

Carbon Neutrality - What Are We Talking About?

The IPCC has determined that carbon neutrality will have to be reached in the second half of the 21st century if the climate objectives of the Paris Agreement are to be met. A variety of countries, cities, companies... have announced that they are going to achieve carbon neutrality, some of them well before the critical date. But are their "carbon neutrality" and that of the IPCC the same thing? Nothing is less certain.

For many, carbon neutrality means that they will not emit more carbon than what **nature** will remove. The IPCC's definition is quite different: carbon neutrality means that **humanity will remove** as much carbon from the atmosphere as it emits.

Regardless of where it is injected into the atmosphere, CO₂ mixes quickly with the atmosphere as a whole and affects the entire surface of the planet. Carbon neutrality as defined by the IPCC is thus a global property.

Given nature's ability to absorb a part of what exceeds its own emissions - currently 50% of our annual emissions - carbon neutrality leads to a slow decrease in the atmospheric concentration of CO₂ and thus a slow decrease of the greenhouse effect. The fake carbon neutrality results only in the stabilization of the atmospheric concentration, a stabilization that does not prevent the global temperature from continuing to rise for several decades to come.

Achieving true carbon neutrality requires action right now. However, the removal of as much carbon as we currently emit is out of reach in a reasonable time frame: to achieve carbon neutrality we must drastically reduce our emissions.

All this is further detailed in the document: "[Carbon Neutrality – What Are We Talking About?](#)" by Jean Poitou.