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EU Sets World's First Voluntary Standard for Permanent Carbon Removals

Key policies: *Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming Regulation (CRCF), European Green Deal, EU Climate Law, EU Bioeconomy Strategy, Carbon Removal Certification Framework, Climate Neutrality Objective 2050*

The European Commission has adopted the first certification methodologies under the Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming (CRCF) Regulation, establishing the world's first comprehensive voluntary standard for permanent carbon removals.

The new methodologies create a common European framework for certifying activities that permanently remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. The initiative is expected to stimulate investment in carbon removal technologies, strengthen environmental integrity, combat greenwashing and support the European Union's objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

With this milestone, the EU becomes the first jurisdiction globally to establish a dedicated certification framework for permanent carbon removals, positioning itself at the forefront of an emerging sector expected to play an increasingly important role in global climate mitigation efforts.

First methodologies cover three permanent removal technologies

The methodologies adopted by the Commission focus on three types of carbon removal activities that have demonstrated sufficient technological maturity and climate mitigation potential:

Direct Air Carbon Capture and Storage (DACCS)

DACCS technologies remove carbon dioxide directly from ambient air and permanently store it in geological formations, preventing its return to the atmosphere.

Biogenic Carbon Capture and Storage (BioCCS)

BioCCS captures carbon emissions generated from biomass-based processes and stores them permanently underground, creating net-negative emissions.

Biochar Carbon Removal (BCR)

Biochar is produced by converting biomass into a stable carbon-rich material that can be incorporated into soils, where carbon remains stored for extended periods while potentially improving soil quality.

Together, these technologies are expected to contribute to long-term carbon removal efforts and support the EU's broader decarbonisation strategy.

Creating a European standard for carbon removals

The methodologies establish a clear and legally grounded framework defining how permanent carbon removals are measured, verified and certified.

Key elements include:

- Standardised rules for quantifying carbon removals

- Requirements to ensure long-term storage permanence
- Procedures for monitoring and verification
- Safeguards against carbon leakage
- Liability provisions addressing potential reversals
- Sustainability requirements protecting environmental integrity

The framework provides long-awaited regulatory certainty for technology developers, project operators, investors and financial institutions seeking to support the growth of carbon removal solutions.

By creating a harmonised European standard, the Commission aims to facilitate market development while maintaining high environmental and scientific credibility.

Transitioning from regulation to implementation

With both certification methodologies and governance rules now in place, carbon removal projects using DACCS, BioCCS and biochar technologies can begin preparing applications for EU certification.

This marks an important transition from framework development to practical implementation.

The first certified projects are expected to emerge in the coming months, creating new opportunities for:

- Innovative climate technology start-ups
- Industrial carbon removal developers
- Investors and financial institutions
- Bioeconomy enterprises
- Research and innovation organisations

The certification system is expected to help create a trusted voluntary market for high-quality carbon removals across Europe.

Supporting innovation and climate investment

The Commission views carbon removals as an important complement to emission reduction efforts, particularly for addressing residual emissions from sectors that are difficult to decarbonise completely.

European Commissioner for Climate, Net-Zero and Clean Growth Wopke Hoekstra described the new framework as a significant step towards building a responsible and credible carbon removal market while supporting climate neutrality objectives.

The Commission expects the framework to:

- Encourage private and public investment

- Accelerate deployment of carbon removal technologies
- Promote innovation in climate solutions
- Strengthen Europe's leadership in climate technologies
- Create new opportunities within the European bioeconomy

Additional methodologies under development

The Commission is currently finalising two additional delegated regulations that are expected to be adopted later in 2026.

Carbon farming methodologies

These methodologies will support activities such as:

- Sustainable agricultural practices
- Agroforestry systems
- Peatland restoration and rewetting
- Afforestation and reforestation

The objective is to enable farmers and foresters to receive result-based payments for verified climate benefits while strengthening the resilience of agricultural and forestry systems.

Carbon storage in bio-based construction products

A separate methodology will establish certification rules for carbon stored in bio-based construction materials.

The framework aims to:

- Demonstrate the carbon storage performance of buildings
- Encourage circular bioeconomy approaches
- Promote sustainable construction practices
- Increase demand for bio-based materials

Launch of an EU Buyers' Club

To support market development, the Commission also announced plans to establish an **EU Buyers' Club** for permanent carbon removals and carbon farming credits under the forthcoming EU Bioeconomy Strategy.

The initiative is intended to:

- Connect project developers with potential buyers
- Stimulate demand for certified removals
- Mobilise private investment

- Accelerate market development
- Support scaling of innovative removal technologies

Additional financial support is expected through existing EU instruments, including the European Innovation Council and the Innovation Fund.

Next steps

The delegated regulation will now be transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union for scrutiny.

The review period will last two months and may be extended by an additional two months.

If no objections are raised, the regulation is expected to be published in the Official Journal of the European Union in early April 2026 and will enter into force 20 days after publication.

Following entry into force, certification schemes will be able to apply for formal recognition by the European Commission under the CRCF framework.

Background

The Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2024/3012) established the first EU-wide voluntary framework for certifying carbon removals, carbon farming activities and carbon storage in bio-based products.

The framework is implemented through Delegated Acts that define certification methodologies for specific categories of carbon removal activities.

The adoption of the first methodologies follows the entry into force of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/2358, which established governance rules for certification schemes, certification bodies and audit procedures.

The methodologies were developed in close cooperation with the Carbon Removal Expert Group and are designed to ensure that certified carbon removals meet stringent requirements relating to quantification, permanence, monitoring and sustainability.

By creating trusted standards and clear rules, the European Union aims to unlock investment, accelerate innovation and support the responsible development of carbon removal solutions as part of its pathway towards climate neutrality by 2050.

Source: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/news-other-reads/news/eu-sets-worlds-first-voluntary-standard-permanent-carbon-removals-2026-02-03_en