



Salesforce on Carbon Credits

What we've learned, where we're headed,
and how to get involved

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This content is periodically updated.

The role of carbon credits in sustainability strategy

Best practice in any organization’s sustainability journey is to prioritize reducing its own emissions. Establishing science-based targets, such as targets validated by the [Science Based Targets Initiative \(SBTi\)](#), enables companies to reduce scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions while monitoring and publicly disclosing progress against climate goals. However, reducing emissions depends largely on systemic changes – e.g., grid decarbonization, sustainable policy and regulatory frameworks, and more – many of which are outside of the control of any one individual company.

As a result, even the most ambitious companies will create some residual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on their way to net zero. **Avoiding the most damaging impacts of climate change requires companies to both reduce emissions *and* address the atmospheric impact of those unavoidable, ongoing emissions.** Large businesses that both reduce their emissions, and separately, reduce or compensate for the impact of their ongoing emissions through carbon markets, can accelerate their positive climate and nature impact.

The world cannot offset its way to net zero. However, carbon credits are an important “last, but not later” option that can complement any company’s overall sustainability strategy.

While companies can use several types of financial mechanisms – such as impact investing, philanthropy, and procurement – to drive sustainability outcomes, carbon credits and carbon markets offer a uniquely impactful solution.

First, carbon credits help critical climate solutions access finance and investment. Certain climate solutions – such as forestry protection, industrial gas destruction, and direct air capture – have limited avenues for sustainable, ongoing revenue generation. Carbon credit sales allow these solutions to be scaled through commercially attractive business models. This accelerates the speed at which these solutions can be innovated, financed, and deployed. Second, carbon credits and markets, while not perfect, are robustly governed. As carbon markets around the world evolve, carbon credits are an increasingly traceable, verifiable, and transparent market instrument, which can be used to underpin credible climate action. Finally, carbon credits support projects located almost anywhere in the world. This provides companies with an opportunity to support climate and nature action in the most efficient, effective, and highest-impact regions globally, and in alignment with specific sustainability strategies.

Quality and integrity is imperative for carbon markets and projects

Today, there is both excitement and trepidation about the growth of the voluntary and compliance carbon markets. The importance of the voluntary carbon market (VCM) lies in its potential to innovate, test, and scale climate solutions, including both technological solutions – e.g., industrial gas destruction, energy transition, direct air capture – as well as nature-based solutions, such as agroforestry and reforestation.

When designed poorly, carbon projects might not deliver the emissions benefits they are meant to represent. In some cases, low quality carbon projects can even harm local communities. On the demand side of the market, some purchasers might misuse carbon credits to make misleading environmental claims, or, as a way to delay decarbonization investments.

Forecasts predicting the growth of the VCM vary widely. However, compliance carbon markets are expanding quickly, as more countries introduce or strengthen emissions trading systems. The United Nations (UN) is integrating carbon market mechanisms into the Paris Agreement, creating new demand for high integrity carbon credits, and narrowing linkages between voluntary and regulated carbon credit demand.

In this sense, a continued “flight to quality” in the VCM is paramount. Many of the norms, standards, and best practices that are tested in the VCM can inform the development of compliance markets. That’s why, in addition to working to strengthen the quality of individual carbon projects, it is imperative that we collectively strengthen the infrastructure of carbon markets overall.

Salesforce's commitment to a sustainable future

Catalyzing the voluntary carbon market

At Salesforce, we believe that building a more resilient business and a more resilient world go hand in hand. A net zero, nature positive future is not just a corporate responsibility – it's a business imperative.

We've committed to reducing our absolute scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions 67% by 2030 (FY2031) compared with a 2018 (FY2019) base year, and reducing scope 3 GHG emissions 68% per USD value added within the same time frame. In addition to working toward these emissions reductions, we are committed to purchasing carbon credits equivalent to our residual scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions on an annual basis. While these targets are linked, as both relate to the impact of our business on the atmosphere, they are managed and communicated separately.

In practice, our participation in carbon markets has served to advance emissions reductions at Salesforce. While we do not have an internal price on carbon, our annual emissions compensation commitment creates a cost of carbon that can incentivize the changes needed to achieve our emissions reduction goals.

When we made our first carbon credit purchases in 2017, we relied almost entirely on a few trusted brokers – many of whom we still work with today – to find, vet, and source credits on our behalf. Since then, the benchmark for transparency and quality has risen steeply, and there are more trusted resources to help buyers navigate the market. Massive leaps forward in market integrity have been made thanks to efforts including the Integrity Council for the VCM (ICVCM) and the VCM Integrity Initiative (VCMI). An evolution of project methodologies, verification methods, and market standards, and the emergence of third party rating agencies like Sylvera (which Salesforce Ventures invested in, in 2021), BeZero and Calyx Global, continue to enhance market integrity.

Our focus on nature-based solutions

Our climate funding includes a strong focus on nature-based solutions, aligned with our Nature Positive Strategy. Nature is the world's most powerful carbon sink, and unlocking its full potential requires investing with speed, scale, and integrity. If we collectively succeed, nature can provide for 20-30% of the total mitigation required for a 1.5°C future.

Salesforce co-founded the [Forest Future Alliance](#), a global movement to conserve, restore, and steward forest landscapes worldwide.

Despite this enormous potential, nature-based solutions currently attract about [\\$220 billion of public and private finance](#), while finance harmful to nature reached [\\$7.3 trillion in 2023](#). Annual nature investment must increase by two and a half times by 2030, and finance that is harmful to nature must be phased out to meet the global climate, biodiversity, and land-degradation goals under the Rio Conventions. The lack of alternative funding sources for nature, and the rigor of carbon finance, makes nature-based solutions well suited for and in desperate need of carbon markets.

In recent years, there has been some debate related to the potential of natural systems to store carbon with integrity. However, forests and other natural ecosystems, if measured across large enough areas, are highly stable over millennia. In addition, the carbon market has advanced a number of commercial instruments to further mitigate integrity risks. We believe that uncertainty is not a reason to exclude nature-based projects from carbon markets, but rather, serves as a key motivation to improve nature-based projects. To that end, we're working to accelerate the next generation of nature-based carbon projects with key partners including the [Symbiosis Coalition](#), [Mangrove Breakthrough](#), and [Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance \(LEAF\) Coalition](#).

A portfolio approach

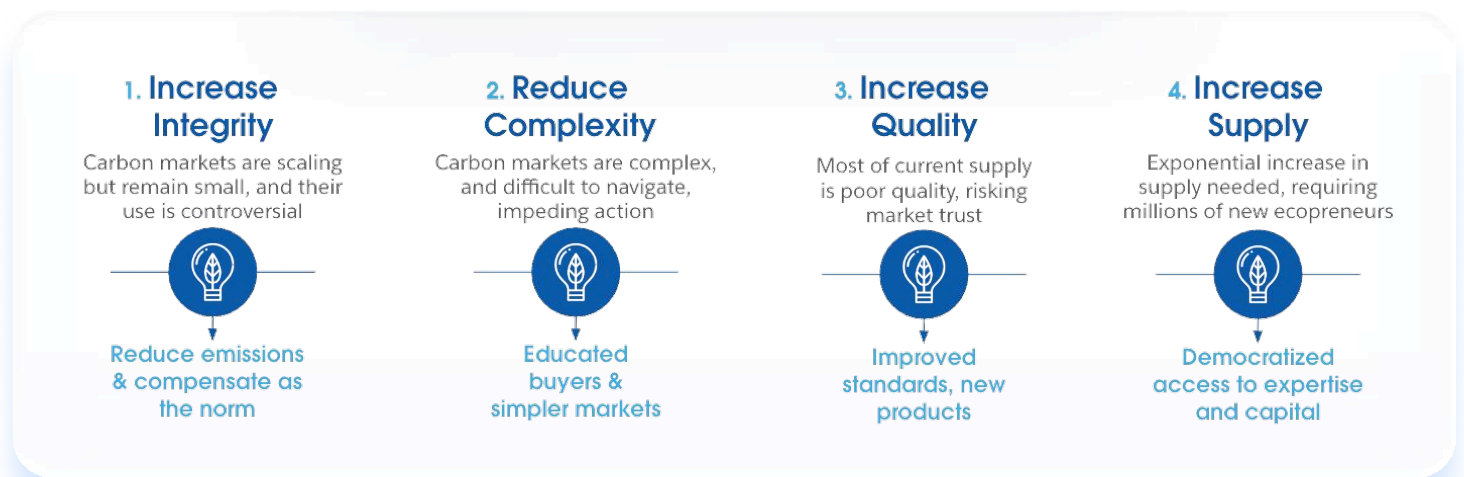
While we aim to accelerate nature conservation and restoration at scale, a portfolio approach is critical. We recognize that the severity of physical climate impacts is related to the atmospheric concentration of GHG emissions and how fast the atmosphere warms. That's why, in the near term, we emphasize superpollutant action in our carbon credit portfolio, which has been referred to as [pulling a climate "emergency brake"](#). Superpollutants are highly potent atmospheric pollutants that contribute a large share of near-term warming. They include methane, black carbon, tropospheric ozone, and hydrofluorocarbons. Although they remain in the atmosphere for relatively short periods, superpollutants have very high warming potential and are critical targets for immediate climate action. In 2026, we co-launched the [Superpollutant Action Initiative](#) with Beyond Alliance, Amazon, Google, and other corporate partners.

We also know that, by midcentury and beyond, a 1.5°C future will require several gigatons of engineered carbon removal capacity, beyond what nature can provide. To this end, we committed to invest [\\$100 million](#) to scale and commercialize engineered carbon dioxide removal (CDR) technologies. In 2024, we began deploying capital to CDR suppliers through partners including [Frontier](#) and [Milkywire](#).

What we've learned

Despite the tremendous progress the VCM has made, we continue to encounter the same four fundamental market issues that we believe keep the VCM from reaching its full potential: **integrity, complexity, quality, and supply.**

Opportunities to scale the voluntary carbon market



‘Reduce and invest’ is the right approach

The first – and perhaps the largest – challenge is **integrity**. The primary criticism of engagement in the VCM is that carbon credits may be used as a substitute for more difficult or costly action, such as reducing emissions. The solution is simple: companies should set separate ambitions for emissions reduction **and** climate compensation (i.e., compensating for the emissions they cannot otherwise reduce with carbon credits). We do not view these actions as interchangeable, or in conflict, but as complements.

This is why we prioritize action that can reduce our emissions, and separately, invest in broader climate and nature action that compensates for the impact of our ongoing emissions.

Buying quality credits is hard, and it shouldn't be

The next challenge is **complexity**. Businesses like ours are working hard to buy high-quality carbon credits. But doing so, while navigating the rapidly-evolving VCM, is challenging. Knowing how to buy, what to buy, and from whom, is difficult for even the largest corporate sustainability teams.

That's why in 2021, we helped create Beyond Alliance, which aims to “accelerate the scale, impact and credibility of investments in climate solutions essential for achieving a 1.5°C future.” Through Beyond Alliance’s technical working groups and industry events, corporate climate funders can exchange, build, and share the knowledge needed for navigating the VCM. We also encourage companies to join buyers coalitions and utilize third-party ratings agencies as key accelerants for participating in the VCM with confidence.

Projects can be better designed and built

A third challenge is the low **quality** of many carbon credits currently on offer. Research suggests that less than 16% of carbon credits issued to date may be considered high quality.

At minimum, we look for credits that are designed using a market standard that is aligned with the ICVCM's Core Carbon Principles, and which have been rated as demonstrating low climate integrity risk by at least one independent ratings agency. However, it is important to consider project quality in broader terms than carbon impacts alone. For example, when assessing carbon projects, we look beyond emissions avoidance or sequestration to consider the potential social and environmental benefits they can generate. We believe that these are not only “co-benefits,” but important drivers of long-term project success.

A holistic approach to carbon projects



We are in an ecopreneur revolution

The final issue relates to **limited supply**. There simply aren't enough projects generating high quality carbon credits today; and certainly not for the number of credits that will be required by 2030. Fortunately, a growing numbers of ecopreneurs – innovators focused on solving sustainability challenges – are building businesses with speed and at scale.

Salesforce is working to democratize and streamline the supply-side of the carbon market. As a founding sponsor of [UpLink](#), we're helping to connect more than 80,000 ecopreneurs around the world as they develop the next generation of climate solutions and accelerate progress on the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). Through our [Salesforce Accelerator – Agents for Impact](#) initiative, we provide nonprofits with funding, technology, and pro bono expertise to help them scale their mission, such as [nature solutions](#).

We also support initiatives and communities that can be supercharged by carbon markets. We've funded the [Mangrove Breakthrough](#), a global movement to value, finance, and safeguard mangroves around the world. The ambition of the Mangrove Breakthrough is to mobilize \$4 billion to protect and restore 15 million hectares of mangroves by 2030.

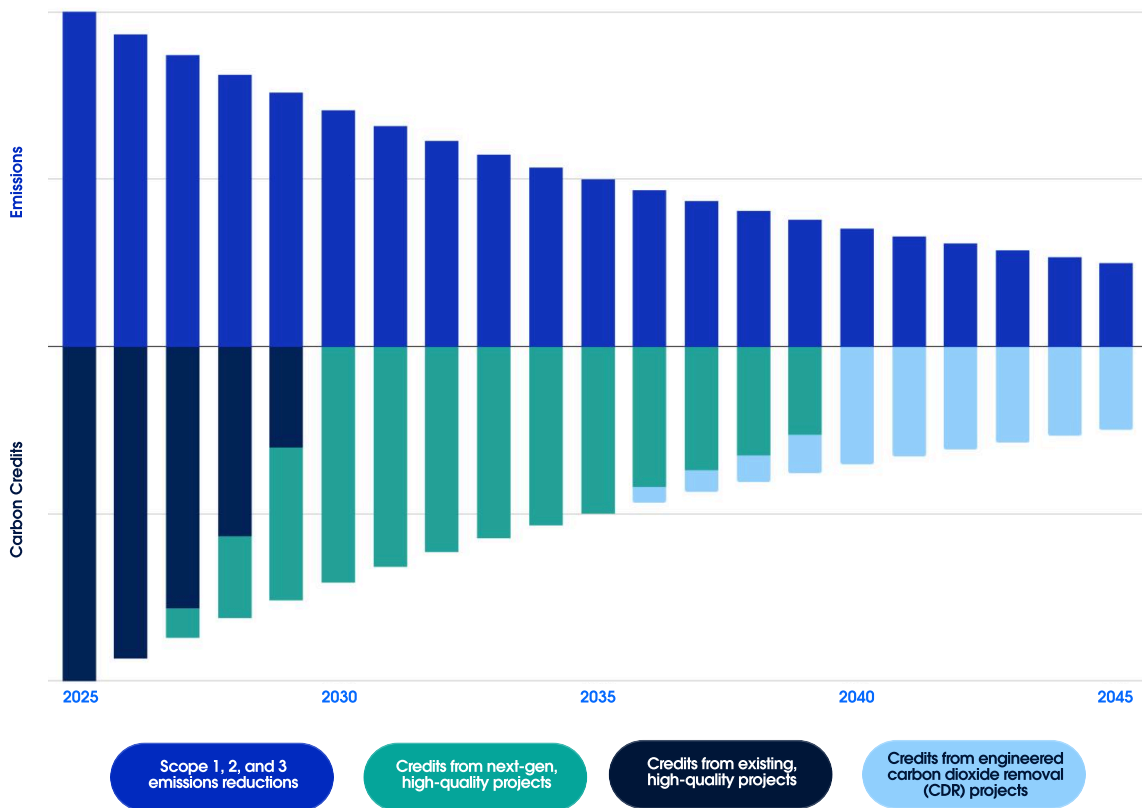
Importantly, we actively participate in five carbon market-wide initiatives that are accelerating new climate and nature projects. These include the [Symbiosis Coalition](#) (nature-based carbon removal), the [LEAF Coalition](#) (jurisdictional REDD+), the [Kinetic Coalition](#) (energy transition), [Frontier](#) (engineered carbon dioxide removal), and the [Superpollutant Action Initiative](#) (high-GWP gas mitigation).

What's next

Collective action is the only way forward

A more sustainable future requires collective action and broad-based systems change. Carbon credits – and carbon markets more generally – are a critical tool that, when made and used well, can play an important role in the global journey to net zero. We encourage companies to participate in this market responsibly, through any number of the actions, channels, or solutions that can help us advance a net zero and nature positive world.

Example high ambition net zero journey



As we champion best practices, we will continue to learn. We're in this together, and we must work collectively to create a future all of us can be proud of – **starting now.**



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