net-zero serves only as a disguise to ensure the status quo of climate inaction.



Carbon vs. human rights and food sovereignty: tens of millions of hectares would be needed to satisfy the ferocious appetite for offsetting via carbon sequestration. This land rush is irretrievably likely to lead to increased financialisation of nature. As a result, large swathes of territory are put in a cage to the detriment of local populations, their lifestyles, and their food sovereignty.

We are called upon to take important and integrated measures to ensure that climate and social justice are considered hand in hand. No solutions will be found in gaining control over nature to achieve a destructive growth threatening humanity nor in financialising nature to create new profit expectations for the few to the detriment of the many.

Only a collective systemic approach to truly reduce emissions and defend human rights and biodiversity will ensure climate justice.



01.

**NET-ZERO
& OFFSETTING
ALIBIS
FOR INACTION.**

CLIMATE CRISIS: THE URGENCY TO ACT

The climate crisis is clearly present, there is no doubt about it. The summer of 2021 alone was a cocktail of its consequences: heatwaves in Europe and Maghreb, fires ravaging hundreds of thousands of hectares in Greece or Bolivia, torrential rains causing unprecedented floods in Germany and Belgium.

Beyond these extreme weather events – often described as out of the ordinary even though their frequency and intensity continue to increase – temperature records are sadly broken, year after year. According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the 2011-2020 decade was the warmest ever observed, with records all over the world in 2020¹. That same year, the average temperature worldwide was about 14.9°C, 1.2°C higher than the pre-industrial level (1850-1900). And 2021 is no exception since we are already talking about the hottest summer ever in Europe. The impacts of the climate crisis in the medium term are also becoming increasingly clearer. For example, the drought episodes suffered in recent years in the south of Madagascar, are one of the key factors in the major food crisis the island is currently experiencing².

Human activities are responsible for these climate disruptions. This too is beyond doubt, as the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) strongly points out in its latest report published in August 2021³. The first part of the sixth assessment report points to the intensification and magnitude of climate disasters associated with an unprecedented warming rate in the past 2,000 years. This is intensifying the risk that certain thresholds will be exceeded, leading to a runaway reaction and irreparable consequences due to constantly increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

NET-ZERO: WE MUST NOT BE FOOLED!

Carbon neutrality implies a balance between greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon pulled out from the air through carbon sinks⁴. Achieving net-zero emissions requires two levers: on the one hand reducing emissions at source and on the other hand offsetting remaining emissions by carbon sequestration. However, as no clear distribution between these two levers has been defined⁵, companies, regardless of their sector (banks, agri-food, fossil fuels, etc.), have seized on the concept of neutrality, essentially focusing on carbon offsetting.

Thus, *"without drastically, quickly, and sustainably reducing our emissions, limiting warming to 1.5°C will be beyond our reach"*⁴ [translated by AS], challenges Valérie Masson-Delmotte, co-president of the IPCC.

Everyone is therefore called upon to act, without delay, to try to reverse the trend. States are first in line with the multiplication of climate plans or policies, and other announcements following one another as international events pass by – like the Biden summit in April 2021. Companies are also at the top of the list, some of which sometimes emit more than certain States!

Efforts must be focused on particularly emitting sectors for which initiating a genuine and profound transition is crucial. The energy, agriculture, and transport sectors are the main priority as they respectively account for 35%, 24%, and 14% of greenhouse gas (GHG)⁵ emissions, representing two-thirds of global emissions.

**ACCORDING TO
THE WORLD
METEOROLOGICAL
ORGANIZATION
(WMO), THE 2011-
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THE WARMEST
EVER OBSERVED,
WITH RECORDS
ALL OVER THE
WORLD IN 2020.**

Neutrality has also inspired many climate plans and policies worldwide, from the European Union to the United States, China, and Brazil.

This crazy race to reach net-zero has led main emitters to set "carbon offsetting" as a valid solution instead of radically reducing the source of emissions head-on. Carbon offsetting is based on financing projects supposed to promote carbon sequestration. In exchange, carbon credits are obtained which are then integrated into the company's environmental footprint.

Even though these initiatives are criticised by many scientists, they are still multiplying at the risk of jeopardising ecological transition, delaying any real action in relation to the climate crisis, and referring to forests and land solely through a carbon perspective.

Such a vision is a bearer of numerous dangers for the climate, biodiversity, and respect of human rights. The limits of carbon offsetting are first and foremost scientific. One tonne of greenhouse gas emissions is not equivalent to one tonne of "compensated" carbon. Let's take the example of tree planting. While a company's CO₂ emissions have an immediate effect on the climate and persist in the atmosphere for hundreds of years, the ability of newly planted trees to absorb CO₂ shifts in time (as the tree grows). It is also non-permanent since the captured CO₂ can be released (forest fires, tree cutting, ploughing, natural disasters, etc.).

Furthermore, the way of measuring captured carbon is highly complex and makes its role unreliable for the climate. In addition, natural carbon sinks are seeing their sequestration potential decrease with climate change. By 2035, African or Amazonian forest sinks could become carbon sources instead of sinks. The IPCC⁸ points out that there is a strong challenge around the protection and restoration of ecosystems and that only a small part of our efforts can be based on land that is not intended to offset our current levels of emissions.

THE BIGGEST GREENHOUSE GAS EMITTERS



Energy
35%



Agriculture
24%



Transport
14%

of greenhouse gas emissions.

**THIS REPRESENTS
TWO-THIRDS
OF GLOBAL EMISSIONS.**

Source: IPCC 2014 - Working Group III contribution to the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)

Finally, without providing a structural response to the climate crisis, these practices also entail risks for the food sovereignty of populations. The large-scale development of carbon offsetting through the land sector could lead to increased financialisation of soils and accelerate land grabbing and privatisation to the detriment of local populations.

CARBON OFFSETTING: A LUCRATIVE GREENWASHING PRACTICE!

Net-zero and carbon offsetting offer a number of benefits to companies placing them at the heart of their climate strategies.

First of all, it suggests an awareness on behalf of the company as well as an implementation of actions to mitigate the impacts generated. In fact, it is a decoy since offsetting does not neutralise greenhouse gas emissions.

The solution does not lie in hiding emissions by planting trees to try and capture carbon on the other side of the planet or by injecting carbon underground, through underdeveloped technologies of which the effectiveness is debated. Above all, it turns attention away from the necessary and urgent transformation needed by current production systems threatening the climate, biodiversity, and populations.

Offsetting also helps companies to go green in their communication strategy to relieve their customer of guilt, especially among citizens who are increasingly sensitive to environmental and climate issues. Promises of so-called "neutral" products are blooming as are offers made to consumers to "offset" their impact. By using often poorly understood wording or concepts, this type of communication gives the illusion of an absence of negative impact and, worse, that their purchase is good for the climate!

Finally, for more and more private and financial actors, carbon offsetting is presented today as a real economic opportunity. This is reflected through the Task Force on Scaling Voluntary Carbon Markets, in which many companies with a high climate impact participate, including Nestlé, Total, Shell, Easyjet, Eni, and Unilever.

This initiative should make it possible to promote the exchange of carbon credits, in particular from offsetting projects. The main argument highlighted as it launched in

2020, was the size of the market set to grow in the coming years. The McKinsey consulting firm estimated that the annual global demand for carbon credits will reach 1.5 to 2 gigatonnes of CO₂ by 2030 and 7 to 13 gigatonnes by 2050. That is a 15-fold increase by 2030 and a 100-fold increase by 2050. Depending on the different price scenarios, the size of this market for voluntary offsetting could reach between 5 billion and 50 billion dollars in 2030⁹.

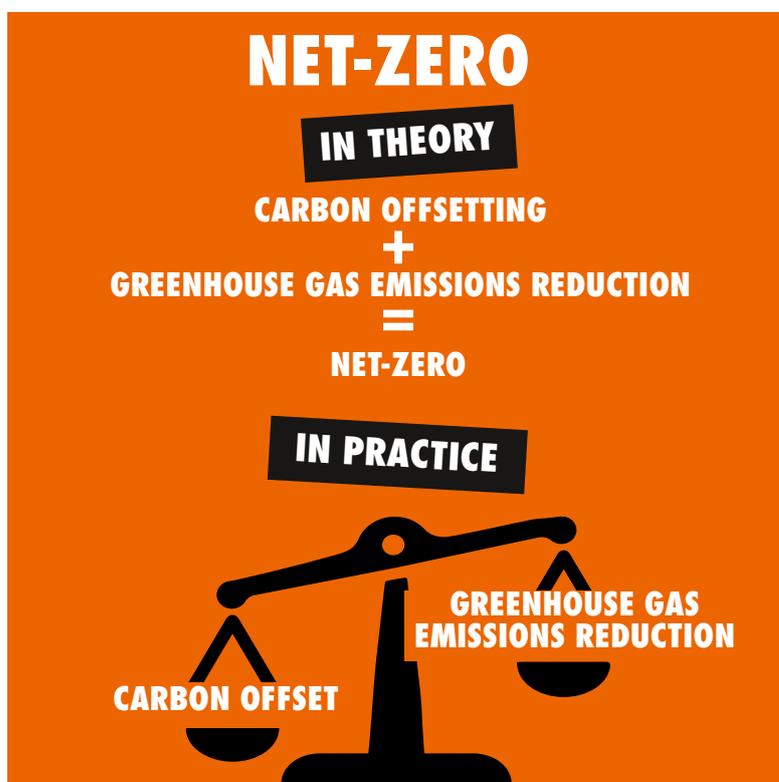
The need of these big companies for carbon credits to resort to offsetting is enormous. Three of these companies alone (Shell, Eni, Nestlé) would need 20 million hectares of land per year for their offsetting cumulated needs, the equivalent of virtually all forest land in Malaysia¹⁰ every year!

More recently, four banks – in England, Canada, Australia, and Brazil – launched the Project Carbon¹¹ platform to promote and streamline carbon credit trading. New announcements of initiatives promoting carbon offsetting and markets are expected to increase in the coming months.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END?

The net-zero approach, especially for companies, is increasingly being challenged.

In France, the ADEME (Agency for the Environment and Energy Management) stated in an opinion made public in early 2021¹², that carbon neutrality is only valid at global level and in a political coordination of States which must collectively allow the achievement of this objective. However, it is not relevant on any other scale (sub-national territory, organisations – companies, associations, communities, etc. –, product or service, etc.). This clearly calls into question companies' net-zero objectives, particularly the most emitting multinationals. According to the ADEME, seeking *'to apply arithmetic carbon neutrality on another scale generates methodological and ethical biases that are somewhat unacceptable'* [translated by AS]. Reducing emissions at source must remain a top priority.



Like the ADEME, the United Nations Environment Program states that the priority must be given to genuine emission reductions: *"If we are serious about averting catastrophic planetary changes, we need to reduce emissions by 45 per cent by 2030. Trees planted today can't grow fast enough to achieve this goal. And carbon offset projects will never be able to curb the emissions growth, while reducing overall emissions, if coal power stations continue to be built and petrol cars continue to be bought, and our growing global population continues to consume as it does today."*¹³

The main risk of carbon neutrality essentially relying on offset schemes is that it will turn attention away from necessary and profound transformations needed in our ways of producing and consuming and thus promote immobilism¹⁴.

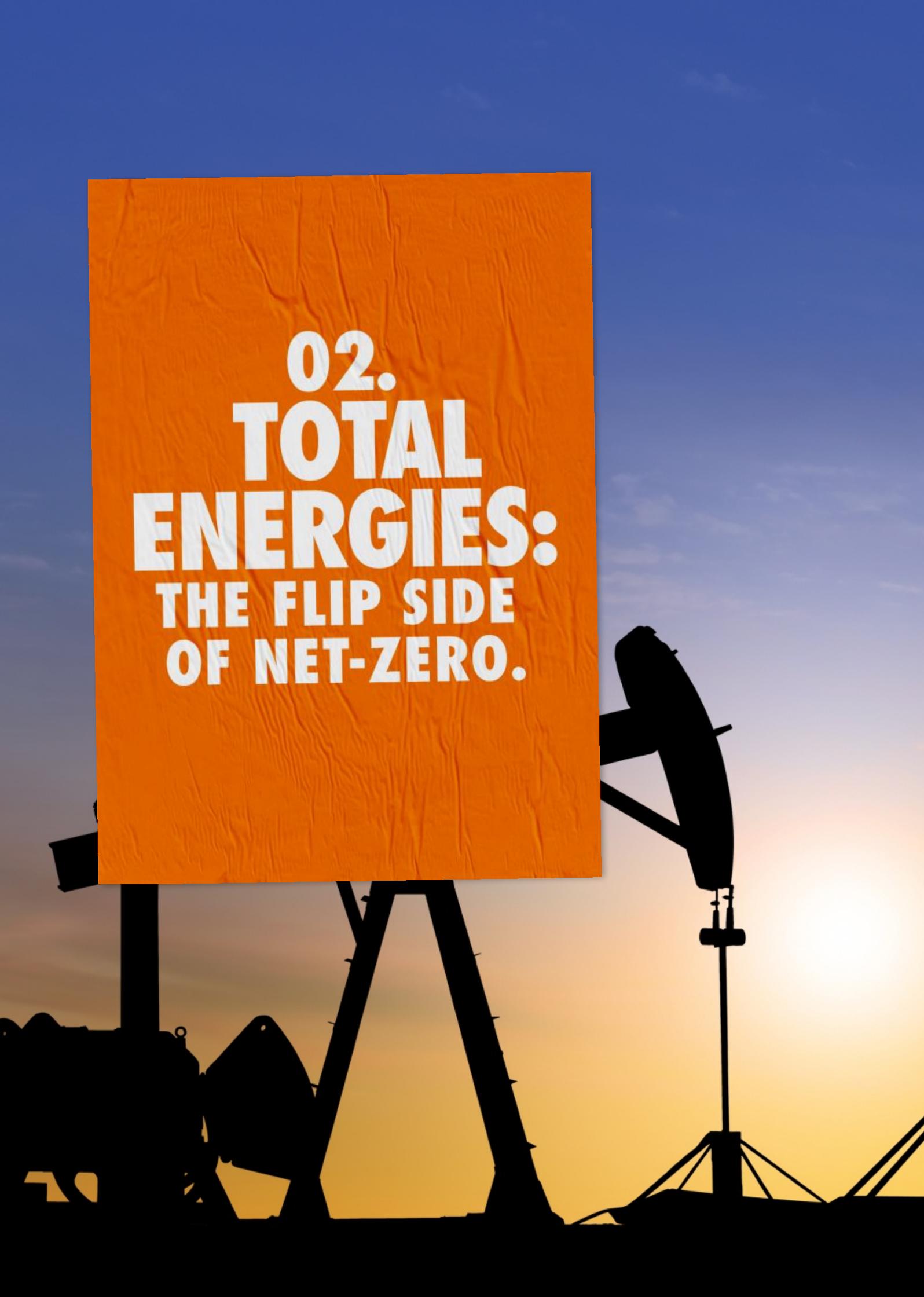
Yet, in the face of the climate emergency, it is no longer possible to maintain inaction under the guise of magic feel-better solutions.

Shell recently paid the price of this in the Netherlands. Leader in the oil sector, the company has set the target of reaching net-zero while continuing to massively invest in fossil fuels!

To achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, Shell wants to offset 120 million tonnes of CO₂ from its activities by planting forests. This represents 12 million hectares by 2030, equivalent to three times the size of the Netherlands¹⁵. Civil society organisations sued the company and the decision taken in May 2021¹⁶ was crystal clear. Shell's climate policy is not in line with the objectives set by the Paris Agreement and the European Union, and the company must take steps to ensure a substantial 45% emission reduction by 2030.

Another element pointed out in September 2021, this time by the Dutch advertising regulatory authority, is the "Drive Carbon Neutral" campaign initiated by the company in England and the Netherlands¹⁷. Drivers were offered to pay a supplement allowing them to contribute to a carbon offset program. Shell was forced to put an end to this offer.

We must not be fooled: carbon offsetting lulls us into thinking that the situation will improve without changing working practices in any way. However, only by reducing greenhouse gas emissions will it be possible to limit climate warming and ensure a brighter horizon for humanity and future generations. Implementing proactive policies and changing both our production and consumption models are urgent and necessary conditions.

The image features a sunset sky with a gradient from blue to orange. In the foreground, the silhouettes of several wind turbines are visible against the bright sun. A large, orange, textured rectangular overlay is positioned in the upper left, containing white text. The text reads:

02.
TOTAL
ENERGIES:
THE FLIP SIDE
OF NET-ZERO.



TotalEnergies has pledged net-zero emissions by 2050. To do so, while pursuing high-emitting activities, the company is committed to developing fast-track offsetting projects.

A NET-ZERO TARGET LACKING CLARITY AND AMBITION

LIMITED AMBITIONS WITH NO REAL IMPACT

To reach net-zero by 2050¹⁸, TotalEnergies has set a net-zero goal for its on-site GHG emissions (scope 1 and 2¹⁹). These emissions represent 10% to 15% of the group's total emissions. While TotalEnergies plans to increase its oil and gas production by nearly 50% between 2015 and 2025²⁰, over the same period it has set an intermediate target of reducing emissions from its oil and gas facilities from 46 Mt CO₂ in 2015 to 40 Mt CO₂ by 2025, representing a 15% reduction.

This will be achieved by improving the energy efficiency of its facilities by 1% per year, eliminating routine flaring²¹, electrifying its processes, and reducing methane emissions. It has also set a target of reducing net emissions by 2030 from its oil and gas operations on scopes 1 and 2 by at least 40% compared to 2015.

However, the majority of TotalEnergies' emissions are at scope 3 (85% to 90%²²), i.e. all indirect emissions related to the products used by its customers.

Is it really a question of "decreasing" emissions? Nothing could be less certain. The company states that *"the calculation of net emissions takes into account natural carbon sinks, such as forestry, regenerative agriculture, and wetlands"*²³. This makes it impossible to calculate the absolute value of TotalEnergies' actual emission reductions.

Similarly, on the energy front, TotalEnergies has expressed its desire to decarbonise its mix²⁴ by developing renewable energies. However, TotalEnergies refers to natural gas as emitting two times less CO₂ than coal. Gas is nonetheless a very polluting fossil fuel contributing to global warming²⁵. TotalEnergies also wants to incorporate more biogas and hydrogen into its energy mix and develop biofuels. Again, hydrogen is mainly produced from fossil fuels²⁶. Biofuels, on the other hand, involve increasing intensive monocultures, with an export vocation, which compete with small-holder agriculture and food crops. Their production is carried out at the cost of land and resource grabbing²⁷, while at the same time exacerbating the degradation of natural resources. According to the Transport & Environment NGO, the rise in demand for biofuels has led to an intensified use of agricultural land and the search for new areas to meet this demand. This has led to the deforestation of rich ecosystems and the release of significant amounts of GHGs into the atmosphere²⁹. In a few cases, the GHG emissions associated with indirect land-use changes are so high that

Scopes

A company's GHG emissions can be divided into three categories, called "scopes" according to the GHG protocol²⁸ typology:

- 1. Scope 1: all direct emissions from the company's activities.**
- 2. Scope 2: all indirect emissions associated with energy (consumption of electricity, heat, or steam).**
- 3. Scope 3: all indirect emissions that take place upstream or downstream of the value chain.**

some biofuels can emit more GHGs than the fossil fuels they replace³⁰.

Furthermore, despite TotalEnergies' pitch on prioritising its energy transition, petroleum products will still represent an important part (35%) of the group's products in 2030³¹.

THE USE OF CONTRASTING AND CONTESTED PRACTICES

The company has not provided further information on additional actions it intends to take on to reduce its emissions. In fact, it seems that offsetting is a decisive lever of its policy to reach net-zero by 2050. Thus, *"for all its residual emissions"*³², TotalEnergies has indicated that it will invest in two categories of carbon sinks: natural sinks (such as forests, wetlands, and "regenerative agriculture") and CO₂ capture and storage (CCS).

With regards to CCS, TotalEnergies describes it as a process that captures and stores CO₂ underground *"in a permanent and safe way"*³³ [translated by AS]. The company intends to develop this on a large scale so that it becomes *"an industrial sector"*³⁴ [translated by AS].

A number of questions are nevertheless arising about the feasibility, efficiency, and increased economic cost of these technologies³⁵. TotalEnergies will also invest in the development of *"negative emission technologies"* such as Direct Air Capture, a technology that uses chemical reactions to capture CO₂ from the atmosphere³⁶. The latter has been criticised as an expensive and energy-intensive

distraction with "negligible" contributions to fight climate change³⁷.

To support the development of carbon sinks, TotalEnergies created in 2019 a unit called "Nature-Based Solutions" (NBS) with a budget of 100 million US dollars per year and set a storage capacity target of at least 5 Mt CO₂ per year by 2030³⁸. The NBS unit must invest in "agroforestry" projects in Africa, South America or Australia³⁹. According to TotalEnergies "[we are] acting on the principle that, in order to be viable over time, natural carbon sinks must be connected to an agricultural or forestry value chain that is local and sustainable. Regional issues related to carbon sink management can then be comprehensively addressed"⁴⁰. This approach raises the question of the sustainability of TotalEnergies' carbon offset projects and the respect of the rights of local communities impacted by these projects.

According to the Climate Action 100+⁴¹ investor coalition, TotalEnergies' climate policy is not in line with the Paris Agreement⁴². The company is indeed committed to reaching net-zero emission targets by 2050, however this is out of step and the company needs to adopt immediate measures to contain global warming to 1.5°C⁴³. TotalEnergies' strategy mainly focuses on carbon offsetting instead of implementing ambitious emissions reductions.

In 2021, OFI Asset Management⁴⁴, an asset manager and a TotalEnergies shareholder, highlighted the shortcomings of Total's climate strategy, particularly the absence of quantified climate objectives with precise steps⁴⁵ and the absence of concise information on the use of CO₂ capture and storage technologies as well as the provisional allocated means. OFI Asset Management has also requested the cessation of the exploration and exploitation of any new hydrocarbon reserves, in line with the International Energy Agency's declaration. According to the latter, any new oil or gas exploration projects are incompatible with the Paris Agreement objectives to limit global warming to 1.5°C⁴⁶.

OVERVALUED AMBITIONS FOR THE COMPANY'S IMAGE

For the rest of the world, the company has pledged "that worldwide Scope 3 emissions will decline in absolute value by 2030"⁴⁷. However, TotalEnergies does not provide any additional information regarding the measures it has put in place to reach this target. The company speaks of a "global ambition" to reduce the average carbon intensity of the energy products used by its customers⁴⁸. However, reducing carbon intensity does not mean reducing emissions, quite

the opposite! Carbon intensity is the amount of CO₂ needed for oil production, which does not entail an average reduction in GHG emissions, especially if the production increases⁴⁹ (see box).

Here is another example of the overvaluation of its commitment. TotalEnergies has also highlighted the importance of respecting biodiversity and pledged not to carry out any oil or gas exploration or extraction activities within sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list⁵⁰. However, this is not voluntary conduct, it is imposed by international standards.

TotalEnergies thus displays a covered-up carbon neutrality: it still seems determined to mainly invest in fossil fuels while claiming neutrality by massively resorting to carbon offsetting.

**TOTALENERGIES
THUS DISPLAYS
A COVERED-UP
CARBON
NEUTRALITY:
IT STILL SEEMS
DETERMINED TO
MAINLY INVEST IN
FOSSIL FUELS WHILE
BUYING
NEUTRALITY
BY MASSIVELY
RESORTING
TO CARBON
OFFSETTING.**

Carbon intensity

Carbon intensity is the amount of CO₂ emitted by the unit of another variable, such as GDP, a company's output⁵¹, energy consumption, or transport⁵². Reducing a product's or a service's carbon intensity is not equivalent to reducing GHG emissions. For companies that have a carbon intensity reduction target, this does not mean a decrease in carbon emissions, especially if production is on the rise.



Mozambique

TOTALENERGIES CONTINUES TO EXPAND: LNG PROJECT IN MOZAMBIQUE

TotalEnergies cites the development of natural gas as an important lever in its energy transition⁵³. The company has chosen to invest in liquefied natural gas (LNG), a rapidly growing market in which TotalEnergies ranks second in the world⁵⁴. Yet, this strategy entails the implementation of polluting projects. Gas is a fossil fuel that violates human rights and ecosystems, as illustrated by the LNG project in Mozambique. Furthermore, LNG projects have a substantial climate impact, since gas liquefaction is extremely energy-intensive with an even higher environmental impact than that associated with natural gas drilling⁵⁵.

Following the discovery of huge natural gas reserves in Mozambique⁵⁶, several multinationals became interested in gas fields (including oil companies such as TotalEnergies, ENI, and Exxon). TotalEnergies obtained the rights to the Off-shore Area 1 concession⁵⁷ and launched an LNG project through its subsidiary in Mozambique⁵⁸. The project, which is estimated at 20 billion US dollars⁵⁹, is to be the largest private investment in Africa⁶⁰.

Of course, TotalEnergies presents the LNG project as a way of creating opportunities for the local population and economy⁶¹. Yet, this is far from reality. According to the Mozambican organisation Justiça Ambiental (JA!) – partner of CCFD-Terre Solidaire – since the discovery of natural gas in Mozambique, oil companies' LNG projects, including TotalEnergies, have caused population displacement and land grabbing⁶². To make way for gas projects, over 550 families in Cabo Delgado have lost access to their land and the sea⁶³. Journalists, who tried to testify about the impacts of these gas projects, were intimidated by government forces⁶⁴. The oil companies' promises to create new jobs for local populations have not been fulfilled, and displaced families, who have lost their livelihoods, are now in great economic difficulty⁶⁵.

Since 2017, violence has increased in Cabo Delgado due to political, social, and religious tensions exacerbated by growing inequalities and human rights violations linked to gas projects⁶⁶. This violence has resulted in many civilian casualties⁶⁷. In this context, the Mozambican government chose the path of militarisation to preserve its gas facilities to the detriment of the locals who have had their rights

violated. Meanwhile, the French government has accelerated its military cooperation with the Mozambican government⁶⁸ to protect, among other things, the country's gas installations⁶⁹. In this fragile situation, TotalEnergies declared in April 2021 force majeure leading it to temporarily halt the project and thus withdraw all staff working on the LNG project.

The results of TotalEnergies' involvement in the gas project in Mozambique have had a very negative impact on human rights, according to our partners at JA!: *"Farming communities have lost their land, fishermen have lost access to the sea, human rights violations are on the rise in Cabo Delgado. Greenhouse gas emissions will increase in Mozambique if big companies continue to deplete and exploit gas reserves. To compensate for their pollution, fake forests will be planted, land will be confiscated, water will become a problem, and our entire ecosystem will be destroyed."*⁷⁰

SINCE THE DISCOVERY OF NATURAL GAS IN MOZAMBIQUE, OIL COMPANIES' LNG PROJECTS, INCLUDING TOTALENERGIES, HAVE CAUSED POPULATION DISPLACEMENT AND LAND GRABBING.



TO COMPENSATE FOR THEIR POLLUTION, FAKE FORESTS WILL BE PLANTED, LAND WILL BE CONFISCATED, WATER WILL BECOME A PROBLEM, AND OUR ENTIRE ECOSYSTEM WILL BE DESTROYED.

**JUSTIÇA AMBIENTAL (JAI),
PARTNER OF CCED-TERRE
SOLIDAIRE (MOZAMBIQUE)**



Republic of Congo

OFFSETTING PROJECT: PLANTING AN ACACIA FOREST IN THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In parallel with maintaining its exploitation and extraction activities, TotalEnergies is relying on carbon offsetting to achieve its net-zero emission target. To ensure the development of carbon sinks, TotalEnergies revealed its project of planting a new 40,000-hectare acacia forest on the Batéké Plateau in the Republic of Congo⁷¹ together with the company Forêt Ressources Management⁷². According to TotalEnergies, this forest could capture over 10 million tonnes of CO₂ over 20 years⁷³. The company adds that *"the planting of acacia... trees on sandy plateaus exposed to recurring bushfires will create a forest environment that will ultimately help broaden the ecosystems' biodiversity. The project will create employment opportunities, with a positive impact on several thousand people."*⁷⁴

However, planting acacia trees is likely to deteriorate the Batéké Plateau's rich and complex ecosystem. According to Brice Mackosso, deputy coordinator of the Publish What You Pay Congo platform, *"the project area is a dense savannah with gallery forests. The particularity of the Batéké Plateau is the presence of indigenous nomadic populations called Batouas, whose natural habitat will be impacted by the destruction of forest galleries. Wildlife – including some species of gorillas – is also sure to lose its habitat. It is important to examine whether these risks have been taken into account in the project"* [translated by AS].

TotalEnergies merely indicates that the Batéké Plateau is not part of an inhabited area and does not give any additional information on the neighbouring populations that will be affected by the planting of a forest. However, a mapping⁷⁵ of this region confirms the information provided by Brice Mackosso, reporting the possible presence of indigenous Pygmies and suggesting that a large part of this land is used for gathering, hunting, and possibly subsistence agriculture by local populations⁷⁶.

Regarding the involvement of local populations in the implementation of this project, TotalEnergies points out that the signing of a 60-year lease⁷⁷ with the Congolese government was completed "as per the procedures in force, which have included prior consultation of the local populations (the area is empty of housing) to inform them

RURAL LAND SECURITY IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT, AS CARBON OFFSETTING PROJECTS CAN ENDANGER THE RIGHTS AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY OF LOCAL POPULATIONS

of the project and its impacts"⁷⁸ [translated by AS]. Nevertheless, according to Brice Mackosso "at this stage, no evidence of consultation with the neighbouring communities exists for this project. Publish What You Pay Congo, a civil society platform engaged in monitoring the exploitation of natural resources, has no knowledge of a Congolese civil society consultation for this project. The

Republic of Congo and TotalEnergies are participating in the implementation of the EITI⁷⁹ and respectively support transparency and public debate on natural resources. Regrettably, this project has not been the subject of a public debate in terms of appropriateness" [translated by AS].

Moreover, while TotalEnergies states that this project "will promote the natural regeneration of local species and provide Brazzaville and Kinshasa with lumber and plywood", it appears that the company is actually considering an industrial plantation of fast-growing non-native⁸⁰ species⁸¹, risking damaging the ecosystem and biodiversity⁸².

Regarding the choice of acacias to capture carbon, according to Alain Karsenty (researcher at CIRAD⁸³), monoculture trees such as acacias have a low potential for carbon sequestration compared to that of natural forests. The IPCC⁸⁴ has also warned against monocultures that consume huge amounts of water and can play a negative role in the disruption of ecosystems⁸⁵.

Regarding multinationals' net-zero emissions targets, Alain Karsenty has added that "*big private companies hope to find in large-scale tree planting operations a way to achieve an unlikely carbon neutrality, which only makes sense at the global level. For those approaches to be useful, they must integrate the problems of rural land tenure security, a key factor in reforestation and access to land*"⁸⁶ [translated by AS]. Indeed, rural land security is particularly important, as carbon offsetting projects can endanger the rights and food sovereignty of local populations, who lose access to their land. It has been estimated that TotalEnergies would need approximately 2,600,000 hectares by 2050 to meet its carbon offset needs. For Alain Karsenty, reforestation operations such as forest planting cannot be effective when they do not respect the land rights of local populations and when they are based on monoculture plantations with fast-

growing species (such as acacias)⁸⁷. These elements question TotalEnergies' project in the Republic of Congo, and more broadly the company's strategy to develop carbon sinks both in terms of effectiveness in the fight against climate change and in terms of respecting human rights. "*It is obviously concerning that carbon compensation projects will once again only benefit multinationals that will embark on this type of project with the sole ambition of capturing international financing. The taxation regulating this project is unknown, and one could well question what the Republic of Congo is gaining with the land transfer to TotalEnergies,*" [translated by AS] concludes Brice Mackosso.



Norway

CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE: NORTHERN LIGHTS PROJECT

For TotalEnergies, carbon capture and storage (CCS) is "one of the key drivers for keeping the global temperature rise below 2 °C in 2100"⁸⁸. The company will dedicate 100 million US dollars per year⁸⁹ of its research and development budget to developing this type of project to "*decarbonize industrial facilities that will continue to emit CO₂*"⁹⁰.

The Northern Lights project, launched in 2017 by the Norwegian oil company Equinor in partnership with TotalEnergies and Shell (Netherlands), is the first large-scale project aiming to capture, transport by sea and store "permanently"⁹¹ CO₂ emissions from industrial sites (such as steel and cement plants).

The CO₂ capture and storage process described by TotalEnergies seems extremely complex: "shipped in liquid form to a temporary onshore storage site, before being transported for around 100 kilometres by subsea pipeline to its injection site, a deep saline aquifer on the Norwegian continental shelf"⁹². The CO₂ will be stored in a geological layer 2,800 metres below the seabed⁹³.

As for CO₂ storage capacity, the first phase of the project, which should start in 2024 with two Norwegian industrial sites, plans to store nearly 40 million tonnes in 25 years, at a rate of about 1.5 Mt CO₂ per year⁹⁴. It could also receive

THESE TECHNOLOGIES ALLOW PLAYERS WHO SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTE TO CLIMATE CHANGE TO CONTINUE TO POLLUTE IF, AT THE SAME TIME, THEY MANAGE TO CAPTURE CO₂ AND STORE IT IN THE SOIL OR OCEANS.

CO₂ from other industrial sites in Norway and Europe, becoming "the world's first storage site to take delivery of carbon from industry sources in several countries". TotalEnergies adds that it aims "to develop [a] viable, reproducible commercial CCUS [carbon capture, utilisation and storage] model in view of carrying out other major projects around the world"⁹⁵.

The limits of CCS technologies have already been documented. These technologies allow players who significantly contribute to climate change to continue to pollute if, at the same time, they manage to capture CO₂ and store it in the soil or oceans. Amongst the various criticisms of CCS⁹⁶, it has been reported that this method requires increased use of fossil fuels⁹⁷.

Furthermore, CCS entails significant environmental risks such as CO₂ escaping through leaks which could lead to devastating consequences for fauna and flora. For offshore sites, such as the Northern Lights Project, CCS could increase ocean acidification and harm marine ecosystems⁹⁸. It is also an extremely expensive and difficult-to-implement technology, whose real effectiveness remains to be proven.

The track record of TotalEnergies' carbon offset policy, whatever the technique, is not neutral. The costs associated with this policy are too high (human, environmental) and, for some, are subject to uncertainty about their sustainability and the extent to which they will produce beneficial effects to fight climate change.

These solutions cannot hide the fact that the carbon offsetting strategy designed by TotalEnergies is a clever way to meet the – reputational – requirement to address the climate crisis while maintaining the development of climate-threatening activities.

THE BALANCE SHEET OF TOTALENERGIES' CARBON OFFSET POLICY, WHATEVER THE TECHNIQUE, IS NOT NEUTRAL. THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS POLICY ARE TOO HIGH (HUMAN, ENVIRONMENTAL).



**FARMING
COMMUNITIES
HAVE LOST THEIR
LAND, FISHERMEN
HAVE LOST ACCESS
TO THE SEA,
HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS ARE
ON THE RISE...**

**JUSTIÇA AMBIENTAL (JA!),
PARTNER OF CCFD-TERRE
SOLIDAIRE (MOZAMBIQUE)**

03.
NESPRESSO:
A SINKING
CLIMATE
POLICY.





The company communicates proactively on the carbon neutrality of each one of its cups of coffee to seduce consumers who are increasingly sensitive to the impact of their consumption. However, the company is focusing a large part of its net-zero policy on carbon offsetting and not actually on reducing its current emissions.

A CLIMATE PLAN HEAVILY RELIANT ON OFFSETTING

Nespresso, part of the Nestlé Group, is the group's first brand to have talked about a "carbon neutral" product. The brand set a net-zero emissions target insisting that every cup of coffee in France has been carbon neutral since 2016. The same goal has been set to be reached by 2022, this time at global level. When unravelling the company's commitments, we soon realise that they are not about reducing emissions but rather about massively compensating them. By 2022, Nespresso hopes to reduce its emissions by 5% and use carbon offsetting for 95% of the remaining emissions⁹⁹. The 5% reduction will be achieved through the use of renewable energy in Nespresso stores and biogas in its manufacture¹⁰⁰. The company also set a target of reducing its carbon emissions by 50% by 2030, with 2018 as its reference level¹⁰¹.

According to Nespresso France, every cup of coffee has been carbon neutral since 2016 through the planting of over 500,000 trees per year¹⁰². Nespresso states that its operations scope 1 and 2 (offices, production centres and services) are carbon neutral. The company also claims that it has achieved carbon neutrality since 2016 on scope 3 in France, particularly the emissions of its supply chain and the life cycle of its coffee¹⁰³. Now, the company is aiming for worldwide carbon neutrality of its scope 3.

Regarding its carbon compensation strategy, Nespresso distinguishes between what it calls "insetting" and "offsetting". Insetting is defined as carbon compensation within the company's value chain (on farms in coffee-producing countries) with its partner Pur Projet. *Offsetting* mainly refers to a carbon compensation mechanism that takes place outside the company's perimeter through forest preservation and restoration projects¹⁰⁴. Nespresso has specified that it will develop 25% of insetting (which it intends to triple by 2022 compared to 2014¹⁰⁵) and 70% of offsetting¹⁰⁶, equivalent to a total of 95% carbon compensation. It should therefore be noted that most of Nespresso's compensation efforts will be outside of its own value chain. There is little information on the projects that Nespresso plans to finance, which is surprising given the strong focus on offsetting in the company's net-zero strategy.

Carbon compensation is also an important lever for the parent company, Nestlé. While anticipating a 68% growth between 2020 and 2030¹⁰⁷, the company has announced that it wants to reach a net-zero emissions target. To do so, it will focus on minimal emissions reductions and "for the rest" – that is to say the majority of its emissions – it will use carbon compensation (insetting and offsetting)¹⁰⁸. Nestlé has estimated that it must offset 13 million tonnes of CO₂ by 2030, equivalent to 4.4 million hectares for carbon compensation through the land sector¹⁰⁹.

WE SOON REALISE THAT THEY ARE NOT ABOUT REDUCING EMISSIONS BUT RATHER ABOUT MASSIVELY COMPENSATING THEM. THUS, BY 2022, NESPRESSO HOPES TO REDUCE ITS EMISSIONS BY 5% AND USE CARBON COMPENSATION FOR 95% OF THE REMAINING EMISSIONS.

In addition, the use of biogas put forward by Nespresso as a solution to help the company reduce its emissions is without consensus among experts. According to the IATP¹¹⁰, biogas cannot be considered as renewable energy as it is mainly produced by large-scale polluting animal farms: it does not burn cleanly and releases CO₂ as well as other pollutants during combustion¹¹¹.

Regarding Pur Projet, Nespresso's partner, a case study¹¹² demonstrated the negative impacts of this company's carbon offset projects for local Peruvian populations. The investigation conducted in 2014, revealed that the Martin Sagrado conservation concession in Peru was assigned to a cocoa cooperative. In the end, Pur Projet obtained the carbon rights to the concession for 80 years¹¹³. This has led to restrictions on the use of this conservation concession by local communities, jeopardising their food sovereignty, and to the re-emergence of territorial

conflicts (114). In addition, the local community "*had been neither consulted nor sufficiently informed about the establishment of the conservation concession*". These carbon offsetting practices are strongly criticised, because "*planting a tree is not a game... but an act of appropriating or claiming land*"¹¹⁵.

AAA SUSTAINABLE QUALITY PROGRAM

In 2003, Nespresso launched the AAA Sustainable Quality Program with the NGO Rainforest Alliance, a program that currently involves over 100,000 coffee producers in 13 countries¹¹⁶. It aims to offer *"high-quality coffee while improving the livelihoods of farmers and their communities, and protecting the environment"*¹¹⁷.

According to Nespresso, the AAA program has several benefits for producers. It encourages farmers to use *"quality production practices"* and allows them to obtain an additional premium, agricultural training, financing, and technical assistance¹¹⁸. The AAA program also helps in *"transitioning smallholder farms into more resilient agroforestry models"* with, for example, the planting of over 4.5 million trees in 5 years (between 2014-2019)¹¹⁹.

The head of the company's corporate communications acknowledged that what originally prompted the creation of the AAA program was a *"business reason"*¹²⁰. According to a study on coffee making, *"the main objective of these internal procedures is to ensure the required quality of coffee, at acceptable costs, through improved yields"*¹²¹. The first goal in establishing this program was to guarantee the sustainability of coffee quality for consumers and the sustainability of the economic sector. However, the vision of economic sustainability for producers focuses on improving their profitability and income by increasing their yields¹²². Moreover, according to the above-mentioned study, *"in actuality, these forms of certification are generally associated with larger farms that use more inputs and above-average amounts of resources and support"*¹²³. The term "sustainable" can therefore be misleading, as sustainability is now often linked to environmental aspects. The reality is that, with regards to this program's "environmental sustainability" dimension, no strong or ambitious commitment has emerged. The company has highlighted compliance with international labour standards (ILO conventions, prohibition of child labour) and the promotion of *"good agricultural practices"*¹²⁴. The few existing independent studies on "sustainable" certifications do not allow us to really measure their impact¹²⁵.

Beyond attesting to the frameworks and rules to which the AAA program is subject, the question of their implementation and audit needs to be addressed. In 2020, an investigation by Channel 4 revealed child labour¹²⁶ on six farms in Guatemala where Nespresso sourced coffee. Nespresso then launched an internal investigation¹²⁷ which confirmed child labour on three farms. The company has pledged to take action to ensure the safety of children in Guatemala's coffee-growing communities¹²⁸. However, this news about child labour highlights the lack of independent and permanent auditing systems of the AAA program regulations.

THE HEAD OF THE COMPANY'S CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT WHAT ORIGINALLY PROMPTED THE CREATION OF THE AAA PROGRAM WAS A "BUSINESS REASON".

NATURE-BASED SOLUTION OR HOW TO CONCEAL CLIMATE INACTION

Nespresso has put forward its agroforestry program, thanks to which its carbon footprint would be offset¹²⁹. But what does this program really consist of? According to the company, this is a nature-based solution (see box) that amounts to "planting trees on coffee farms"¹³¹ [translated by AS], thus promoting the creation of carbon sinks. Nespresso highlights that it has "decided to use agroforestry"¹³² [translated by AS] in order to "protect the ecosystems on coffee farms impacted by climate change"¹³³ [translated by AS]. Furthermore, according to the company, "trees improve the quality of coffee while providing additional income for coffee farmers and helping to offset our carbon emissions"¹³⁴ [translated by AS].

Nespresso implies that its agroforestry program would go hand in hand with developing agricultural practices and adding multiple benefits for the environment and coffee producers. In other words, tree planting is presented as an agroforestry program that would be different from conventional agricultural practices, when in reality its goal essentially seems to be offsetting the company's emissions. Tree planting is not a magical solution and cannot reduce or cancel the carbon footprint of coffee production. Moreover, there is no equivalence between CO₂ emissions associated with coffee production and the potential of planted trees to absorb carbon.

Moreover, coffee production has many environmental and climate impacts specifically linked to the rising use of chemical inputs and increased deforestation¹³⁵. Coffee production also requires huge amounts of energy, water, land, and very often fertilisers and pesticides with potential consequences for biodiversity and fragile ecosystems in areas where coffee is grown¹³⁶.

The environmental impact of coffee production cannot be compensated by planting trees! The World Resources Institute points out that while regenerative agricultural practices – including agroforestry – can be beneficial to the climate, claims about their potential for carbon sequestration in soil are based on limited, and in some cases implausible, data¹³⁷.

In addition, Nespresso informs us that, as part of this pilot project, 50,000 fruit and "timber trees" have been planted¹³⁸. The company adds that agroforestry could have additional economic benefits for producers, as trees such as cedar, mahogany or white wood are planted¹³⁹. However, a recent study on the state of trees in the world highlights that the second biggest threat to trees is their direct exploitation, especially for the timber industry¹⁴⁰. The fact that Nespresso is already considering these planted trees (as part of its agroforestry projects) as potential wood for the timber industry questions their permanence and by extension, that of carbon sequestration.

TREE PLANTING IS NOT A MAGICAL SOLUTION AND CANNOT REDUCE OR CANCEL THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF COFFEE PRODUCTION.

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)

The concept of nature-based solutions was created in 2015-2016 by the IUCN and European academics, but does not appear in the text of the Paris Agreement¹⁴¹. As this concept is still unclear, it is associated with a wide range of practices, some of which are harmful to the environment and human rights. NBS are used today to justify practices such as geoengineering, biomass combustion on an industrial scale, or even carbon offsetting through the land sector¹⁴². Growing polluting companies use this concept to divert attention from ambitious climate action that would go hand in hand with reducing their emissions at source. NBS allow these companies to continue their business-as-usual practices while using carbon offsetting through financing projects such as large-scale tree planting¹⁴³.

Regenerative agricultural practices

This refers to a range of agricultural practices aiming to regenerate degraded soils, increase biodiversity, and fight global warming by promoting CO2 storage. These practices gathered together in this category may include no-till agriculture, crop rotation, use of mineral fertilisers and agrochemicals, or reduced use of pesticides, and are aimed at productivity and economic benefits. According to the World Resources Institute, these practices can improve soil quality and also have environmental benefits, but they are unlikely to contribute to a large-scale reduction of GHG emissions.

Source: <https://www.wri.org/insights/regenerative-agriculture-good-soil-health-limited-potential-mitigate-climate-change>



W GIVEN THIS MINDSET OF DESTROYING HERE AND COMPENSATING THERE, THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IS CONTINUING TO INTENSIFY.

CENSAT AGUA VIVA, PARTNER OF CCFD-TERRE SOLIDAIRE (COLOMBIA)

**04.
AIR
FRANCE
NOT FLYING
TO THE RESCUE
OF THE CLIMATE!**





The weight of the aviation sector on greenhouse gas emissions is obvious and documented. Yet, no major actions are being initiated to reduce these emissions. Change of on-board tableware, digitisation of pilot manuals, Air France will stop at nothing!

AIR FRANCE'S CLIMATE POLICY: SOME "REDUCTION" MEASURES

To reduce its environmental footprint¹⁴⁴, Air France has fixed a target of reducing by half its CO₂ emissions by 2030¹⁴⁵. In other words, it wants to reduce emissions per passenger/kilometre by 50% by 2030¹⁴⁶. Air France's choice to reduce emissions as such, by lowering the carbon intensity of its flights and not its emissions in absolute terms, covers up the climate inaction of its "carbon neutral" strategy¹⁴⁷.

Regarding the distribution of Air France's emissions, its scope 1 and scope 2 emissions are linked to its air operations (99.7%), ground operations (0.3%), and the electricity consumption of ground activities. Scope 3 emissions come mainly from the upstream phase of kerosene, purchases of goods and services, and road travel by passengers and employees¹⁴⁸.

For its ground operations, i.e. 0.3% of its direct emissions, Air France has set itself a net-zero emission target by 2030¹⁴⁹.

As for modernising its fleet, Air France believes that "*the most impactful way to reduce [its] carbon footprint is to invest in a more fuel-efficient fleet*"¹⁵⁰. It indicates that it will replace some of its aircraft with less polluting models and that it will develop "*innovative solutions*" such as the Flying-V aerodynamic aircraft which saves 20% of kerosene¹⁵¹, but which will not be available before 2040¹⁵². As for improving its operational efficiency, Air France also intends to make its aircrafts lighter.

The company limits itself to mentioning anecdotal initiatives such as the digitisation of pilot documentation or the use of lighter tableware in business class¹⁵³. Air France's CEO even mentioned that the airline was looking to replace plastic champagne glasses in economy class with "*a sustainable model*"¹⁵⁴! [translated by AS] Tablets for pilots, "sustainable" champagne glasses, and with that the climate crisis is solved?

Another lever brought up by the company is the use of "sustainable" aviation fuels, which is "*one of the most impactful measures for reducing the CO₂ emissions from aviation*"¹⁵⁵. Most significantly, Air France wants to introduce biofuels for its aircraft¹⁵⁶. However, as previously pointed out¹⁵⁷, biofuels are not a solution given their impact on climate, the environment, and human rights.

THE OFFSETTING ILLUSION

Beyond these few anecdotal or controversial measures, Air France's climate strategy is lacking tangible actions to reduce its emissions. Air France has therefore mainly based its climate policy on three carbon offsetting categories: A so-called "compulsory" offsetting in line with the European Union Allowance Trading Scheme (EU-ETS) and the global CORSIA (Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation)¹⁵⁸.

A "voluntary" offsetting in which Air France offers its customers the possibility of voluntarily offsetting their CO₂ emissions through Air France's Trip and Tree program¹⁵⁹, created in partnership with the association A Tree for You. This association, co-founded by Air France, introduces tree planting projects in several countries¹⁶⁰.

Last but not least, a "proactive" offsetting¹⁶¹ since January 2020, by which Air France says it proactively offsets 100% of its domestic flights' CO₂ emissions (over 450 flights per day on average)¹⁶². With the company EcoAct¹⁶³, Air France is setting up reforestation, forest preservation, and renewable energies development projects in countries such as Brazil, Cambodia, Kenya, and India¹⁶⁴.

Amongst these projects is "Floresta de Portel" which helps to fight against deforestation in this area located in the Brazilian Amazon¹⁶⁵. However, an academic study¹⁶⁶, which analysed 12 avoided deforestation projects offering carbon credits to airlines (including Air France's Floresta de Portel project), shows that the deforestation levels of Air France's project are very similar to those of an unprotected area nearby. This tends to call into question the contribution and the real impact of Air France's project in terms of avoiding deforestation.

**BEYOND THESE
FEW ANECDOTAL
OR CONTROVERSIAL
MEASURES, AIR
FRANCE'S CLIMATE
STRATEGY IS
LACKING TANGIBLE
ACTIONS TO
ACTUALLY REDUCE
ITS EMISSIONS.**

The offsetting illusion as envisaged by Air France has been subject to many criticisms, including those of the IPCC's co-president. In July 2020, Valérie Masson-Delmotte challenged the airline following its communication on its flights' carbon neutrality when buying a plane ticket by stressing that:

*"The notion of carbon neutrality according to the IPCC implies that each CO₂ emission into the atmosphere is erased by eliminating the same amount of CO₂, removed from the atmosphere and stored sustainably (negative emissions). Neither avoided deforestation nor investments in low-carbon energies tally with this"*¹⁶⁷ [translated by AS].

MANDATORY OFFSETTING: THE CORSIA SYSTEM AT THE HEART OF CRITICISM

According to Air France, the aviation sector is *"the first economic sector to have defined ambitious long - term reduction targets and to have set up a carbon offsetting scheme at global level"*¹⁶⁸, namely the CORSIA system adopted in 2016 by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)¹⁶⁹. This system aims to stabilise CO₂ emissions from the international aviation sector at 2020 levels, by imposing the offsetting of emissions by airlines¹⁷⁰. The program's "pilot" phase will run between 2021 and 2023 and its first phase between 2024-2026 (both phases will apply to States that have volunteered to take part¹⁷¹).

Yet, a recent study by the European Commission¹⁷² indicates that CORSIA's *"level of ambition for the international aviation sector is misaligned with, and weaker than the global level of ambition required to keep within the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement"*¹⁷³. Worse, this study calls into question the CORSIA offsetting system, which would be a *"greenwashing strategy that diverts public action from real measures"*¹⁷⁴ [translated by AS]. Thus, CORSIA would be ineffective in reducing the climate impact of the aviation sector and would not allow real and permanent emissions reductions.¹⁷⁵

Civil society organisations, including the Climate Action Network (RAC)¹⁷⁶, are constantly underlining *"the lack of scientific basis of carbon offset schemes, which cannot be considered equivalent to the emissions reductions recommended by the IPCC"*¹⁷⁷ [translated by AS]. This approach, particularly through the land sector, has many limitations recalled by Alain Karsenty of CIRAD: *"the area needed to devote to forests (planted forests potentially competing with food crops and grasslands), the time needed to fix CO₂ in trees (while emissions are immediately found in the atmosphere) and the duration of carbon storage in trees"*¹⁷⁸ [translated by AS]. He adds that, without a massive reduction in emissions, it is hard to imagine being able to offset the annual increase in atmospheric CO₂ stock¹⁷⁹. And this is especially relevant for the aviation sector. According to environmental modelling professor Britaldo Silveira Soares Filho, offsetting projects such as planting trees or avoiding deforestation cannot make a flight carbon neutral¹⁸⁰.

A recent survey, by Greenpeace's investigative unit Unearthed¹⁸¹, analysed ten airline deforestation reduction schemes and found that while these projects often have environmental benefits, attempts to quantify and market the generated carbon "savings" in the form of carbon credits are established on fragile foundations.

The European Commission's study also highlighted several issues, for example, the lack of additionality of some of CORSIA's programs, one of the major requirements of carbon offset projects. Additionality means that these projects should not be able to be carried out in the absence of the additional financing linked to the sale of carbon credits¹⁸².

Finally, the study noted the lack of transparency from the States participating in the program, since they are not required to transmit their airlines' data, as well as the double-counting of emission reductions¹⁸³. Emission reductions are now accounted for by the country that buys them and by the one that sells them, so that they are counted twice¹⁸⁴. The CORSIA program is therefore once again a decoy that does nothing to achieve a real transformation of the aviation sector in line with the Paris Agreement targets.

TRIP AND TREE: TAX ADVANTAGES AND FINANCING AIR FRANCE'S GREENWASHING THROUGH ITS CUSTOMERS

The Trip and Tree program was created in 2017 by Air France and the association A Tree for You (co-founded by Air France)¹⁸⁵. It is aimed at the airline's customers who want to "take action for the planet and reduce the environmental impact of their trip"¹⁸⁶. Provided they have a travel document or a plane ticket from the airline¹⁸⁷, customers can voluntarily donate the amount of their choice, which will finance tree planting projects in France or elsewhere in the world. A total of 952,574 "perennial" trees were planted for a budget of 5 million euros¹⁸⁸ following the Trip and Tree program.

The association offers prices per tree ranging from 2 euros in Togo to 28.90 euros in France¹⁸⁹. This variation in tree prices is justified by the fact that several criteria are taken into account to ensure the plantations' sustainability (equipment, training of beneficiaries, project coordination, location, etc.)¹⁹⁰.

The association has made its own calculations regarding the amount of CO₂ stored in each tree. It recommends planting one tree per passenger for a one-hour long flight in

economy class (encouraging customers to double this amount when travelling in first or business class¹⁹¹!).

Donors can monitor the project's progress and "receive news about their trees for at least three years"¹⁹². What happens after these three years? According to the association, trees take 10 years to capture carbon and, if no problem arises, they are supposed to continue capturing carbon throughout their lives. As for tax, donors who live in France benefit from an income tax reduction of 66%¹⁹³.

Air France co-created an association and is using consumer voluntary action as one of its climate policy pillars, at the customers' expense. The airline is taking advantage of this action that it neither manages nor finances in any way, and adding it to its climate balance. Meanwhile, the French government is also helping to finance this non-climate action with tax exemptions post-donations!

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, A FACILITATOR OF AIR FRANCE'S CLIMATE POLICY

In May 2020, the French government granted Air France a 7-billion-euro loan¹⁹⁴ to help the airline cope with the economic losses caused by the Covid-19 pandemic¹⁹⁵. Initially, this rescue plan came along with environmental conditions: reducing CO₂ emissions for domestic flights by 50% and shutting down domestic connections when a rail alternative of less than 2 hours 30¹⁹⁶ was available.

But from the beginning, Air France identified the French government's environmental requirements as a risk factor, because it feared "not being able to meet the French State's loan conditions from a sustainable and viability perspective"¹⁹⁷ [translated by AS]. In the summer of 2020, the airline shut down some domestic routes (Orly-Bordeaux, Orly-Nantes, Orly-Lyon). A strong signal? Not even close! A few months

later, the company announced new routes operated by its subsidiary Transavia (Orly-Biarritz, Nantes-Marseille, Nantes-Toulouse, Nantes-Nice, and Nantes-Montpellier)¹⁹⁸. In April 2021, the French State once again paid 4 billion euros in aid to Air France. The Minister of Economy, Bruno Le Maire, assured that this new loan came with the same "environmental requirements"¹⁹⁹ as those associated with the State aid in 2020²⁰⁰.

The removal of domestic flights where a rail alternative of less than 2 hours 30 hours exists was adopted with Article 36 of the Climate and Resilience Bill in July 2021. However, the climate benefits would be much greater if this measure applied to flights that could be replaced by 4-hour train journeys (33.2% reduction in CO₂ emissions from domestic flights, compared to 11.2% for the closure of lines when a rail alternative of less than 2 hours 30 hours exists)²⁰¹. In reality,

the bill only endorses the cancellations of flights already recorded by Air France in 2020. The Climate and Resilience Bill does not contain any elements that really change the company's practices.

Beyond anecdotal measures on air traffic, the reduction of which would nevertheless ensure real emission reductions, this law introduces the dangerous obligation to offset emissions for domestic flights in France²⁰² (from January 2022). This is an unprecedented measure that does not exist anywhere else in the world²⁰³. However, carbon offsetting is ineffective as it does not really offset emissions from the aviation sector (see above) or encourage the sector to really reduce its emissions²⁰⁴! Through this new measure, the French government is only allowing airlines not to engage in a real transformation of a sector that is nevertheless a major emitter, and is therefore endorsing climate inaction.

Offsetting, as introduced in Article 38 of the law, is part of the "low carbon standard"²⁰⁵ co-created by the Ministry of Ecological and Solidarity Transition in 2018²⁰⁶. As part of this low-carbon certification label, Air France and its partner EcoAct are already developing two projects in France²⁰⁷.

An analysis carried out by CCFD-Terre Solidaire, along with other organisations, demonstrated the numerous restrictions and shortcomings of this label²⁰⁸. First of all, this certification considers that there is a reduction in GHG emissions when they are lower than in a "counterfactual" prospective scenario in the absence of the project financed by carbon credits. However, this scenario is not subject to any requirements. In addition, the label does not provide for a minimum reduction. Projects with increasing emissions can therefore be labelled low-carbon when it is accorded that the emissions would have been higher without the existence of the project. Finally, the label takes little account of the environment in general and biodiversity in particular, allowing monoculture forestry or agricultural projects that use synthetic pesticides to obtain the label.

**THE CLIMATE AND
RESILIENCE BILL
DOES NOT
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PRACTICES.**





BY DESTROYING THE FOREST, THEY ARE DESTROYING OUR FOOD SOURCE, BUT ALSO OUR MEDICINAL PLANTS AND OUR SPIRITUALITY.

NINAWA HUNI KUIN, PRESIDENT OF THE HUNI KUIN PEOPLES OF THE STATE OF ACRE (BRAZIL)

CONCLUSION & RECOMMAN- DATIONS.

According to the IPCC, current CO2 concentrations are the highest they have been in at least two million years and the impacts of the climate crisis are increasingly being felt around the world. According to the group of experts, a temperature rise of 1.5°C will potentially be reached as early as 2030. In this context, companies claiming to be "carbon neutral" are posing a risk when giving the illusion that Paris Agreement objectives are achievable even when maintaining the current production pace and consumption patterns, simply by offsetting their emissions.

Planting trees seems to have become the magical solution. However, whatever the possible benefits of planting trees when done properly, scientists say it is clear that priority must be given to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

01.

REDUCING RATHER THAN OFFSETTING

The immediate reduction of emissions at source must be the number one priority of all climate policies and all corporate climate strategies, especially for the most emitting sectors such as agriculture, energy, or transport. Given the scientific uncertainties associated with soil carbon sequestration, States must abandon the accounting of sequestered carbon as a source of mitigation in their national inventories. Ambitious reduction targets must strictly be set in absolute terms and not in net terms.

02.

SAFEGUARDING LAND FROM CARBON MARKETS

The land sector (forests and agricultural lands) must be excluded from the offsetting mechanisms of the Paris Agreement's carbon markets (Article 6). Relying on the land sector to implement carbon offsetting projects involves risks of nature financialisation, and as a result, large-scale land grabbing.

03.

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

It is essential to introduce a corporate due diligence obligation in national, European, and international legal frameworks to ensure effective access to justice through the civil and/or criminal liability of companies for any person or community whose fundamental rights are violated, in particular when implementing carbon offsetting projects.

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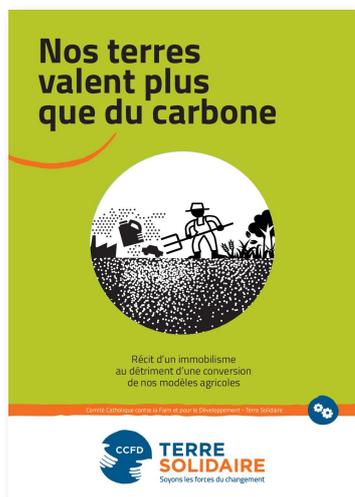
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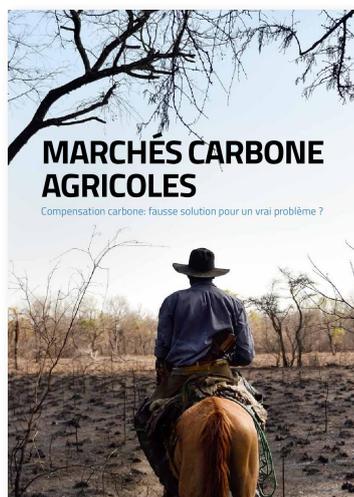
CLIMATE JUSTICE: CHECK OUT OUR REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS.



Story of immobilism to the detriment of a conversion of our agricultural models

Agriculture is in turn considered responsible or a victim of climate change. Some see in it solutions to fight against global warming by transforming agricultural land into carbon sinks... Is this the right or wrong solution? Shouldn't we first question our agro-industrial systems?

<https://ccfd-terresolidaire.org/nos-combats/souverainete/rapport-sequestration-carbone-terres-agricoles-6119>



Carbon markets: a false solution for a real problem?

Carbon markets and agricultural offsetting mechanisms are often presented as a solution to fight against global warming. We warn of their negative impacts and call on public policies to support other, more effective alternatives.

<https://ccfd-terresolidaire.org/nos-combats/souverainete/marches-compensation-carbone-probleme-6779>



Brazil: the Huni Kuin Indians face their destiny

Close to the Peruvian border, the Huni Kuin Indians of Brazil are struggling to preserve their way of life and culture. Looking for alternatives to the carbon offsetting programmes.

<https://ccfd-terresolidaire.org/nos-publications/edm/2021/318-septembre-2021/bresil-les-indiens-huni-7098>

LE CCFD-TERRE SOLIDAIRE, A FIGHT AGAINST INJUSTICES.

For 60 years, CCFD-Terre Solidaire has been mobilised alongside those fighting every day against all causes of hunger and those who face the injustices of the current development model. To face these scourges, it was a priority to act differently and sustainably. For this reason, CCFD-Terre Solidaire received the "Grande Cause Nationale" award in 1993.

Driven by Christian values, these combined actions make it possible today to say that "another world is possible", a better world.

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The challenges of social transformation, international solidarity, and development are inextricably linked to environmental issues.

The climate crisis reveals the impasse of our development models based on resource overexploitation, wealth accumulation, and overconsumption.

It threatens food sovereignty, particularly in the global south by limiting their production capacity and access to food. CCFD-Terre Solidaire defends climate justice and advocates an alternative model for society.

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in **67** countries

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