

# SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## Debunking commonly used terms

**Sustainability:** Official definition (Brundtland): "*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". Added to this is being able to grow economically without breaking environmental or societal boundaries, trading ethically, minimising usage of harmful ingredients where possible and supporting local communities.

**Scope 1, 2 and 3:** **Scope 1** emissions are from sources owned or directly controlled by the organisation, eg, gas boilers, company cars. **Scope 2** emissions are the company's indirect emissions, caused by the production of the electricity it purchases and uses. **Scope 3** emissions are the emissions the organisation is indirectly responsible for up and down its value/supply chain. eg. procurement, shipping.

**Carbon Neutral:** Based on Scope 1 and 2 emissions, a company can declare themselves carbon neutral by offsetting what they use, but there are no requirements to reduce emissions or make improvements.

**Net Zero:** Reducing emissions across all scopes as far as possible, then offsetting what remains. This is designed to meet the Paris agreement of keeping a global temperature rise of less than 1.5°C.

**Offsetting:** Where carbon emissions generated through an activity (e.g. manufacturing, driving, flying) are calculated, and then the equivalent amount is "paid off", via investing in a scheme which removes carbon from the atmosphere (e.g. tree planting). Carbon offsetting does not reduce emissions at the source and purchasing offsets should be a last resort, after other measures to avoid, reduce or substitute emissions have been explored.

**Circular Economy:** This is trying to keep resources in use for as long as possible. This can be by reusing, repairing, sharing and recycling. This model tries to reduce waste to a minimum.

**Greenwashing:** A form of marketing that exaggerates the 'green' credentials of a company or its products, using imagery, markings and terminology. The methods used can be misleading and claims are often unsubstantiated. Best advice is to seek evidence to back up any claims and look out for any fine print - if it seems too good to be true it often is.

**Eco-Friendly / Non-Toxic:** Widely used but unregulated terms. Check product labels and Safety Data Sheets, as products may still contain substances which are harmful. All ingredients and processes have some environmental impact, even water.

**Natural Ingredient:** A chemical compound that comes from nature. It is obtained by process of physical extraction (e.g. pressure), without any transformation of its constituents. An example ingredient would be Aloe Vera. Similar to this is a 'natural-origin' ingredient, but this has undergone chemical processing for extraction, such as solvent extraction, via methods that use minimum resources and generate minimum waste. Always check product information to ensure a product labelled as natural does not also include synthetically produced chemicals.

The GREEN CLAIMS CODE helps businesses understand and comply with obligations under consumer protection law when making environmental claims. Find out more on the GOV.UK website.