

## Glossary of General Sustainability Terms

1. Alternative Energy - Alternative energy is a crucial component of climate mitigation and falls into two categories:
  - a. Substitutes for existing petroleum liquids, e.g., ethanol, biodiesel, and tar sands.
  - b. Alternatives for generating and storing electrical power e.g., wind, solar, and battery.
2. Biodegradable - Able to decompose and blend back in with the earth, given the right conditions and presence of microorganisms, fungi or bacteria.
3. Biodiversity - The biological diversity of flora and fauna species on Earth, a complex web of life that underpins the natural life processes on the planet. Human-caused environmental damage reduces biodiversity, and creating a healthy, sustainable society requires increasing biodiversity.
4. Business model – A business’s plan for making money. Business models can be tied to social causes.
5. Business transformation - Making bold and fundamental changes to the way business operates, rather than making incremental step changes to the status quo.
6. Carbon credit - A generic term for any tradable certificate or permit deemed to allow a company, within an emissions trading scheme, to emit one tonne of CO2 equivalent. This covers CO2 or any of the other greenhouse gases. See carbon offset.
7. Carbon footprint - Carbon footprint refers to the emissions of greenhouse gases (carbon equivalent) from an individual or organization.
8. Carbon neutral - Companies that are ‘carbon neutral’ achieve net-zero carbon emissions. That means the given company offsets the amount of carbon they produce by removing carbon emissions elsewhere or purchasing carbon credits. See net-zero.
9. Carbon offset - Carbon offsets reduce carbon emissions by purchasing credits or using carbon trading schemes.
10. Carbon offsetting - Any activity deemed to reduce overall emissions of greenhouse gases by purchasing verified carbon credits (also known as offsets) through emissions reduction projects or carbon trading schemes.
11. Carbon positive - Any activity deemed to reduce and/or offset more emissions than it produces.
12. Carbon sequestration - Carbon sequestration can be natural or manufactured. Carbon that is captured and stored is sequestered, preventing it from entering the atmosphere. An example is a tree absorbing CO2 from the atmosphere and storing it.
13. Climate change - A long-term shift in global weather patterns or average temperatures. Climate change is intended to be a slow, gradual process but research shows that, compared with climate change patterns throughout Earth’s history, the rate of temperature rise since the Industrial

Revolution is extremely high. Effects of climate change can include rising temperatures, leading to increased extreme weather such as heatwaves, floods, droughts, and storms, and resulting in reduced water and food security and social stability.

14. Climate change mitigation - Policies and measures which aim to reduce greenhouse gases from companies and governments with the intention of lessening the global impacts of climate change, such as reducing the amount and intensity of fossil fuel burning.
15. Climate resilience - As opposed to sustainability, which aims to create more climate-resilient systems, climate resilience studies existing systems' capacity to handle stresses and maintain functionality imposed by climate risk.
16. Collective Impact - Cross-sector coordination to bring about large-scale change.
17. Conscious capitalism - Conscious capitalism is a free-market economy that mutually benefits both people and the environment.
18. Conscious consumerism – Consumers choosing to purchase products and services that are produced responsibly.
19. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) - A management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations. See ESG.
20. Environmental Management Systems - A set of processes and practices that enable an organisation to reduce its environmental impacts. The most commonly used framework is the one developed by the International Organization for Standardisation (ISO) for the ISO 14001 standard.
21. Environmental Reporting - The process in which a company submits requested information relating to the impact their business activities have on environmental areas such as climate change, deforestation, and water security. This data allows capital markets and purchasing organizations to make informed decisions. (Also known as disclosure.)
22. ESG – ESG refers to a business strategy or framework that encompasses Environmental causes, social causes, and has a Governing body in leadership that holds the company accountable on various sustainability and ethical issues. Often used interchangeably with CSR. See CSR.
23. Greenhouse Gases (GHG) - Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, which trap and hold heat in the atmosphere (greenhouse effect) and contribute to climate change. Much of human activity emits greenhouse gases, such as burning fossil fuels for energy and transport, farming land for food production, and deforestation. There are three tiers for companies reporting on GHG emissions
  - a. Scope 1 emissions refer to direct greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that occur from sources that are controlled or owned by an organization, including company vehicles.
  - b. Scope 2 emissions refer to indirect GHG emissions associated with any purchases of electricity, steam, heat, or cooling.

- c. Scope 3 emissions are the result of activities from assets not owned or controlled by the reporting organization, but that the organization indirectly impacts in its value chain. This includes the emissions linked to downstream companies; in the mobility industry, this could be emissions created by supply chain partners in the delivery of service to relocation management companies and/or corporate clients.
- 24. Greenwashing - Activities, usually marketing to increase sales, intended to make people believe a company is doing more to protect the environment than it really is.
- 25. Greywater – Greywater is wastewater, without toxic chemicals, collected for secondary uses. For example, greywater from bathrooms, sinks, showers, bathtubs, and clothes washers can be re-used.
- 26. Nature-positive - Behavior and actions which overall increase biodiversity and the number of species in nature, as opposed to causing them to decline.
- 27. Natural resources - Natural resources are materials or substances such as minerals, forests, water, and fertile land that occur in nature and can be used for economic gain.
- 28. Net-zero - The overall balance between emitting and absorbing carbon in the atmosphere. The outcome of limiting catastrophic climate change requires companies and countries to become net-zero, and many policies are based on achieving that within certain time frames, for example the terms of the Paris Agreement
- 29. Recyclable - A product or material that can be collected, processed, and manufactured into a new product.
- 30. Recycling - Recycling refers to collecting and reprocessing a material to be used again. A common form of recycling would be aluminum cans or paper products which are broken down and repurposed for different market use rather than ending up in a landfill.
- 31. Renewable Energy - Renewable energy comes from a not depleted source when used, such as wind or solar power.
- 32. Renewable resources - Renewable resources can be used multiple times and recharged. These energy sources include wind, solar, geothermal, and more, but they all have a rechargeable supply. Non-renewable resources like coal, oil, and groundwater have limited quantities.
- 33. Science-based targets - Targets for reducing emissions 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.
- 34. Social enterprise - A social enterprise is a for-profit business whose core business model is tied to a social cause.

35. Supply chain - The multitude of companies involved in the entire process of creating a product or facilitating a service. Activities from a company's supply chain constitute its scope 3 emissions. The goal is to ensure a supply chain that has the lowest environmental impact possible.
36. Sustainability - Maintaining a balance of resources extracted and resources restored. The 1987 United Nations Brundtland Commission defines it as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The three pillars of sustainability are
  - a. Economic sustainability includes job creation, profitability, and proper accounting of the environment for cost-benefit analyses.
  - b. Environmental sustainability focuses on the well-being of the environment including water quality, air quality, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
  - c. Social sustainability includes environmental justice, human health, resource security, and education.
37. Sustainable procurement - Decisions when buying products and services that include social and environmental factors along with price and quality.
38. Sustainable Transition Plan - A time-bound action plan that clearly outlines how an organization will achieve its strategy to pivot its existing assets, operations, and entire business model towards a trajectory that aligns with climate science recommendations, for example, halving greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 and reaching net-zero by 2050 at the latest, limiting global warming to 1.5°C.
39. Triple bottom line - A phrase first coined by John Elkington in 1994, describing the separate but interdependent financial, social, and environmental ‘bottom lines’ of companies.
40. Value proposition - The consumer value derived from a product, service, or organization. For example, using recycled materials is a value-proposition for climate-conscious consumers.
41. Water security - The capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human wellbeing, and socioeconomic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems.
42. WEEE-waste - Discarded electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) such as mobile phones, computers, and televisions. (Also known as E-Waste)

<https://www.cdp.net/en/the-sustainable-economy-glossary>

[Sustainability 101: 35 terms and definitions you need to know \(sustainablereview.com\)](https://sustainable.org.nz/learn/tools-resources/glossary-of-sustainability/)

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