



Planet Positive[©]

Planet positive is a compensation program that enables products and activities with a negative impact to become positive for the planet. Going beyond “neutralizing”, the negative impact is compensated twice, resulting in a positive planetary impact of equal size.

Goal of the *planet positive* label: to provide an empowering, trusted, scientifically rigorous label for products and activities that demonstrates that the product or activity, including compensatory measures, has contributed to making the planet more ecologically and socially positive.¹ *Planet positive* means that the product or activity becomes socially beneficial in addition to reducing global overshoot.

This initiative, promoted by Global Footprint Network, does not merely neutralize impact. It goes beyond: it mirrors the negative ecological impact of the product or activity into a positive ecological contribution of the same size. Therefore, the Ecological Footprint of a product or service is compensated to an extent that it results in a reduction of humanity’s ecological overshoot. The reduction is at least as large as the original Footprint.

Given massive global ecological overshoot,² neutralizing impact is no longer sufficient. Overshoot reduction is required to enable humanity to thrive within the means of planet Earth. *Planet positive* activities truly MoveTheDate: they push the date of [Earth Overshoot Day](#) further out.³

¹ Technically speaking, the approach reduces humanity’s biocapacity deficit by as much as it would have been increased without the measure. And it is done in a fair way that benefits people with less economic opportunities.

² FoDaFo, York University and Global Footprint Network’s National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts track the level of global overshoot, as well as biocapacity deficits, nation by nation. Results are available on an open data platform at <https://data.footprintnetwork.org>. Economic implications are spelled out in research published in [Nature Sustainability](#) and [Sustainability](#).

³ *Planet positive* is not subject to rebound effects: On the contrary, if the label leads to more *planet positive* activities, overshoot will be reduced even further.

Mechanism: Every product or activity requires energy and resources. This is true even for an email or a song on a solar-powered smart phone. To make a product or activity *planet positive*, we calculate its total resource requirements⁴ and compensate them at least twofold. This includes any demand on the planet's ecosystems' regenerative capacity – i.e., its entire Ecological Footprint.

Anthropogenic carbon emissions are a big part of humanity's current demand on the regenerative capacity of the planet – the carbon Footprint currently makes up 57% of humanity's Footprint.⁵ Here is how *planet positive* deals with carbon emitted by the product or activity – i.e., its carbon Footprint:

1. The same amount of carbon is compensated by investing in emission reductions. This is CO₂ that would otherwise have been emitted (for example in a fossil fuel plant), that is now avoided; for example, by producing it with solar power or by reducing use through higher efficiency.
2. In addition, a second unit of carbon for the same amount is compensated by investing in the ecosystem's capacity to absorb carbon, thereby also restoring those ecosystems.

As a result, twice the amount of carbon Footprint associated with the product or activity is being compensated, hence the effect is net positive for the planet. As a result, **the planet is better off.**

Why take both approaches into account when compensating carbon? Because the goal is not just to compensate or neutralize, but to make the planet better – and MoveTheDate. The *planet positive* certification must overcome any doubt that it produces net-positive outcomes. For instance, sequestering carbon dioxide when restoring ecosystems still requires biocapacity (space to absorb the CO₂). It does not make the demand on nature go away. By paying for carbon sequestration, that carbon's Ecological Footprint does not disappear; the emitters are just taking responsibility for the sequestration when they invest in sequestration (as opposed to just emitting and leaving it up to humanity to cope with that excess atmospheric carbon). Yet, sequestration has additional benefits as it typically leads to the restoration of ecosystems and opportunities for biodiversity. Others are more skeptical of emission reduction approaches as the reduction is not visible or materially manifest. Measuring reduction depends on careful, not murky, accounting⁶. Therefore, *planet positive* uses the highest standards, high-quality carbon credits.

⁴ Global Footprint Network analyzes the world from a biological perspective, recognizing biological capital as the materially most limiting resource for the human economy. Hence, when measuring impact of a product or activity, all demands are translated into how much biocapacity is required to provide and use that product or activity.

⁵ <https://data.footprintnetwork.org>

⁶ The assessed carbon emissions not only include the ones from the direct energy used but also those caused through the entire life cycle. This means that the carbon emissions counted also consist of the proportional part of the energy and resources needed to produce the equipment and the associated infrastructure. For example, when displaying visuals on an electronic screen, it not only includes the direct electricity used to operate the screens but also the portion of the energy needed to produce the display panels, and the electric infrastructure used to produce and distribute the electricity. In other words, *planet positive* takes a systemic view that includes the entire impact, consistent with life-cycle assessment approaches.

Quality: *Planet positive* adheres to the highest accounting and compensation standards, including the requirement that carbon credits⁷ ensure that the certification delivers on its promise. Compensations used for *planet positive* must:

- avoid [double counting](#) (for instance, carbon reductions must not be counted elsewhere);
- be socially beneficial (benefits have to flow back to communities that manage the ecosystems);
- be guaranteed over long time frames (not just temporary); and
- be traceable as every provided *planet positive* seal is registered on the *planet positive* website www.planetpositive.eco.

What Global Footprint Network offers: we provide a *planet positive* stamp of approval for the specified activity that we assess (this comes with a logo and a public log on the *planet positive* website www.planetpositive.eco). The accounting of activities and their compensation are listed in a publicly accessible log on the website.

Operationalization: Global Footprint Network provides the certification of *planet positive* for clearly defined products or activities under the following process:

1. Global Footprint Network assesses the life-cycle Ecological Footprint of the product or activity. Products and activities that are non-compliant with environmental pollution standards or labor laws are not eligible.
2. Global Footprint Network shows the results to the client, including the costs it would take to make the product or activity *planet positive* and what exactly it includes (i.e., compensating twice in order to mirror the impact from negative to positive.). Activities will also be defined by a time span. Products that require resource inputs to operate will be treated as “activities”.⁸
3. If the client agrees with the proposal, Global Footprint Network will provide them with the *planet positive* seal that demonstrates the *planet positive* certification. Global Footprint

⁷ Leading carbon standards include Plan Vivo <https://www.planvivo.org> and Gold Standard <https://www.goldstandard.org>. More on assessing the quality of carbon offsets is available [here](#).

⁸ Products and activities. Activities require resources. For instance, to fly from point A to point B requires resources to fuel the plane, and also includes portions of the airport infrastructure and plane (the appropriate share of the embodied resources in the plane and the airport infrastructure). Or watching a movie takes energy, and there is a share in the overall resources that were needed to produce the movie, per viewer. Products are slightly more complex. Some products, such as a bed, a vase, or a curtain, do not need resources to be used. For those products the question is, how much does it take to provide this product to the user (and how long does it last)? Other products, like a car, a heating blanket, or a food mixer also require energy to operate. Hence, they can be analyzed similar to an activity, including both the operational resource and energy requirements and the appropriate share in embodied energy and resources to produce the product. Clothes, for example, may also be in the latter product category, as wearing them does not require extra resources, but they do need to be cleaned from time to time. So, they too need to be analyzed, including resources and energy used to maintain them over their life cycle. The [life-cycle assessment](#) literature addresses these distinction by defining products or activities from the perspective of “functional units” - such as wearing a particular t-shirt for a year.

Network will list each certification on its website, including how it was compensated. This secures the full transparency of the process.

Misuse or unauthorized use of certification: If the certificate logo is used for activities that are not certified (and hence not compensated), the user must buy three-fold *planet positive* certificates if the certificate use happened by mistake. If the misuse was intentional or the breach has not been cured, the (ab)user of the certificate would be sued for damage of at least five-fold the certificate value, and their abuse would be noted publicly on the *planet positive* website www.planetpositive.eco.

Source of credits: Global Footprint Network will purchase sequestration and compensation credits from providers. They will be registered in the public log viewable at www.planetpositive.eco. All credits used are compatible with high-quality standard.

For further information, write to info@footprintnetwork.org with “PLANET POSITIVE” in the subject line.