



The Climate Clarity Guide

Making climate jargon simple



Why have we made our Climate Clarity Guide?

At McDonald's Ireland we believe we have a really important role to play in tackling climate change.

And we know it's something you care about too.

But the language used around the environment is often so complicated that it makes it hard to really understand what is happening to our planet and exactly what the problems are. That means when it comes to doing your bit for the environment, it's difficult to know where to start.

That's why we've created **The Climate Clarity Guide.**

This guide provides clear explanations for some of the most complicated language used to describe climate change. It will help you cut through the jargon and have conversations with friends and family about what we can all do to help protect our planet.

“ We've all got a duty of care to look after the environment. McDonald's Ireland franchisee ”

Sustainability is definitely something I've heard a lot about, but am not able to explain fully. Sometimes my kids ask questions about it and I don't quite know how to answer.

42 year old mother of three from Dublin

60%



of people think the jargon used to describe climate change is increasing

75%



of people would like to understand more about the environment



Why we made this guide



Carbon Jargon



Getting Climate Clarity



What we're doing



Getting your head around carbon jargon

You are not alone – the language around climate change is confusing.

Have you ever been chatting about the environment, when terms crop up and you're not 100% sure what they mean? Don't worry, it isn't just you - it's hard for anyone to know the difference between carbon offsetting and carbon capture.

No matter what age you are, it's a topic we're all looking to learn more about.

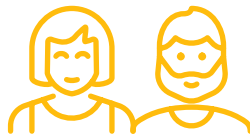
I probably started to think about climate change a lot more when I thought - what will the future look like for my daughter and maybe grandchildren as well?

McDonald's Ireland Franchisee



18-24

Young people (aged 18-24) are the keenest to understand more about what they can do to protect the planet (67%)



parents

39% say that their children ask them questions about sustainability that they can't always fully answer



55+

58% of the over 55s feel that they don't know enough when it comes to issues around sustainability and the environment. 23% think that the jargon used makes the issue too complex to understand



Although most people (91%) have heard of the term 'zero carbon', 23% of these say that they are not able to explain it

51% of parents think that their family would engage much more with sustainability and the environment if the language used was easier to understand



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We asked the Irish public for the words, phrases, and language which they find the most confusing when reading, hearing, or talking about climate change or the environment.

To help cut through the noise we've teamed up with Duncan Williamson, former Head of Food at the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Compassion in World Farming, to provide clear explanations for the most misunderstood terms.



Carbon

Carbon is a chemical element that is in all living things. As plants and animals die they get buried in the ground, and after many millions of years these **underground remains can turn into fossil fuels, such as coal and oil.**

When we burn these fuels the carbon that was in the ground goes into the air as a gas called carbon dioxide. Plants and trees can absorb some of this carbon dioxide, but a lot of it stays in the atmosphere as a Greenhouse Gas that warms up the planet. Humans have cut down many of the planet's trees and plants, making the problem worse.



Carbon Dioxide

Carbon dioxide is **one of the 'Greenhouse' Gases that traps heat and warms up the air around the Earth.** This makes the planet become warmer (similar to the way a greenhouse heats up in the sun because the hot air is trapped inside).

That increase in temperature, or global warming, causes a number of **harmful effects including making the weather more extreme** (so more droughts and floods, for example), melting the ice caps and making sea levels rise.

75% of people would like to understand more about issues around sustainability and the environment.

84% believe that more should be done by brands and governments **to explain climate issues** in ways everyone can understand.



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Climate Change

Climate change describes a change in the weather of a region — such as high and low temperatures and amount of rainfall — over a long period of time rather than individual weather events. **Scientists have observed that, overall, the Earth is warming.**

This can have many impacts. For some animals and species, the places they live will change so much they will no longer be able to survive there.

As climate change is happening so quickly many species won't be able to find a new place to live and could become extinct.

We are already feeling the impacts of climate change, from wildfires in the USA to flooding in London.



Fossil Fuels

Fossil fuels are **fuels such as coal, oil or gas** that are created underground over millions of years from the buried remains of animals or plants. They are the leading contributor to climate change.

Emissions

An emission is something that's been released into the world. In the context of climate change it means **the release of harmful Greenhouse Gases which trap heat in the atmosphere** and cause the earth to warm up.



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Greenhouse Gases (GHG)

These are **gases such as carbon dioxide or methane that trap heat in the earth's atmosphere**. By trapping heat closer to the Earth's surface, **it means the planet warms up**. This has many impacts such as causing glaciers to melt.

Greenhouse Gases are mostly released when fossil fuels (such as coal, or oil) are burnt to provide power or fuel, and when forests are cut down for land to be used for farming.

Animals like cows and sheep also produce Greenhouse Gases such methane, while producing the food used to feed chickens and pigs also releases Greenhouse Gases.

Global Warming

Scientists have observed that, **overall, the Earth is warming**. This rise in global temperature is sometimes called global warming.

This can have many impacts – some areas of the world will become dangerously hot so it is impossible for animals or people to live, and the ice caps and glaciers will melt.



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Making the most complicated climate jargon simple

The 15 climate terms people in Ireland said they find the most confusing are:



1. Biodiversity

Biodiversity is **the variety of plants, animals and different species in a habitat – whether that's on land or in water.**

Having the right balance between living things and healthy places for them to live is important not just for that area, but for the whole planet. For example, a meadow with high biodiversity will have lots of different species, from plants and birds to insects and worms.



4. Climate resilience

is how well a specific place, or a community, is able to cope with extreme weather and other impacts of climate change.



2. Carbon capture

is the process of **catching the carbon dioxide gas produced by places like power plants and factories** before it enters the air and then taking it away and storing it deep underground.



5. Carbon neutrality

is when the **amount of Greenhouse Gas released into the air by a company equals the amount it removes from the air.**

Basically, whatever they put in is matched by what they take out.

3. Carbon offsetting

is a way of **balancing out the amount of carbon you produce or use** by doing other things that remove or lower the amount of carbon in the air, like planting trees, for example.



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6. Decarbonisation

means **reducing and removing carbon**. Specifically, it's about countries and companies making changes so they produce less carbon – for example by moving to greener energy sources like wind and solar.



7. Food sovereignty

is the **right of all people to healthy food that is grown, made and eaten in a way that respects both nature and the climate**. Usually this means focusing on creating local, small scale food systems, where food is grown, made, and eaten locally.



8. Greenwashing

is **when a company makes it sound like they are more environmentally friendly than they actually are**.

For example, saying something is made from all recycled materials and it isn't, or over claiming about how much energy a product saves.

It's a play on the term "whitewashing," which is when you exaggerate or mislead about something to gloss over bad behaviour.



9. Nature-based solutions

are actions and ideas that use the power of nature to help lessen the impact of climate change on the planet. For example, restoring a forest or wetland, or using coral reefs to help provide flood protection.



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10. Net zero

is about keeping things in balance. It's about making sure the amount of Greenhouse Gases we put into the air is the same as the amount we take away. Either by reducing the amount of Greenhouse Gases we make in the first place or by making sure we do things that help remove those gases once they are released.

There are key differences between net zero and carbon neutrality. Carbon neutrality is focused on short term ways to offset carbon emissions – so it's not about reducing emissions necessarily but doing things that cancel out their impact.

Net zero is a longer-term goal focused on reducing emissions in line with the latest climate science and you only offset those emissions where it is impossible to take out or reduce the carbon that come from sources the company doesn't own or control.

That is everything from the business travel their employees undertake, to the waste they create, the investments they make and the goods and services they buy. This can include transportation, distribution and how a product is disposed of at the end of its life.



11. Regenerative agriculture

is a way of farming that works in closer harmony with nature. It's where you avoid doing things that might harm the land or other wildlife and instead use those natural resources to help you farm better, protect nature and be better prepared for the impacts of climate change, such as bad weather.

It means paying a lot of attention to how healthy the soil is and how you use water, and relying less on fertilizers and other man-made methods.

An example of an environmental improvement as the result of regenerative agriculture is increased biodiversity.

12. Science-based targets



are the targets set by companies to reduce their Greenhouse Gas emissions. Targets are considered 'science-based' if they are in line with meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement - a major global treaty on climate change which states that helping to **keep global warming to below 2°C** is needed to significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.



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13. Scope 1,2,3 carbon emissions

is the **way of pinpointing the sources of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions a company generates** from its own operations, or through other operations the company doesn't own or control.

Scope 1 are the **emissions that come directly from things the company owns and controls**. That's everything from the gas boilers they might use, to their office air conditioning, to the fumes produced by their delivery vehicles.

Scope 2 are the **indirect emissions that come from making the energy a company buys** in order to run its business. For most companies, electricity is the main source here.

Scope 3 is **all the other indirect emissions that come from sources the company doesn't own or control**. That is everything from the business travel their employees undertake, to the waste they create, the investments they make and the goods and services they buy.

This can include transportation, distribution and how a product is disposed of at the end of its life.

Footnote:

Quantitative Research carried out by Amárach Research, the Irish market research and data specialists who carry out social, behavioural and policy related research. Established since 1989, Amárach specialises in providing high-quality research, consulting and analysis. Research carried out between 10th and 17th September 2021 with 1,000 members of the public.



14. Sustainable agriculture

is a **way of farming with the future in mind**. It means growing food in a way that responsibly uses important resources, like water, and making sure future generations are still able to farm and feed themselves well.

The difference between this and regenerative agriculture is sustainable agriculture is just about **making sure the land can keep being farmed well into the future** and won't contribute to rising Greenhouse Gas emissions.

Regenerative agriculture is focused on nature and not just making the land last and holding back climate change, but really focusing on improving the land and bringing back nature, too. So it's not just sustainable but better for the land and wildlife too.

15. Zero carbon

means that **no carbon emissions are released at all by a product or service**, for example, a wind farm making electricity.



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What we're doing at McDonald's Ireland

Our Plan for Change is a broad plan setting out clear goals and actions to help us achieve our aim of net zero emissions across our entire UK and Ireland business by 2040.

We're addressing all the ways we impact the climate by working together with our suppliers, farmers, and customers.



Our Plan for Change sets out ambitious goals and actions across our four key areas - **Planet, People, Restaurants** and **Food** – to make sure we lead positive change from farms to front counter.

Our climate commitments include:

Aim to achieve net zero emissions by 2040 across the UK&I business, working with our suppliers and franchisees to have a positive impact on the climate.

That means addressing all the ways we impact the climate to significantly reduce and remove our Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.

Ensuring all of our restaurants are built to a UK industry net zero emissions standard. Our first net zero emissions restaurant is already under construction in Shropshire. This restaurant will have curbs, roads and furniture made from recycled materials and British sheep wool to insulate the walls.

Ensuring our packaging and waste has a second life, with our customer packaging made from renewable, recycled or certified sources, and designed to be recyclable or compostable, by 2024.



Our **Plan for Change** builds on many of the moves we have already made over the last two decades to reduce our impact on the planet.



All the electricity we purchase for our UK & Irish restaurants is already 100% renewable from wind and solar sources.



We turn cooking oil into fuel for our delivery trucks.



We're rolling out electric vehicle charge points across the country.



We're working hard to decrease the amount of plastic in restaurant by switching to paper straws, introducing new lid-less McFlurry cups and reducing the amount of plastic needed in other items like salad boxes.



Plus, we have removed hard plastic toys from Happy Meals, now each meal contains either a soft toy or a paper-based toy or book and we've even opened our first-ever playground in Oxford made using recycled Happy Meal toys.



We have been sourcing responsibly for over 20 years, with our menu already including 100% Irish beef, free range eggs, organic milk, Bord Bia approved pork, MSC certified fish and Rainforest Alliance certified coffee.

To find out more on the Plan for Change, visit:
www.mcdonalds.ie/planforchange



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