

S5 Carbon Footprint

What is a carbon footprint?

A carbon footprint is the amount of greenhouse gases—primarily carbon dioxide—released into the atmosphere by human activity. A carbon footprint can be a broad measure or be applied to the actions of an individual, a family, an event, a business, or even an entire country. It is usually measured as tons of CO₂ emitted per year.

How is a carbon footprint calculated?

When calculating a carbon footprint, a lot of factors are taken into consideration. For example, driving to the supermarket burns a certain amount of fuel, and fossil fuels are the primary sources of greenhouse gases. That supermarket is powered by electricity, its employees probably drive to work, so the store has its own carbon footprint. Moreover, getting the products to the store added to the carbon footprint. Before those goods were shipped, the fruits, vegetables, and meats that the store sells were all grown or raised on farms, a process that produces methane, which has a greenhouse effect 25 times greater than CO₂. The combination of all these elements results in the full carbon footprint of a given activity.

How can I calculate my carbon footprint?

It is difficult to add up one's individual carbon footprint. Online calculators are often used to give a rough estimate of one's carbon footprint. It considers factors such as the size of your household, how often you drive/fly, how efficient your appliances are, what you eat, if you recycle, etc. Of course, this is not a perfect measure, it

helps to gauge the level of one's carbon footprint. Having an idea of your carbon footprint can encourage you to take the necessary steps in order to reduce it.

How can I reduce my carbon footprint?

Here are some ways you can reduce your carbon footprint:

- driving more-efficient vehicles
- using public transport
- using energy-efficient appliances
- insulating your home to reduce heating and air conditioning costs
- consuming food that doesn't require as much transportation
- eating less meat
- purchasing carbon credits, the money from which can go into projects such as planting trees or investing in renewable energy.