



Written by [James Murphy](#) on January 15, 2023

German Climate Researcher Proposes a CO₂ Emissions Budget for Everyone

If the world is serious about climate change, German scientist Hans Joachim Schellnhuber from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research believes, every person should be given a personal CO₂ emissions budget. According to Schellnhuber, people should be limited to producing no more than three tons of CO₂ per year per capita.

According to the Nature Conservancy, the average carbon footprint for those living in the United States is currently about 16 tons per capita per year. The average personal vehicle is said to emit 4.6 tons per year, and a single private jet can emit over two tons per hour. If you're interested, you can calculate your own personal carbon footprint [here](#).

Not to worry if you need more emissions. According to Schellnhuber you can just buy more from poor people who don't need as much.

"Everyone gets three tons of CO₂ per year, but if you need more, you just have to buy it," Schellnhuber explains.

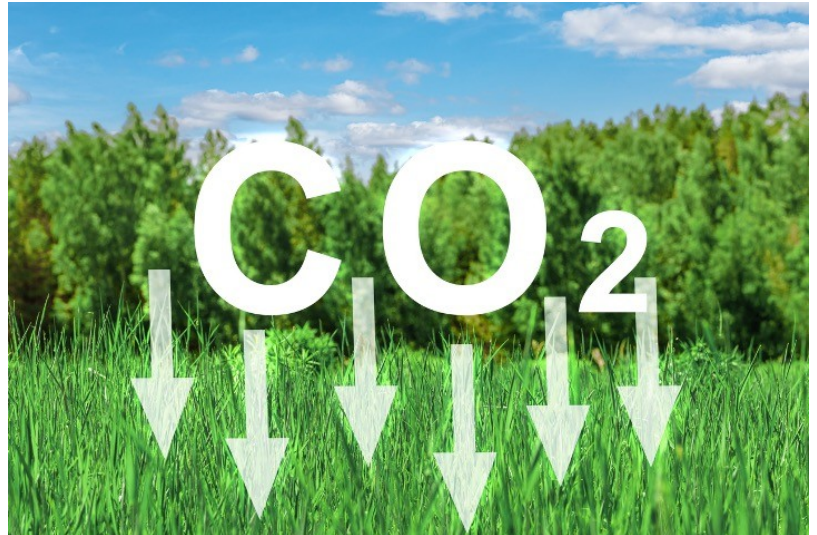
Schellnhuber refers to the three-tons-per-year target as a "planetary guard rail" to help us stave off the worst effects of climate change, which many believe will usher in higher sea levels and far more extreme weather as the global average temperature is raised by a few degrees.

While Schellnhuber doesn't expect that such a change can happen overnight, he does believe that the limit of three tons per person must be reached by 2030 — a mere seven years away.

According to the scientist, only such a radical reduction will give the world any chance of keeping global warming within that 1.5°C - 2°C threshold that the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assures us is necessary to maintain a livable habitat on Earth.

If the idea of carbon budgets and buying and selling emissions sounds familiar, it may be because former Vice President Al Gore and his business partners made a fortune selling "carbon offsets" earlier in this century. Some say Gore and his partners pocketed more than \$200 million in this carbon-credit scheme.

And that market continues to grow strong as wealthy individuals and corporations seek to be seen as "environmentally conscious" even though they may be large polluters. Consider actor Leonardo DiCaprio, a climate-change zealot who claims to be a "carbon neutral citizen" despite his energy-guzzling lifestyle with private jet trips and a fossil-fuel-powered luxury yacht.



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DiCaprio feels safe in making that claim because a London company has [planted](#) thousands of trees in his name. Trees, of course, remove CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Schellnhuber himself proposed the idea of a personal CO₂ budget for every person on Earth back in 2009:

Humankind has to limit itself to emit only [a] fixed amount of carbon into the atmosphere until 2050....

The industrialized nations have already exceeded their quotas if you take into account past emissions....

With the current output you see that Germany, the US and other industrialized nations have either already used up their permissible quota, or will do so within the next few years....

The industrialized nations are facing CO₂ insolvency. This means that they have to notch up their efforts to reduce climate change, otherwise they will use up the CO₂ budget actually designated to poorer countries and future generations.

So fourteen years ago, by Schellnhuber's calculations, the industrialized world had already used up their carbon allowance, and any emissions going forward would come from the Third World's allotment. Imagine what our "carbon allowance" would be now.

To some, Schellnhuber's "CO₂ budget" plan sounded like the stuff of authoritarians.

Czech physicist Dr. Lubos Motl said Schellnhuber's 2009 proposal "is just breathtaking and it helps me to understand how crazy political movements such as the Nazis or communists could have so easily taken over a nation that is as sensible as Germany."

Indeed, as Motl suggests, the prospect of personalized carbon scores is terrifying. Imagine government bureaucrats with the power to punish you for keeping your furnace too warm or for driving your personal vehicle too many miles.

The ability to control carbon emissions is, indeed, an authoritarian bureaucrat's dream. If it's determined that you've exceeded your monthly carbon budget, some yet-to-be-named division of social credit could have the power to fine you for climate disobedience.



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