

Media Release



Researchers call for the COP28 Global Stocktake to address the Land Gap

New data indicates that a short list of high-emitting, high-income nations are overly reliant on land use to offset their emissions, with researchers calling for COP28 negotiations to put greater pressure on countries to deliver quick and effective emissions reductions.

Scientists and analysts from the University of Melbourne and Climate Resource have considered new data in an updated Land Gap Report Briefing Note, including almost 40 updated country climate pledges and low emissions development strategies, which confirms that countries will need around 1 billion hectares – larger than the area of the entire USA – to implement land-based climate mitigation pledges.

The data shows that just a handful of high-income, major-emitting countries' climate pledges account for three-quarters of the total land required, indicating that these major-polluting economies prefer to continue business as usual and offset their emissions, rather than implement real policies and measures to phase out fossil fuels.

The short list of countries includes Australia, Canada, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the USA.

The original ground-breaking Land Gap Report, [released at COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh](#), placed significant doubt over the transparency of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and raised the alarm that this extent of land-based activities cannot be achieved without causing negative impacts on livelihoods, land rights, food production and ecosystems.

It is expected that COP28 will deliver on the first Global Stocktake (GST) under the Paris Climate Agreement, a milestone point in climate negotiations that should inform countries every five years on increasing ambition in national pledges, to do more to address the climate crisis.

Country pledges are woefully off track and put the world on a disastrous trajectory of up to 3 degrees of warming, according to the [IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report](#).

Dr Kate Dooley, lead author of the [Land Gap Report](#) and Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne says, 'If countries negotiating the GST at COP28 fail to take this opportunity to address the land gap in Dubai, they will not have a chance to do so for another five years.'

'If the world is to stay below 1.5 degrees of warming, it is essential that NDCs are transparent and credible. The GST needs to prioritise a phase-out of fossil fuels and discourage countries from continuing to over-rely on land to offset their high emissions.'

Many climate mitigation approaches that rely on large scale reforestation and afforestation efforts threaten to exacerbate, rather than help to solve, the biodiversity crisis and, in some countries, could exacerbate food insecurity and land conflict, given the multiple competing uses of land and its impact on the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable and land-dependent communities.

Advocates are calling for the COP28 negotiations to emphasise the focus on short-term actions needed to phase out emissions from fossil fuels and industrial processes which are essential if the world is to limit warming to 1.5°C.

'These countries are offsetting our future', said Catalina Gonda of the Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance. 'They're shifting the burden of reducing emissions onto the most vulnerable communities and ecosystems and relying on approaches that have proven time and again to be unreliable in addressing climate change. These major polluting economies need to stop using the 'net zero' framing to undermine mitigation action by allowing a trade-off between emissions reductions and removals. This updated information from the Land Gap Report identifies that the countries who are doing the most to cause the problem, are doing least to address it'.

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