



Carbon Credits

A guide for business buyers

Carbon credits let businesses compensate for unavoidable emissions by funding verified climate projects. Below are the questions corporate buyers ask us most often.

01. What is a Carbon credit?

A carbon credit represents one metric ton of carbon dioxide-equivalent (CO₂e) that has been either removed from the atmosphere or prevented from being emitted. Carbon credits enable individuals and organizations to compensate for emissions by supporting projects that reduce or remove greenhouse gases. Most companies utilize them for unavoidable or difficult to abate emissions as part of a larger carbon reduction strategy. Each credit is measured in metric tons, with one mT equal to about 2,205 pounds of CO₂e.

02. What is the difference between a Carbon credit and a REC?

While both are market-based environmental instruments, RECs and carbon credits are fundamentally different in four key ways:

1. Unit of measure. RECs are measured in megawatt-hours (MWh) of renewable electricity generated. Carbon credits are measured in metric tonnes of greenhouse gases (CO₂e) reduced or removed.
2. Source. RECs are always generated by renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, or hydropower. Carbon credits can come from a much wider range of project types, including forestry, landfill gas capture, energy efficiency, and renewable energy projects as well.
3. Claims. When you purchase a REC, you are claiming the use of renewable electricity. When you purchase a carbon credit, you are claiming a reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions. These are distinct claims and should not be used interchangeably.
4. Additionality. Carbon credits are required to meet additionality criteria, meaning the emissions reductions must not have occurred without the carbon market. RECs are not subject to the same requirement.

If you are unsure which product is right for your sustainability goals, our team is happy to help. Reach out at customerservice@b-e-f.org.

03. Is my Carbon Credit purchase a donation? Is my purchase tax deductible?

BEF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which means contributions made to us may be tax deductible under federal law.

However, the tax treatment of a Carbon Credit purchase depends on a few factors, including whether your payment qualifies as a charitable contribution or a business expense, whether you received any goods or services in return, and your individual tax situation. A claim, such as matching your carbon footprint, may count as receiving a good or service. BEF cannot provide you with tax advice and you should always consult your own tax advisor.

04. What kind of carbon credit is the best?

There isn't a single "best" carbon credit. Instead, high-quality credits tend to share certain characteristics, regardless of project type. The differences between project categories are mostly about trade-offs (cost, certainty, co-benefits, complexity), not outright superiority. All carbon credits represent the same amount of greenhouse gasses reduced or removed from the atmosphere - 1 metric tonne. Beyond this baseline, there are many factors that can influence your decision about which one might be "best" for you or your business. You should consider the type of project, co-benefits, and how these align with your sustainability or other goals. For example, a forestry project may have benefits for habitat, freshwater resources, and local economy, while a landfill gas credit may be a lower cost and you can purchase more, hence reduce more greenhouse gasses with your budget. There are also additional certifications that may increase the integrity of the carbon credit such as CCP and CCB. You may also consider purchasing a Stacked credit to support a BEF program directly with your purchase.

05. What are Stacked Carbon Credits?

As a nonprofit, BEF directs a portion of the revenue from every carbon credit sale to support our organization's mission impact programs and operational expenses.

A Stacked Carbon Credit takes this a step further. When you choose a Stacked product, you designate which specific BEF program a percentage of the sale revenue will support — giving you the combined benefit of a verified carbon credit and a direct, contribution to a BEF program you care about.

A percentage of your purchase is directed to the program you select, and the underlying carbon credit is sourced from our verified portfolio and retired on your behalf.

06. Can you help my company create a custom portfolio of carbon credits based on our budget or other criteria?

Absolutely. Our team works directly with businesses to build carbon credit portfolios tailored to your budget, sustainability goals, and values. Whether you're looking to prioritize specific project types — like forest conservation, renewable energy, or regenerative agriculture — or align your credits with particular geographies or certification standards, we'll help you find the right mix. Reach out to us to start the conversation.

07. I don't see the Carbon Credit project / project type I'm interested in. Can you special order credits on behalf of customers?

Yes! BEF has established relationships with developers and brokers throughout the carbon credit market, so if you don't see what you're looking for in our current portfolio, we'll do our best to find it. Reach out to our team with your project preferences — type, geography, certification standard, or any other criteria — and we'll explore what's available for you.

08. How do I know a carbon credit is really doing something?

Carbon credits represent real, measurable climate impact, and that impact is ensured through a few key safeguards. First, every project follows established methodologies that define exactly how emissions reductions or removals are calculated. These methodologies are developed and maintained by leading standards bodies like the Verra and the Gold Standard. Second, projects are independently verified by third-party auditors. These auditors review the data, assess the project on the ground, and confirm that the emissions impact meets the required

criteria before any credits are issued. Third, all issued credits are tracked in transparent public registries, ensuring that each credit is only used once and can be traced back to a specific project. Together, these layers—standardized methodologies, independent verification, and transparent tracking—are what ensure that carbon credits represent real, quantifiable climate action.

09. What does it mean for a carbon credit to be retired?

Retirement is the final step in the tradeable life of a carbon credit. When a credit is retired, it is permanently removed from the market in a public registry, ensuring it can never be resold or claimed by anyone else. This is what makes your environmental claim exclusive and verifiable — proof that the environmental benefit has been used once, by you, and only you.

10. Does it matter where in the world my carbon credits are coming from?

From a climate perspective, no. Global warming is a global issue, and greenhouse gas reductions are equally beneficial regardless of where in the world the project is located.

That said, location can matter when it comes to a project's co-benefits. The additional positive impacts of a carbon credit project, such as habitat conservation, watershed health, and community development, are local by nature. If supporting a specific region, ecosystem, or community is important to your company, the project's location may very well influence which credits are the right fit for you.

Our team is happy to help you find projects that align with both your emissions goals and your values. Reach out at customerservice@b-e-f.org.

11. Shouldn't I be reducing my carbon footprint, not just purchasing carbon credits?

Absolutely, and we couldn't agree more. At BEF, we believe that purchasing carbon credits and reducing your emissions are not an either/or proposition. Real climate impact happens when both actions occur together. Carbon credits deliver immediate, verified environmental benefits while your organization works toward longer term reductions. Typically, carbon credits are used to help mitigate residual or unavoidable emissions as part of a longer-term reduction strategy. Every step counts and taking action on multiple fronts at once is the most effective path forward.

12. What are Scope 1, 2 and 3 Emissions?

Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions are from the Greenhouse Gas Protocol framework which categorizes emissions for the purpose of calculating your impacts. Scope 1. Direct emissions from owned mobile or immobile assets such as fuel for fleet vehicles or natural gas in your operations, Scope 2. Indirect purchased electricity, steam heat and cooling, and Scope 3. All other indirect emissions such as business travel, commuting, shipping and supply chain emissions.

13. How do I calculate my footprint?

Calculating a carbon footprint can be a challenge for any size of business or household. BEF offers free access to a business footprint calculator hosted by Persefoni, a trusted third-party platform. This is a great first step toward understanding your emissions. It is worth noting that online calculators may not capture the full complexity of your business footprint. If you would like more comprehensive guidance, we encourage you to reach out to our team.

We can connect you with trusted independent GHG advisors, as well as provide recommendations on GHG accounting software platforms that may be a good fit for your organization.

14. Does BEF help develop new carbon credit projects?

BEF's role in the market is as a trusted advisor and retailer, not a project developer. We carefully vet and source credits from a network of developers and wholesalers around the world, which allows us to offer a diverse portfolio of high-quality projects across many types, geographies, and certification standards. This independence means we're focused entirely on finding the right credits for you.

15. My company is issuing an RFP for Carbon credits. How do I ask you to participate?

We welcome the opportunity to respond to RFPs for carbon credits. Please send your RFP or any related inquiries to customerservice@b-e-f.org and a member of our team will get back to you promptly.

16. Do you have a minimum purchase volume?

Not at all — we believe every business, regardless of size, deserves access to high-quality environmental credits and personalized service. You have the option to work with our team or purchase any amount directly through our self-service web store at any time. That said, if you're planning to purchase more than 1,000 credits of any kind, we encourage you to connect with us first so we can ensure you get the right mix of products, pricing, and support.

17. Can I purchase Carbon Credits for more than one year at a time?

Yes! BEF offers multi-year and forward purchasing options for customers who prefer to plan ahead. If you are interested in a multi-year purchase, please reach out to us at customerservice@b-e-f.org to discuss the options available to you.

18. Do you help with certifications or compliance such as LEED, RE100, AB1305, Change Climate, and others?

BEF offers products that are designed to meet the requirements of many certification and compliance frameworks. We are happy to provide information about our products and how they may align with your goals.

However, BEF does not provide consulting services on certifications or compliance schemes themselves. It is the responsibility of the customer to ensure that their purchase meets the specific requirements of the certification or compliance framework they are submitting to. We recommend consulting with your certifying body or a qualified advisor if you have questions about your particular compliance obligations.

19. My company wants to contribute to habitat conservation projects that go beyond our GHG emissions. How can BEF help my company do more to give back?

BEF's mission goes well beyond carbon. Through our BEF Watersheds program, we work with partners across the Pacific Northwest to restore and revitalize critical freshwater ecosystems — supporting fish habitat, riparian restoration, and the communities that depend on healthy watersheds.

One of the easiest ways to extend your impact is through our Stacked Credits. When you purchase a Stacked Carbon Credit, you can designate a percentage of the sale revenue directly to a BEF program like Tree Planting or

Salmon and Floodplain Recovery — so every credit you retire also funds on-the-ground conservation work. It's a simple way to go beyond your emissions footprint and invest in the ecosystems that matter to your company and your stakeholders.

If you'd like to explore how BEF Watersheds or other programs align with your sustainability goals, we'd love to connect.

20. My company wants to contribute to Community benefitting renewable energy projects that go beyond our GHG emissions. How can BEF help my company do more to give back?

BEF's commitment to clean energy extends well beyond certificates. Through BEF Renewables, we partner with utilities, Tribal communities, and other organizations to deploy renewable energy at scale — from community-scale solar installations to innovative clean energy projects that benefit the people and places that need it most. Our Community Solar program goes further, delivering the economic and environmental benefits of solar directly to low-income and Tribal communities.

A simple way to connect your carbon credit purchases to this work is through our Stacked Credits. When you choose a Stacked product, you can designate a percentage of the sale revenue to support programs like these — so your purchase does double duty, retiring a verified credit while funding on-the-ground clean energy impact.

If you'd like to learn more about how your company can support community-benefitting renewable energy, please reach out to customerservice@b-e-f.org.

21. I am interested in developing a carbon credit project, where do I start?

While BEF does not develop or assist in developing carbon credit projects, we're happy to point you in the right direction. There are three core elements that determine whether a carbon credit project is viable:

1. A recognized methodology. Every carbon credit project must align with an accepted methodology — sometimes called a protocol — which is the scientific framework defining how emissions reductions or removals are measured and verified. Methodologies are rigorously developed and reviewed before being accepted by one or more carbon registries.
2. Sufficient project volume. The project must generate enough metric tonnes of CO₂e reduced or removed to be financially worthwhile. Simply put, larger projects are more likely to pencil out economically, as the costs of development, verification, and registration are significant regardless of project size.
3. Additionality. The project must be "additional," meaning the emissions reductions would not have occurred without the existence of a carbon credit market. This is a foundational requirement across virtually all registries and methodologies.

We recommend connecting with a carbon project developer or registry directly to explore whether your project idea meets these criteria. Registries such as Verra, Gold Standard, and the American Carbon Registry are good starting points for learning more.

22. What can I say about my purchase?

There are general best practices for how to communicate your carbon credit purchase accurately and credibly, and the specifics can vary depending on the type and volume of credits you've purchased. Our team is always happy to provide personalized guidance for your specific situation. Reach out to us at customerservice@b-e-f.org with any questions.

23. My event needs an environmental sponsor. Who should I contact at BEF?

We would love to help! BEF has served as a carbon credit, renewable energy and/or water restoration sponsor for a wide range of events, from leading sustainability conferences including Trellis, GreenBiz, Sustainable Brands, Green Sports Alliance Summit, and Music Sustainability Alliance Summit, to events across many other sectors and industries. Whether your event is focused on sustainability or not, we are always open to exploring sponsorship opportunities that align with our mission of advancing water and environmental stewardship. Please reach out to us at customerservice@b-e-f.org and we will be happy to talk through the possibilities with you.

24. What can I expect after my carbon credit purchase?

Once your purchase is complete, you'll receive a certificate documenting the key details of your environmental products — including the project name and description, volume, registry, and vintage. But our support doesn't stop there. BEF's team is available for ongoing customer service to answer questions about your purchase, help you understand how to use and report your credits, and provide guidance on making accurate environmental claims. We want to make sure you feel confident communicating the impact of your purchase to your stakeholders, customers, and team.

QUESTIONS? customerservice@b-e-f.org

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