

Headline: LOOK: New UN website allows users to compute carbon footprint

Byline: Kristine Angeli Sabillo

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Screenshot from the Climate Neutral Now website

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Ever wondered how much greenhouse gas emissions you have produced or caused in your lifetime?

A new United Nations (UN) initiative allows netizens to get a rough estimate and help them think of ways to reduce their carbon footprint.

The website Climate Neutral Now has various features that aid individuals, companies and governments to measure their climate footprint, reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and offset what they cannot reduce through so-called UN-certified emissions reductions.

It defines "climate footprint" as the amount of greenhouse gas emissions generated in a person's day-to-day life.

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The website features a button on its homepage that says "Calculate your carbon footprint now." When clicked, it redirects to a page where the user is asked about his country of residence, transportation, energy and other lifestyle choices.

At the right side of the page, the breakdown is shown as the user answers the questions.

A Filipino, for example, who travels by bus 500 kilometers a week, does not recycle his waste, uses electricity for heating, eats mostly meat and does not shop for local or organic food more or less produced 22.33 tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the last 10 years.

"Climate neutrality is a long term vision of the world we want this century and backed by science. The new universal agreement to be inked in Paris this December at COP21 needs to be a springboard to that future. It is going to require action today and tomorrow and everyone needs to get on board – from governments and corporations to cities, regions and individuals," Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) said.

Carbon neutrality refers to having a net zero carbon footprint through offsetting with renewable energy or buying carbon credits.

"Climate neutrality is not about zero emissions. It is about reducing current emissions to the point where we reach the ultimate balance between emissions and the absorptive capacity of the Earth," according to the website.

The COP21 or 21st Conference of Parties, which will be held in Paris later this year, aims to come up with a legally binding agreement that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

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American actor Edward Norton, who has pledged to Climate Neutral Now, said people should take a "personal responsibility to combat the threat of climate change."

"Help protect the ecosystems that sustain biodiversity and save the livelihoods of billions of people around the world," he said in a statement.

The website also allows businesses and governments to facilitate their voluntary cancellation of certified emission reductions (CERs), which are generated from the UN Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM).

Users can pay for CERs that held reduce greenhouse gas emissions, effectively allowing that person or entity to compensate for their own emissions.

For example, for as low as \$3.50, a user can contribute to a renewable energy project in India. The amount is equivalent to one ton of greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the website, "generating 36,000 megawatt hours of electricity per year with a modern diesel generator emits 28,000 tons of CO₂ a year. If a CDM hydro project were to replace the diesel energy with clean hydro power energy, then those 28,000 tons of CO₂ would be avoided each year, earning the CDM project 28,000 annual CERs.

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The UNFCCC secretariat said that a study by the Imperial College of London shows that a ton of CO₂ that is offset can "deliver up to USD 664 in additional economic, social and environmental benefits." IDL