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Making “Carbon footprint” the new “Calorie” for a Net Zero

Guy Djoken

U.S. Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centers & Associations, The United States

Abstract

According to the United Nations backed scientists, the only way to avert the worst impacts of climate change and preserve a livable planet, global temperature increase needs to be limited to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. To keep global warming to no more than 1.5°C – as called for in the Paris Agreement – emissions need to be reduced by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.

Today, across the globe, a growing coalition of stakeholders are pointing to net-zero emissions objective as the best way out of the doom. 107 countries, responsible for about 82% of global greenhouse gas emissions, have committed to the net-zero pledges in one way or another.

While pressure has been correctly applied on major polluting countries and industries, a shared responsibility for effective climate change solutions with individuals seems as the best course of action with a better chance of success.

To that end, the "carbon footprint" concept developed by British Petroleum in the early 2000s may offer viable path. The footprint calculator allows users to estimate their household emissions based on factors like home features, travel habits, and recycling.

By making carbon footprint the new “Calorie” we can turn Carbon footprint counting as “Calorie Counting”. The global popularity of counting calories in food is mixed and varies significantly by region, but its use in official nutrition information is widespread.

The calorie, originally a unit of heat energy for engineers, was adapted for food and human metabolism by American agricultural chemist Wilbur Olin Atwater, and soon after, became a common food keyword due to nutrition science in the late 19th century and popular media in the early 20th century.

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