

How can global aviation
become truly climate-neutral?

How will it affect society, and each of us?



Article

Towards True Climate Neutrality for Global Aviation: A Negative Emissions Fund for Airlines

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Abstract: What would it take for aviation to become climate-neutral by 2050? We develop and model a trajectory for aviation to reduce its CO₂ emissions by 90% by 2050, down to a level where all residual emissions can be removed from the atmosphere without crowding out other sectors that also need negative emissions. To make emitters pay for the carbon removal, we propose and model a negative emissions fund for airlines (NEFA). We show that it can pay for the removal of all CO₂ emitted by aviation from 2030 onwards, for a contribution to the fund of USD 200–250 per ton CO₂ emitted. In our baseline simulation, USD 3.3 trillion is invested by the fund over 40 years in high-quality carbon removal projects designed for biodiversity and societal co-benefits. While we do propose a number of governance principles and concrete solutions, our main goal is to start a societal dialogue to ensure aviation becomes both responsible and broadly beneficial.

Press Release No: 66

Date: 4 October 2021



Net-Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050



Translations:

Élimination des émissions nettes de carbone d'ici 2050 (pdf)
Zero emissão líquida de carbono até 2050 (pdf)
Cero emisiones

netas de CO2 en 2050 (pdf)

国际航协：2050年实现净零碳排放 (pdf)

Boston - The International Air Transport Association (IATA) 77th Annual General Meeting approved a resolution for the global air transport industry to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. This commitment will align with the Paris Agreement goal for global warming not to exceed 1.5°C.

"The world's airlines have taken a momentous decision to ensure that flying is sustainable. The post-COVID-19 re-connect will be on a clear path towards net zero. That will ensure the freedom of future generations to sustainably explore, learn, trade, build markets, appreciate cultures and connect with people the world over. With the collective efforts of the entire value chain and supportive government policies, aviation will achieve net zero emissions by 2050," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General.



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Countries' support global 'Net-zero 2050' emissions target to achieve sustainable aviation



Ministers and other high-level officials concluded high-level environment talks at ICAO Headquarters in Montréal on 22 July 2022, supporting a collective global goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Montréal, 25 July 2022 – Ministers and officials engaged in high level environment talks brokered by ICAO have urged countries to cooperate further through the UN agency toward a collective global long term aspirational goal (LTAG) of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, in support of the Paris Agreement's temperature target.

The conclusions came Friday evening after four days of deliberations among Ministers and other high-level officials representing 119 countries at ICAO Headquarters in Montréal, with over 700 participants from States and International Organizations attending the hybrid Meeting.

Recognizing that each State's special circumstances and respective capabilities will inform the ability of each to contribute within its own national timeframe, while showcasing a collaborative spirit through constructive dialogue and respect for diversity, the new conclusions will aid a just and green transition for the decarbonisation of international aviation.

NEFA Methodology

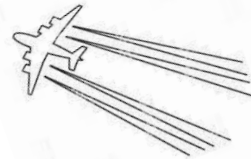
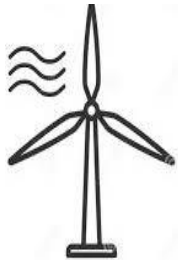
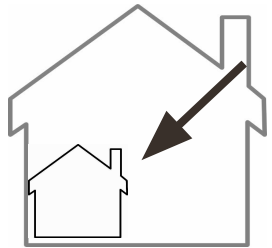
1. Analysis

- a. Goals, commitments, and actions of key aviation players incl. CORSIA
- b. Non-CO₂ dynamic climate effects of aviation (today RFI=3)
- c. Lifecycle climate and biodiversity effects of alternative fuels
- d. Alternative power sources and possible efficiency gains: electric, hydrogen
- e. Resource use for aviation and fairness
- f. Credibility and past announcements

2. Modeling, simulation, sensitivity analysis of NEFA

3. Policy proposal development

Typology of Climate Action



1 Sufficiency

2 Efficiency

3 Clean Energy

4 CCS

5 NET

6 SRM

7 Adaptation

Stabilize temperature

Stabilize CO₂ concentration

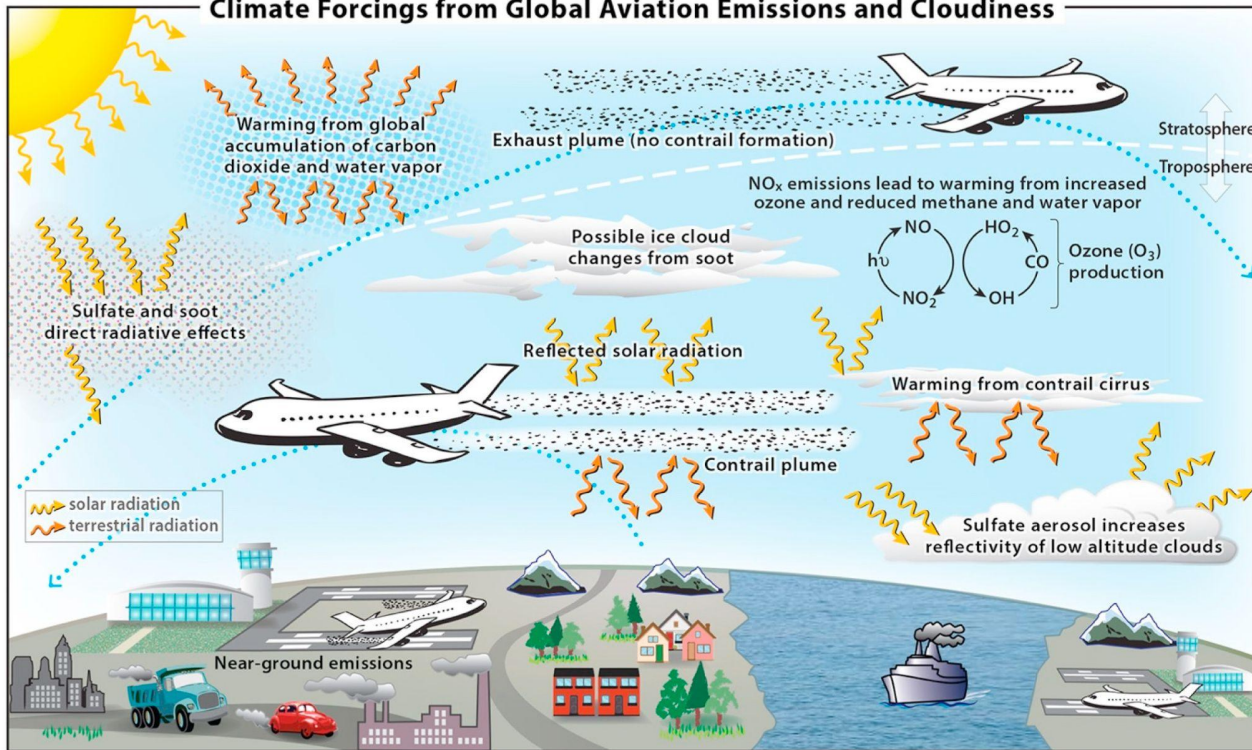
Reduce emissions

Adapt to
changed
climate

Mitigation (IPCC): reduce sources or enhance sinks

Adaptation: reduce harm

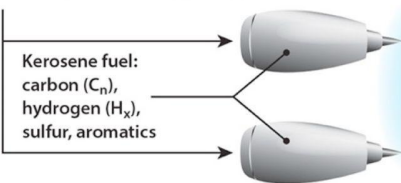
Climate Forcings from Global Aviation Emissions and Cloudiness



Jet Engine Combustion

Air: nitrogen (N₂) + oxygen (O₂)

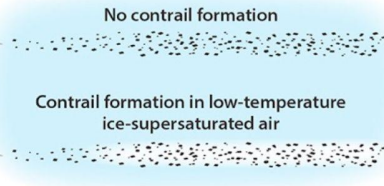
Kerosene fuel:
carbon (C_n),
hydrogen (H_x),
sulfur, aromatics



Exhaust Plumes

No contrail formation

Contrail formation in low-temperature ice-supersaturated air



Plume Composition

Gases

Carbon dioxide (CO₂)
Nitrogen oxides (NO_x)
Carbon monoxide (CO)
Water vapor (H₂O)
Sulfur compounds
Unburned hydrocarbons (HC)

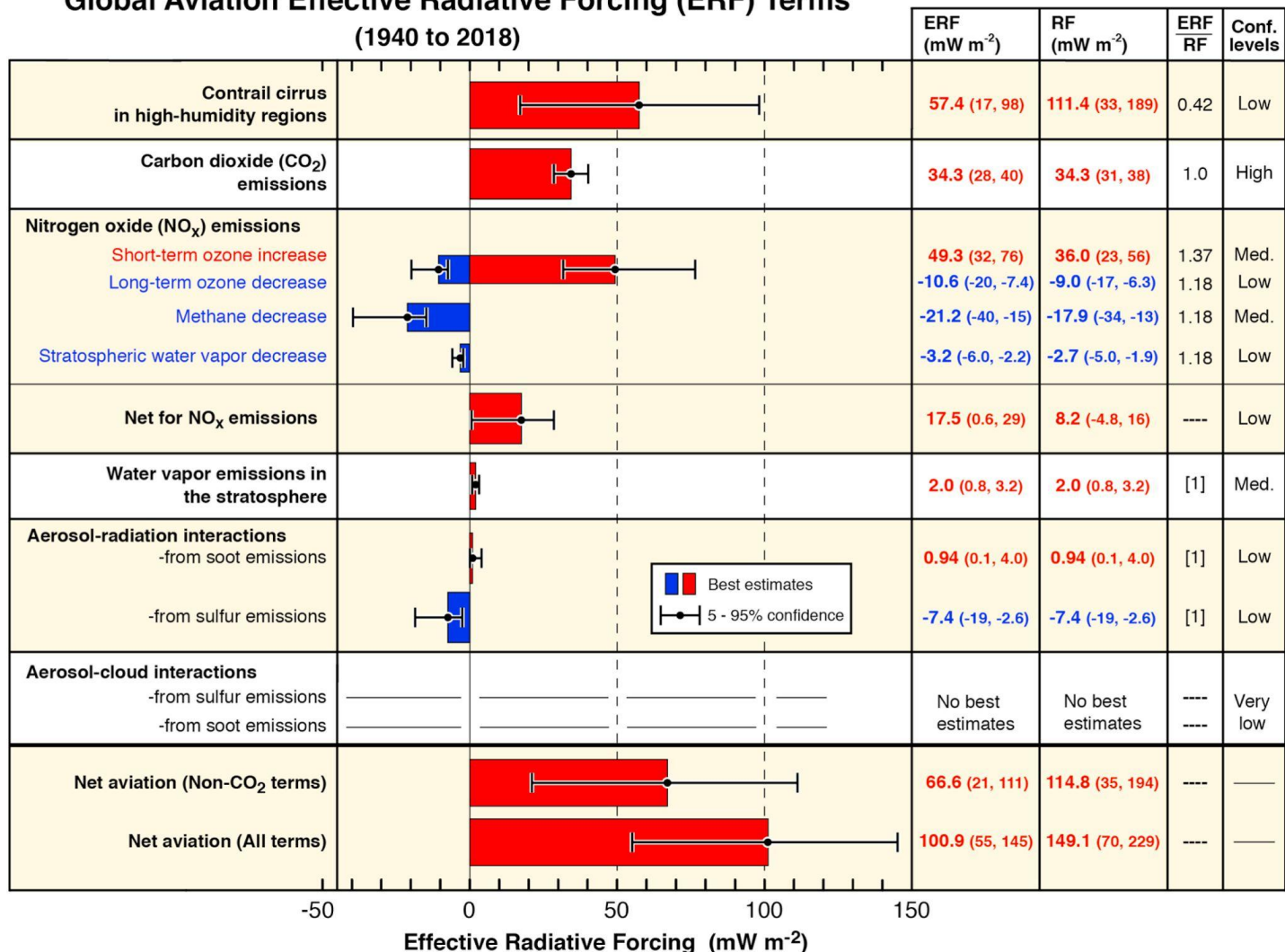
Aerosol Particles

Cloud condensation nuclei
Ice nuclei
Contrail ice
Others

Lee et al 2021

Global Aviation Effective Radiative Forcing (ERF) Terms

(1940 to 2018)



Lee et al 2021

EPFL

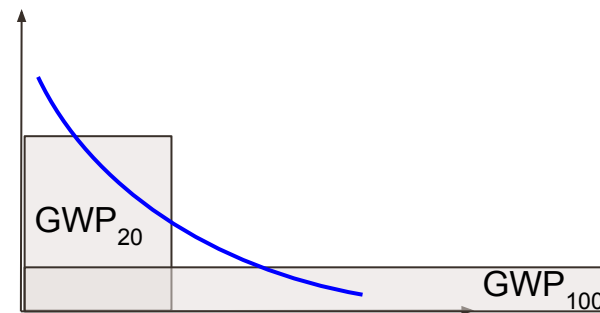
Sascha NICK

LEURE

Short-lived and long-lived GHG, and the case of methane

GWP₁₀₀ or **GWP₂₀** or **GWP*** ?

For short-lived GHG, especially methane



$$\text{CO}_2\text{e}^* = (105 \cdot \Delta\text{Em}) + (7 \cdot \text{Em})$$

where Em are current methane emissions and ΔEm is the absolute change in methane emissions over 20 years

Example: For methane from Swiss agriculture, based on the 1999-2019 period, when emissions slightly decreased from 160 to 155 kt CH₄,

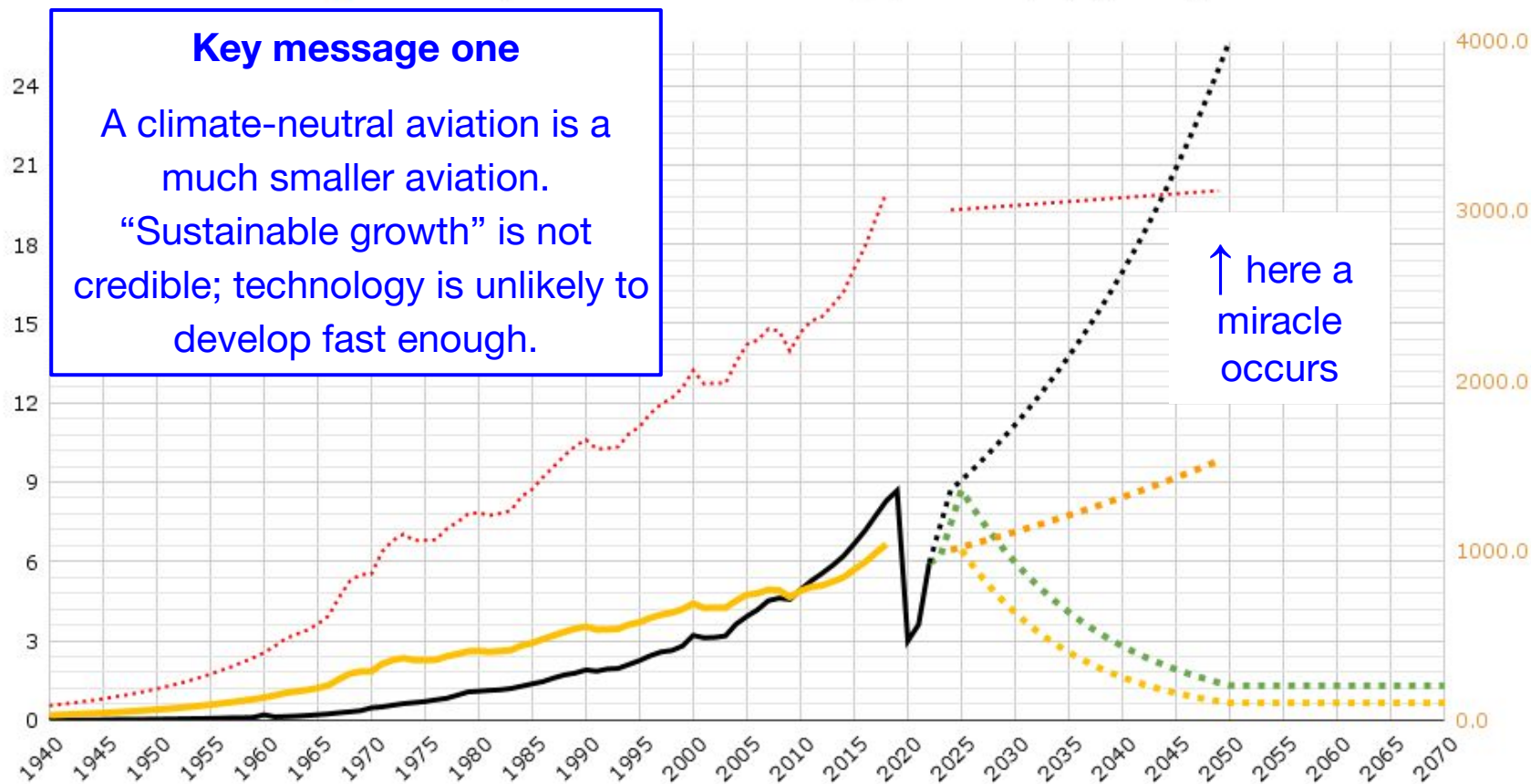
ΔEm is -5 kt CH₄, and equivalent CO₂ emissions using GWP* are

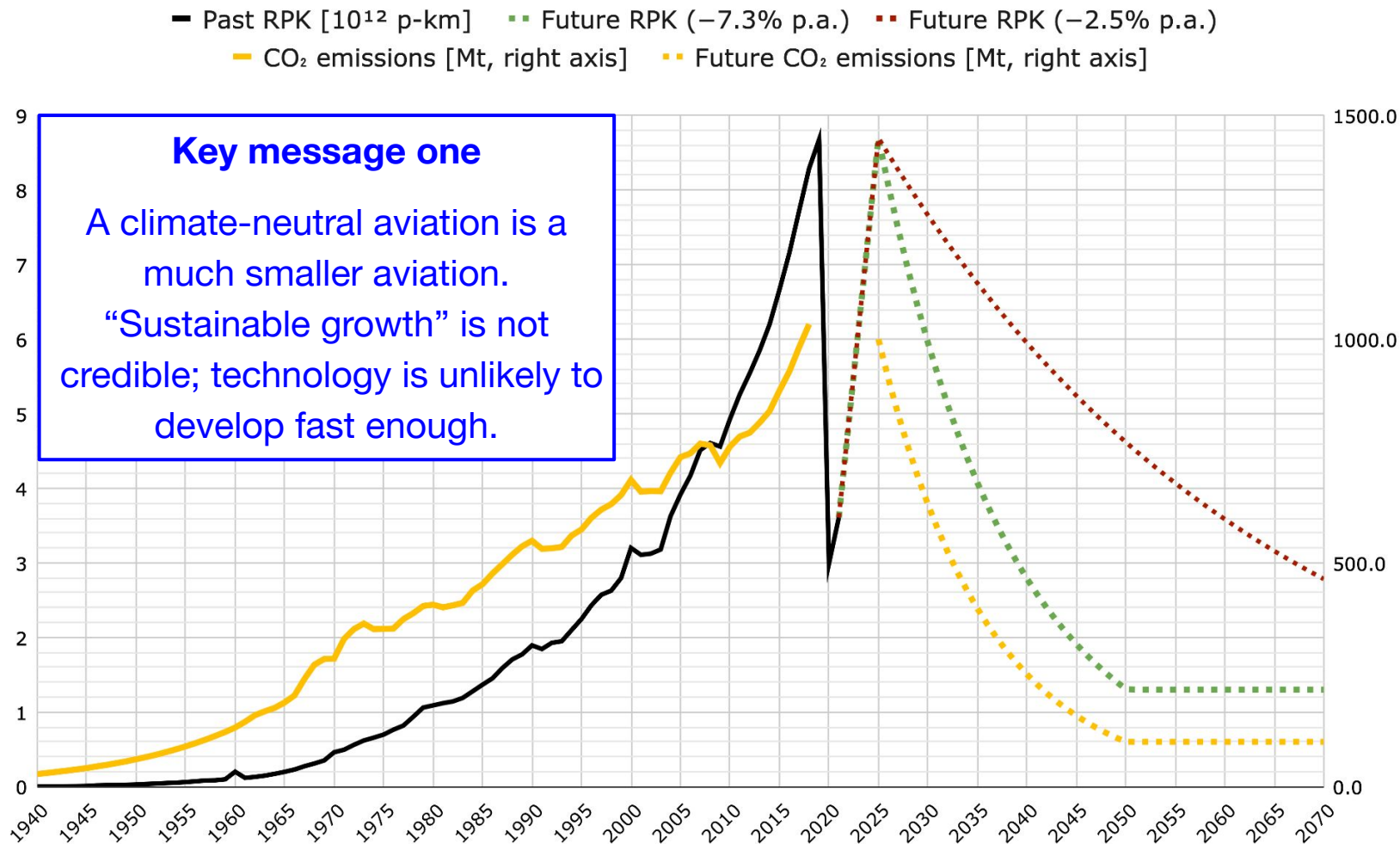
$$105 \cdot (-5) + 7 \cdot 155 = 560 \text{ kt CO}_2\text{e}$$

significantly less than the $155 \cdot 28 = 4340 \text{ kt CO}_2\text{e}$ obtained when using GWP₁₀₀

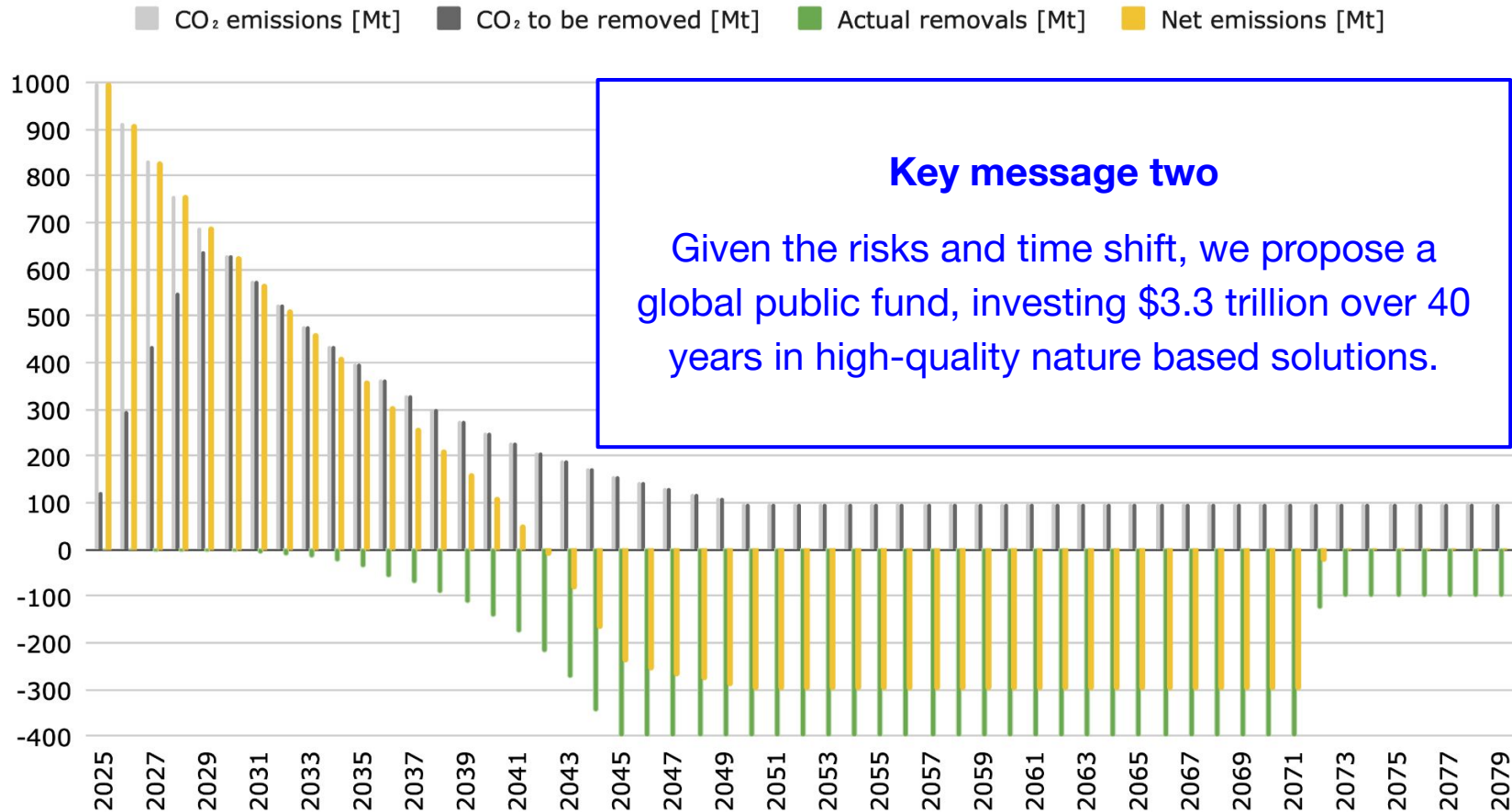
Simulation parameters	
Emission reduction p.a.	8.80%
Initial emissions [Mt/p.a.]	1000
Final emissions [Mt/p.a.]	100
NE growth 2027-36	50.0%
NE growth 2037+	25.0%
Max removals [Mt p.a.]	400
Removal cost start [\$ /t]	400
	in year
	2025
Removal cost final [\$ /t]	250
	from year
	2050
Interest rate	2.00%
Simulation results	
CO ₂ price [\$ /t]	229.87
Σ NE payments [\$ bn]	3256.16
Removed excess CO ₂ by	2072
Cash flow summary	
Total discounted cash flow [\$ bn]	
	Paid by fund
	-1816.79
	Paid into fund
	1816.79
Fund balance in end year	0.00

- Past RPK [10^{12} p-km] ■ Future RPK (-7.3% p.a.) ■ Future RPK (ICAO-mid) — CO₂ emissions [Mt, right axis]
- Future CO₂ emissions [Mt, right axis] ● Future CO₂ ICAO-mid, lower bound [Mt, right axis]
- Estimate of past + lower bound future CO₂eq ICAO-mid [Mt, right axis]

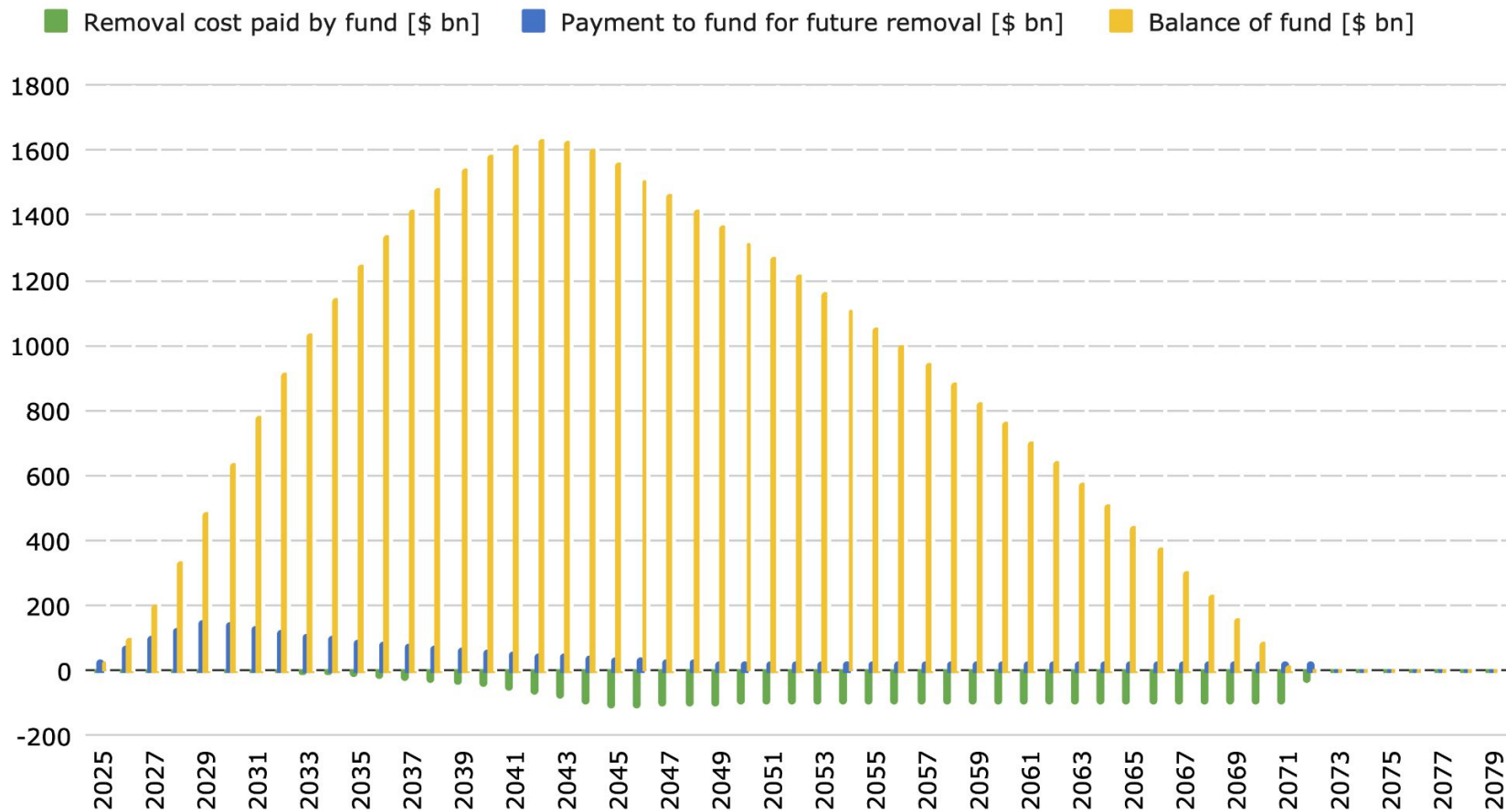




CO₂ emissions and removals [Mt]



Fund inflows, outflows, balance



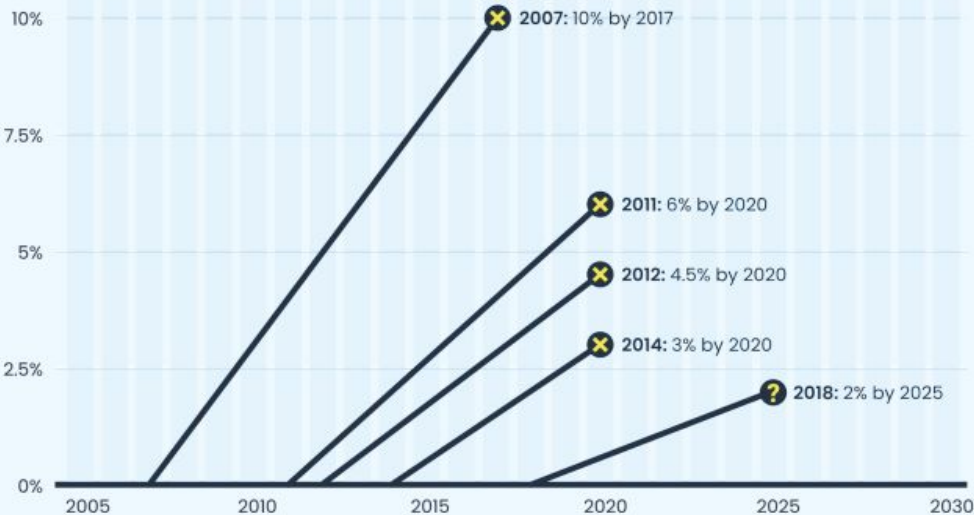
Sensitivity Analysis		Range of Parameter		CO ₂ Price [USD/t]		Σ CO ₂ Removal Payments [USD bn]		Removed All Excess CO ₂ by Year	
Simulation parameters	Baseline	Min.	Max.	Min. param.	Max. param.	Min. param.	Max. param.	Min. param.	Max. param.
Emission reductions p.a.	8.8%	2.5%	10.0%	160	239	9651	2953	2136	2069
Reductions, narrower range, p.a.		5.0%	7.3%	196	218	5177	3772	2091	2077
Final emissions [Mt/p.a.]	100	50	150	231	227	2979	3717	2069	2076
NE growth 2027-36	50.0%	33%	60%	203	246	3326	3217	2078	2068
NE growth 2037+	25.0%	10%	50%	204	243	3401	3228	2080	2069
Max removals [Mt p.a.]	400	200	800	186	249	4629	2897	2128	2057
Removal cost in 2025 [USD/t]	400	300	600	222	245	3173	3422	2072	2072
Removal cost from 2050 [USD/t]	250	200	300	190	270	2671	3841	2072	2072
Interest rate p.a.	2%	1%	3%	269	196	3256	3256	2072	2072
Interest rate, extreme range		0%	4%	314	168	3256	3256	2072	2072
Simulation results-baseline				230		3256		2072	

Missed Targets

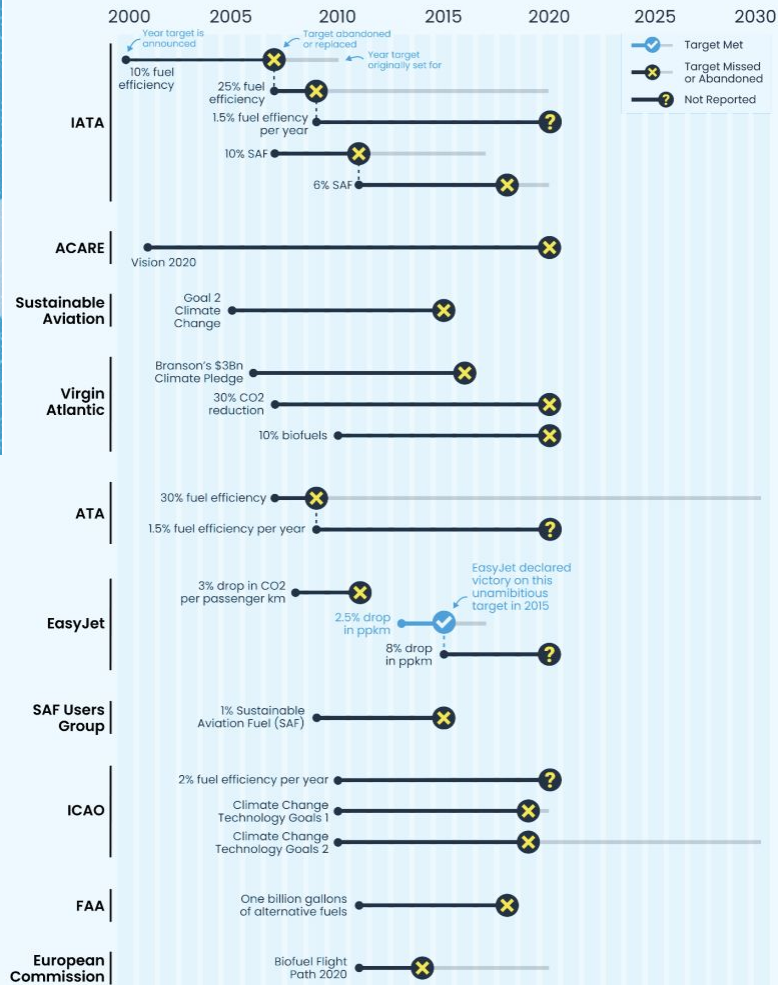
A brief history of aviation climate targets

Key message three

Based on its track record, aviation cannot be trusted to decarbonize voluntarily and must be regulated.



Two Decades of Missed and Abandoned Aviation Industry Sustainability Targets



Structure of the proposed Negative Emissions Fund for Airlines (NEFA)

Governance: ICAO or NEFA**Reporting + monitoring**

- Report flights, aircraft, fuel, CO₂, contrails
- Monitor payment to NEFA
- UNFCCC: submit NDC as virtual country
- Restrict alternative fuels to low-impact

Annual capacity auction

2025

-7.3% p.a. until 2050

stable from
2050**Climate Club: EU + other**

- Require airline participation
- Participate in the Climate Club
- Submit credible 1.5°C NDC
- Ensure NEFA projects are good
- Engage citizens to ensure benefits of a smaller aviation + progressive frequent flyer taxation

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Airline 2**Airline 1****Commitments:**

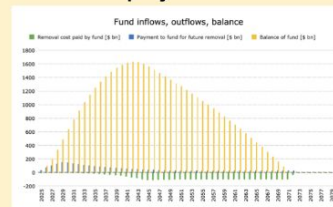
- Reduce RPK >2.5% p.a.
- Buy capacity at auction
- Pay CO₂ price to NEFA
- Report flights and CO₂

Benefits:

- Access to NEFA airports

NEFA

- Collect and invest airline payments



- Build and monitor a portfolio of carbon removal projects
- Int'l fund governance

...

NEFA project 2**NEFA project 1 for carbon removal**

- Only in NEFA countries w. credible 1.5°C NDCs
- Designed for co-benefits
 - Biodiversity, restoring ecosystems
 - Societal: investments, jobs, capacity building

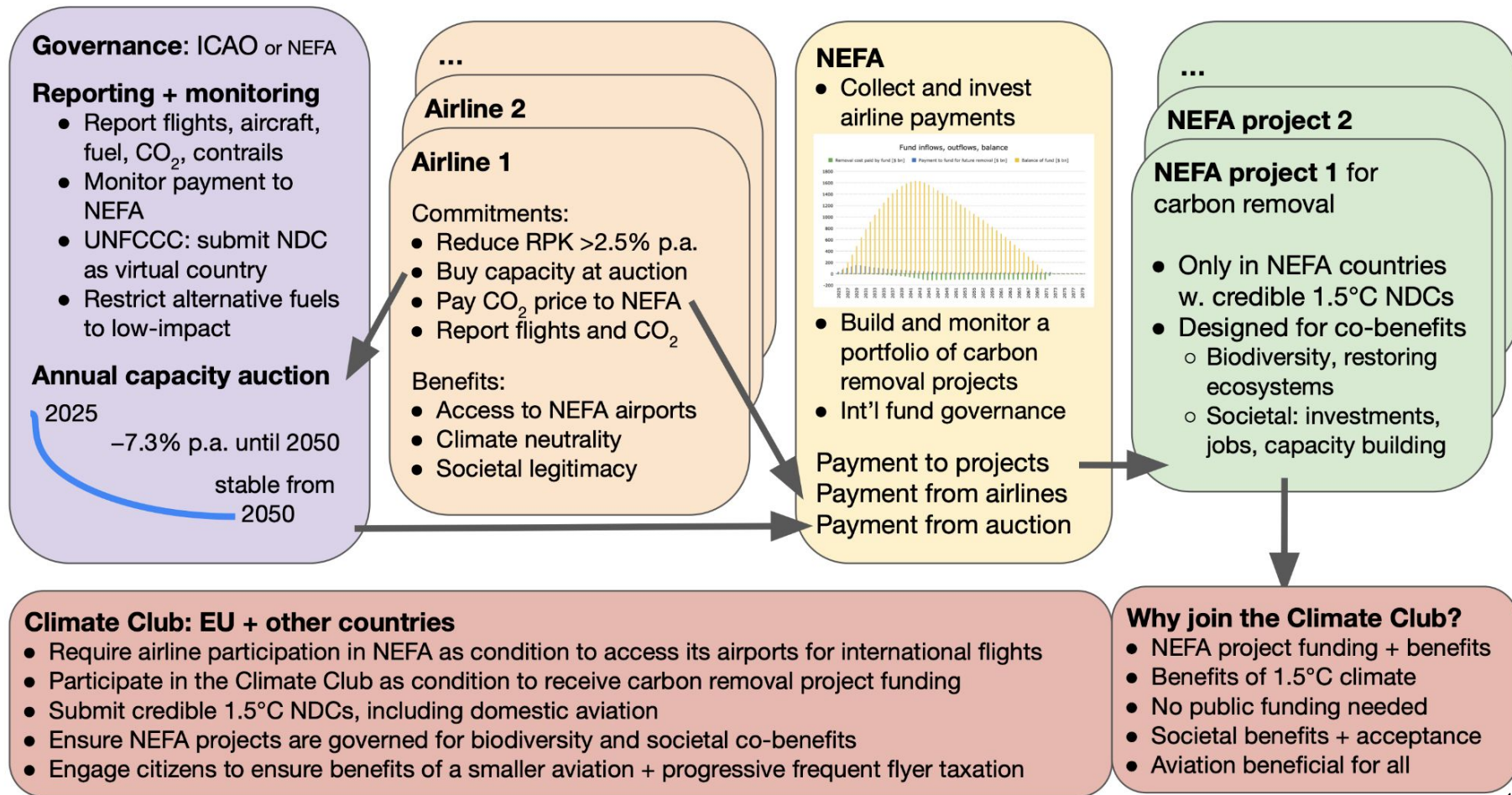
Key message four

A well-designed governance ensures compliance, mobilizes significant resources for biodiversity and societal wellbeing, and gives a future to aviation.

Why join the Climate Club?

- NEFA project funding + benefits
- Benefits of 1.5°C climate
- No public funding needed
- Societal benefits + acceptance
- Aviation beneficial for all

Structure of the proposed Negative Emissions Fund for Airlines (NEFA)



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Towards climate-neutral aviation: fewer flights, benefits for biodiversity and society, and renewed legitimacy for airlines

by Sascha Nick

Published 1 December 2022 in S

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Key message five

From the perspective of main stakeholders, big but not insurmountable changes are needed, many with positive side-effects.

Large companies

Most obviously, the total cost of flying would go down by two thirds, and videoconferencing would be used even more than today. Over time, globalized supply chains might be at a disadvantage and could be reconfigured to become more regional or local, with only a few components truly globally sourced – for example, specialized microprocessors. As this would happen over two decades, there is time to adjust, and in the process make supply chains more resilient, circular, and sustainable. Now is the time to rethink business models, eliminate planned obsolescence, and start curbing extraction, material, and energy use. However, given the time needed to reconfigure supply chains, planning should start immediately, starting with new products and services.

Academia

In terms of operations, reducing academic staff travel would just be the beginning. This would mean more local or regional conferences, with fewer participants, remotely connected to related events elsewhere when needed, but little flying. Executive or other learning programs could be planned in ways that would minimize travel – adjusting schedules, combining events, on-site teams remotely connected to other teams, and longer and more local gatherings incorporating multiple activities. More fundamentally, helping society to rapidly adjust to a post-fossil fuel, limited extraction world could become an essential focus of research and teaching, especially in business education.

Agricultural communities

Any transition towards sustainability will only work if it benefits communities and wins their support. Climate change, biodiversity loss, soil depletion, and very different precipitation patterns are already affecting almost every agricultural community in the world, and they must adapt to these threats in order to survive. A limitation in air transport capacity will also impact global food exports, reducing the markets available to many agricultural communities, which would be extremely challenging, especially for disadvantaged populations. On the other hand, continuing today's agricultural trajectory will lead to a collapse in ecosystem services, including food production, which would disproportionately affect such communities. There is no single solution, but our proposal mobilizes around \$100 billion each year for decades to invest in nature-based solutions, with most carbon removal projects managed by and for the benefit of local communities in participating countries. Restoring and protecting wetlands, mangroves, corals, forests, and other ecosystems would all qualify, as would soil health projects, which would also improve food production resilience.

Airlines

Surprisingly, aviation is perhaps the easiest sector to adapt, even though it is the one that will be transformed most by the transition to climate-neutral aviation. Predictable flight reductions would facilitate investments and asset management, hiring and training, flight route planning, ultimately ensuring service quality. Reporting guidelines developed for the current Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA) could be adapted. The 25-year transition period is longer than the timeframe airlines had for previous adaptations, even before COVID-19. The 1980s, the reference period for the number of flights, was a profitable and predictable period for airlines. Most importantly, in a world of constrained resources, becoming climate neutral would renew airlines' social license and ensure the future of the aviation sector.

Abo Transport aérien

Voler sur des avions «verts» en 2050 coûtera plus cher

Des chercheurs de l'EPFL ont mis au point un modèle pour financer la décarbonation de l'aviation civile d'ici à trente ans. Il suppose une réduction drastique des vols et une hausse des tarifs.



Ivan Radja
Publié: 14.11.2022, 07h00



L'aviation civile a émis 1 milliard de tonnes de CO₂ en 2019. Le chemin vers le zéro net carbone en 2050 est encore long.

AFP



Vers la fin des vols à bas prix?

Le transport aérien est souvent montré du doigt pour son rôle dans le réchauffement climatique. Robert für le président, le trafic aérien mondial devrait atteindre un milliard de passagers en 2050, plus du double de son niveau de 2019. Sans autant d'émissions en plus si rien n'est fait. Responsables de 2 à 2,4 % des émissions mondiales de CO₂, le secteur aérien doit faire à la fois passer ses voyages renouvelés, même si l'industrie aéronautique travaille d'arrache-pied. L'avis concorde les critiques, car il se soumet un moyen de déplacement réservé aux plus riches.

«Il est difficile d'imaginer une action internationale efficace en faveur du climat sans un engagement concret», souligne Sascha Nick, chercheur au Laboratoire d'Économie urbaine et de Développement de l'École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL). «Si ce plan global ne se met pas en œuvre, les émissions de CO₂ continueront d'augmenter de façon exponentielle et les vols à bas prix continueront d'être disponibles. Il est urgent de trouver des solutions, mais à quel prix?». Les deux principales organisations du secteur, l'IATA, qui représente les compagnies aériennes, et l'ACFT, une agence de l'ONU qui représente les pays, ont récemment effectué un bilan d'état des lieux. Ils ont constaté que les vols à bas prix continueront d'être disponibles et que les émissions de CO₂ continueront d'augmenter de façon exponentielle. L'objectif est de réduire les émissions de CO₂ de 75 % d'ici à 2050, jusqu'à un niveau où toutes les émissions résiduelles peuvent être éliminées de l'atmosphère.

«Il y a un décalage énorme entre cet objectif et les actions concrètes», ajoute Sascha Nick. En dehors de la période de covid, le secteur aérien

augmente chaque année son impact carbone. Les émissions de CO₂ à Chaux-de-Fonds, qui a permis d'obtenir un accord pour réduire les émissions mondiales de CO₂ de 25 % d'ici à 2050, jusqu'à un niveau où toutes les émissions résiduelles peuvent être éliminées de l'atmosphère.

«Pour l'aviation, une partie de passer de milliard de tonnes de CO₂ par année à une réduction de moitié est un défi majeur. Cela ne peut être atteint qu'au niveau de l'année 2050. Le monde doit donc commencer à travailler dès maintenant sur des solutions, mais à quel prix?». Les deux principales organisations du secteur, l'IATA, qui représente les compagnies aériennes, et l'ACFT, une agence de l'ONU qui représente les pays, ont récemment effectué un bilan d'état des lieux. Ils ont constaté que les vols à bas prix continueront d'être disponibles et que les émissions de CO₂ continueront d'augmenter de façon exponentielle. L'objectif est de réduire les émissions de CO₂ de 75 % d'ici à 2050, jusqu'à un niveau où toutes les émissions résiduelles peuvent être éliminées de l'atmosphère.



Transport aérien Voler sur des avions «verts» en 2050 coûtera plus cher

Des chercheurs de l'EPFL ont mis au point un modèle pour financer la décarbonation de l'aviation civile d'ici à trente ans. Il suppose une réduction drastique des vols et une hausse des tarifs.

Ivan Radja
Sascha Nick est l'un des promoteurs du Fonds d'émissions négatives pour les compagnies aériennes (NEFA). Il explique pourquoi les mesures actuelles sont insuffisantes et détaille le mécanisme du modèle créé à l'EPFL.

mondiales de dioxyde de carbone, toutes activités confondues. Les compagnies d'aviation soutiennent que les vols peuvent être verts dans trente ans. Illusion aussi? L'IA, l'association qui regroupe les compagnies, de même que l'Organisation de l'aviation civile internationale (OACI) ont certes un objectif plus ambitieux, aligné sur la feuille de route du GIEC, à savoir la neutralité carbone en 2050. Cependant, les moyens pour y parvenir ne suffisent pas. L'hydrogène est un substitut encore à l'état embryonnaire, dont les premiers prototypes sont attendus pour 2035, et une éventuelle commercialisation beaucoup plus tard, trop tard en tout cas pour être inclus dans l'objectif 2050. Et encore faut-il qu'il soit vert (ndlr: électrique de l'eau grâce

à l'énergie renouvelable). Pour l'aviation, une partie de passer de milliard de tonnes de CO₂ par année à une réduction de moitié est un défi majeur. Cela ne peut être atteint qu'au niveau de l'année 2050. Le monde doit donc commencer à travailler dès maintenant sur des solutions, mais à quel prix?». Les deux principales organisations du secteur, l'IATA, qui représente les compagnies aériennes, et l'ACFT, une agence de l'ONU qui représente les pays, ont récemment effectué un bilan d'état des lieux. Ils ont constaté que les vols à bas prix continueront d'être disponibles et que les émissions de CO₂ continueront d'augmenter de façon exponentielle. L'objectif est de réduire les émissions de CO₂ de 75 % d'ici à 2050, jusqu'à un niveau où toutes les émissions résiduelles peuvent être éliminées de l'atmosphère.



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Zéro carbone dans l'aviation: des promesses dans le vent?

par Sarah Sermondadaz



Deux chercheurs suisses ont calculé à quelles conditions le secteur du transport aérien peut respecter ses promesses de décarbonation. Pour l'instant, le compte n'y est pas.

