

EU certification framework for carbon removals

The carbon removals certification framework proposed by the European Commission is considered an essential tool to deliver climate neutrality by 2050, which requires increased deployment of and investment in carbon removal technologies and initiatives. The proposal aims to ensure a transparent and credible governance framework for building trust in EU-certified carbon removals. The report on the proposal by the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) is expected to be put to the vote during the November II plenary session, thus fixing the Parliament's position for trilogue negotiations.

Background

The potential role and importance of a certification framework for carbon removals was mentioned in the Commission's 2020 [new circular economy action plan](#) and [climate target plan](#) under the European Green Deal. The Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation is so far the only piece of climate legislation dealing with carbon removals. The 2021 Commission [communication](#) on sustainable carbon cycles outlined several areas where carbon removals play or could play an important role.

European Commission proposal

The [proposed regulation](#) establishing a certification framework would be a voluntary tool to certify storage of biogenic and atmospheric carbon or the reduction of carbon release from biogenic sources into the atmosphere. It would cover three types of carbon removal activities: i) carbon farming, which enhances carbon capture in, or reduces carbon release from, a biogenic carbon pool; ii) permanent carbon storage, such as direct air capture with carbon storage (DACCS) or bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS); and iii) long-lasting carbon storage in products or materials. The framework would apply quality criteria on which an independent certification body would audit operators, to verify compliance, before a Commission-recognised certification scheme would be able to issue an EU carbon removal certificate.

European Parliament position

Parliament has [acknowledged](#) the need to increase carbon removal activities and protect natural carbon sinks. In a 2021 [resolution](#) on the circular economy action plan, Parliament called on the Commission to propose a certification framework. In April 2023, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on sustainable carbon cycles. On 24 October 2023, the ENVI committee – while emphasising the prioritisation of direct emissions reductions over removals – adopted its [report](#) with 59 votes in favour, 17 votes against, and 9 abstentions. The committee report seeks to distinguish the different types of activities, their quality criteria and associated certified units, as well as regulate use depending on the type of unit. For example, the report specifies minimum storage time to be: several centuries for carbon removal activities such as DACCS and BECCS; at least 50 years for carbon storage in products (initially limited to harvested wood products and construction materials); and at least five years for a broadened definition of carbon farming activities, which should in addition generate co-benefits for biodiversity and ecosystems. To increase transparency and limit burden on Member States, the report proposes that the Commission establish an EU registry, as well as a platform of experts representing academia, civil society and stakeholders, to monitor implementation.

First-reading report: [2022/0394\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: ENVI; Rapporteur: Lídia Pereira (EPP, Portugal). For further information see our 'EU Legislation in progress' [briefing](#).

[Outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#): This proposal is relevant for measure 1(5).

