



Climate Neutral Group's methodology on **carbon footprinting**

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Climate Neutral Group 

Part of  **Anthesis**

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1. What is an emission factor?

An emission factor is a coefficient which allows to convert *activity data* from an emission source into greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The emission factor is expressed as kg CO₂eq per unit of activity data.

To calculate the carbon footprint, the activity data needs to be multiplied with an emission factor for the corresponding emission source.

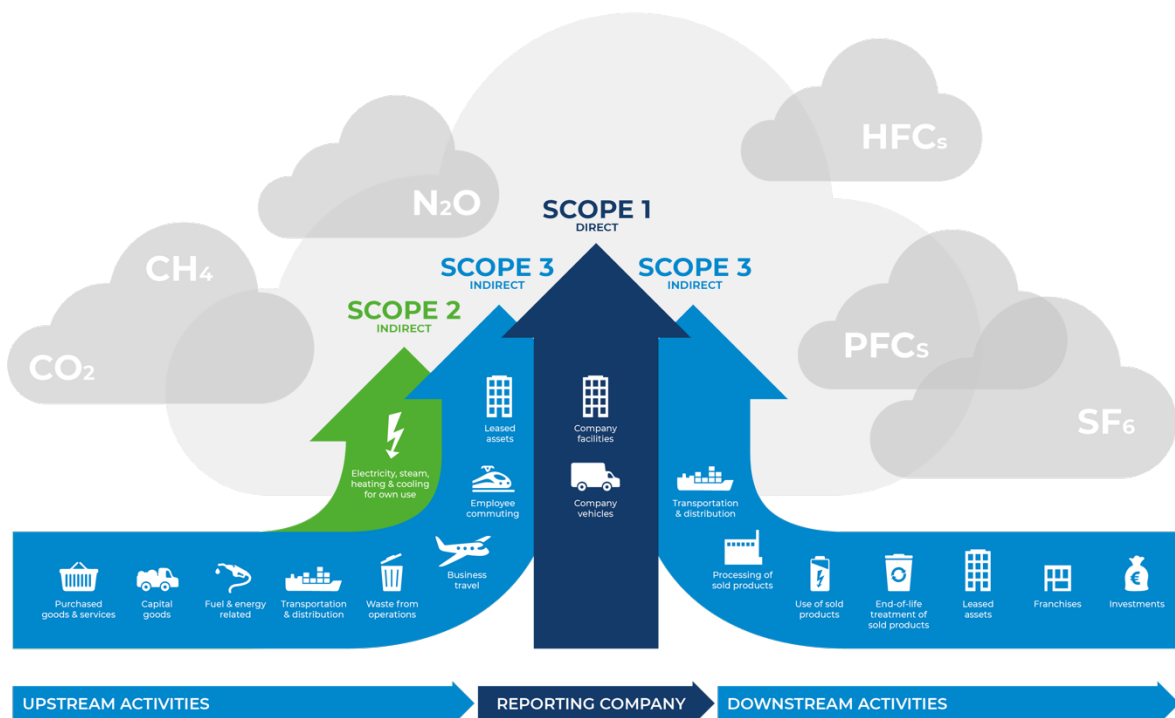
Example

The emission sources for the production of a product are Dutch grey electricity and natural gas. The activity data is 1 kWh of electricity and 2 m³ of gas.

The emission factor for Dutch grey electricity is 0,523 kg CO₂eq per kWh.
The emission factor for Dutch natural gas is 2,085 kg CO₂eq per m³.

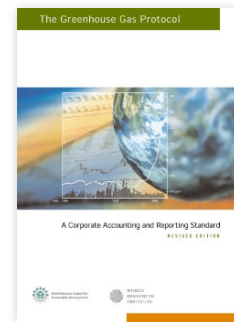
The carbon footprint to produce this product is 1 kWh multiplied by 0,523 kg CO₂eq per kWh and 2 m³ is 2,085 kg CO₂eq per m³.

To ensure high-quality carbon footprints, CNG follows a consistent and transparent approach in collecting activity data and choosing the source of emission factors.



2. Emission factor sources

Climate Neutral Group works in line with our [Climate Neutral Certified Standard](#). The Annex 3a of the Standard - the Database with Permitted Emission Factor Sources & Secondary Data Sources - contains a list of reliable sources for emission factors. This list comprises international and/or commercial databases such as [ecoinvent](#), [Agri-Footprint](#) or the [World Food LCA Database \(WFLDB\)](#) where CNG has access to. On the other hand there are public national databases such as [CO2emissiefactoren](#) from the Dutch Government or [BEIS](#) from the UK government (formerly Defra).



In case a source is not listed, it can be added. However, it should be reviewed on transparency, completeness, and applicability by CNG. The [databases from Greenhouse Gas Protocol](#) could be considered when collecting data for inventories.

Be aware that the number of sources should be limited as much as possible for one footprint calculation to safeguard consistency.

3. Choosing the right emission factor

For each footprint calculation we analyse credible data sources and choose the most applicable emission factor for the year in which the emission occurred. International standards, such as the Greenhouse Gas Protocol or ISO 14064-1 and 14067, describe requirements for accurate carbon footprint calculations. However, they do not specify emission factors as they are regularly updated. We follow the current developments and research and base our choices on the following criteria (derived from the Product Environmental Footprint of the European Commission):

- **Technology:** does the emission factor relate to the right technology? For example, when searching for an emission factor for electricity from solar panels, we choose the one for PV panels.
- **Geography:** does the emission factor cover the right geography? For example, when searching for an emission factor for electricity in the Netherlands, we choose for the Dutch website for emission factors. When a company is based in China, a Chinese electricity factor can be retrieved from e.g., the international database Ecoinvent.
- **Time:** does the emission factor cover the right time period? For example, when searching for an emission factor for a carbon footprint for 2018, we use data (as close as possible) derived from the same year.

Our consultants at Climate Neutral Group are trained to pay careful attention to these aspects on choosing the right emission factors.

4. Types of emission factors

4.1 Emission factors for green electricity

Emission factors for green electricity are in any case lower than the emission factors for grey electricity or the average emission factor for a country. This applies for both self-generated electricity (through e.g., solar panels) as well as for most green energy certificates, so called Guarantees of Origin (GoOs). However, the emission factors are not consequentially zero. Electricity from biomass can originate from many types and the emission factor is highly dependent on the biomass used and its origin. Emission factors for biomass (including GoOs) are therefore also not equal to zero but based on the specific type of biomass used.

In addition, Climate Neutral Group does not recognise GoOs originating from hydropower in Scandinavia (incl. Iceland). Hydropower in these countries exists for a long time already and are therefore no benefit to the European energy transition.

Below, you can find an overview of our approach to emission factors from GoOs:

Guarantees of Origin	Emission factor
Hydropower from Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark	Emission factor for grey electricity from the country in which the electricity is used
Wind and solar from any European country	Emission factor equals zero
Biomass from any European country	Emission factor for the specific type of biomass used

4.2 Emission factors for passenger flights

Depending on the available data, CNG uses three different methods to calculate emissions for passenger flights. All calculation methods include a standard request for information including all greenhouse gases. The results are expressed in CO₂ equivalents.

1) CNG's Flight Carbon Calculator

Since February 2021, Climate Neutral Group has its own flight carbon calculator available (FCC). The calculator uses special databases that can provide accurate, flight-specific calculations. This method is based on calculating the fuel consumption for a specific flight segment and converting it into CO₂ emissions using a standard conversion factor (3.16 tons CO₂/ton aviation fuel according to [ICAO](#), the International Civil Aviation Organisation from the UN). FCC calculates the CO₂ emissions of a flight with increasing accuracy, depending on available input data and on aircraft type and class level. The following input data is essential: [IATA codes](#), flight class, airline codes and aircraft type (equipment code). The calculation is based, among other things, on the following input fields: flight duration, aircraft type and age, airline and seat configuration, and passenger load factor. A radiative forcing index¹ (RFI) of 1.9 is included in the calculation as a standard, which can be adjusted if necessary.

¹ The Radiative Forcing Index (RFI) is the ratio of total radiative forcing to that from CO₂ emissions alone. It is used as a measure of the importance of aircraft-induced climate change. ([Source: IPCC archive](#))

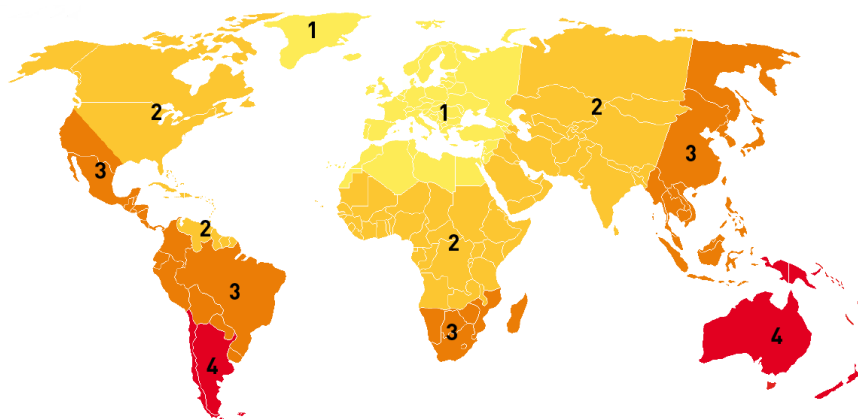
2) CNG's distance-based flight calculator

In case not all necessary data for the FCC is known, CNG uses a flight calculator with a distance-based method. It calculates the flight emissions based on the distance flown, [UK-BEIS emission factors](#), the RFI, and flight class (if known). The distance flown is corrected for 'detour flights' in order to land on the right airport. This detour factor is maximised, according to ICAO. As in the FCC, an RFI of 1.9 is included as a standard, which can be adjusted if necessary. The Well to Tank (WtT) and Tank to Wheel (TtW) factors are included in the relevant parameters of the calculation.

3) Zone Model

The zone model is based on flight zones from the Netherlands and is only used if air travel is not a significant part of the total footprint.

- Zone 1: Europe and North Africa
- Zone 2: North America, Central Africa, Middle East, India and Russia
- Zone 3: West Coast America, South America, Southern Africa, Southeast Asia and Japan
- Zone 4: Chile, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand and Polynesia



return trip from Europe to zone:	average CO ₂ emissions
GreenSeat zone 1	0.50 tonnes CO ₂
GreenSeat zone 2	1.00 tonnes CO ₂
GreenSeat zone 3	1.20 tonnes CO ₂
GreenSeat zone 4	2.00 tonnes CO ₂

4.3 Emission factors for 'green gas'

The term 'green gas' can be interpreted in different ways. CNG considers gas as 'green' only if it comes from renewable sources, also called biogas. This is released, for example, during the fermentation of organic waste, maize or manure. In this case we also use a lower emission factor. However, green gas for heating is still very limited.

As a company, you can choose to compensate for your gas consumption. Often, this is referred to as 'green' but factually, it concerns CO₂ offsets from projects not related to green gas, meaning that this gas hasn't necessarily been generated from renewable sources. CNG therefore does not calculate with a lower emission factor in this case but with the one for natural gas. The CO₂ offsets count of course for the compensation of emissions.

4.4 Emission factors from primary sources

It is encouraged to use primary data if available. For example, in case your supplier has calculated a carbon footprint for a product that you buy, it is recommended to use this information instead of emission factors from secondary databases. If this is an Environmental Product Declaration (EPD), the footprint has been reviewed and thus is credible. In any other case, please keep in mind to review the footprint on the GHG footprinting principles described below.

5. Updating emission factors

CNG uses the most recent emission factors. Updates occur at the beginning of each year and will remain the same during that entire year (apart from exceptions due to insights with significant impact). This rule mostly applies to the emission factors derived from national databases, such as CO₂emissiefactoren or BEIS. Emission factors from international databases, such as [ecoinvent](#), may not change every year and therefore should be reviewed at least every 3 years.

Annual updates based on CO₂emissiefactoren will also be translated to our CO₂ Management System (SmartTrackers).

6. GHG footprinting principles

When building a carbon footprint, we take the following aspects into account, based on the GHG Protocol principles:

- **Accuracy:** are uncertainties reduced as far as possible?
- **Relevance:** do the emissions included represent the GHG of the organisation or product?
- **Consistency:** are methods, boundaries and approaches used consistent so that they allow comparison of emissions over assets and time?
- **Completeness:** are all emission sources and activities accounted for in the footprint?
- **Transparency:** are the data sources, assumptions and sub-calculations transparent?

We rely on the following sources:

- [Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules Guidance](#) of the European Commission
- [GHG Accounting and Reporting Principles](#) of the World Resources Institute

7. List of activity data

Annex 1: List of Mandatory and Optional GHG Emission Sources on page 27 of the [Climate Neutral Certified Standard](#) provides a list of activity data (or usage data) that should in any case be considered when calculating the footprint of an organisation, product or service. This list is based on the GHG Protocol.