

# PALLETCENTRAL

July-August 2022 ■ Volume 22 No. 4

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All enterprises, independent of size, need to embrace the vision for a carbon-free (or neutral) economy.



Do You Remember the Old Expression  
**“IT’S JUST THE  
TIP OF THE ICEBERG?”**

**A**n analogy is often used to help someone understand that a problem is a much larger or more complex than it appears. The tip of the iceberg is a symptom; the rest of the iceberg is the cause of the problem. What caused the sinking of the *Titanic* wasn't the tip of the iceberg but the massive part of it below the waterline.

The tip of the iceberg is a good analogy for the current climate warming situation. Drought, fires, floods, and elevated air and sea temperatures are symptoms; the root cause is excessive Green House Gas (GHG) emissions generated by humankind.

### **The Problem**

Unfortunately, many of the materials created to form the foundation for our current society are significant GHG emitters: cement, plastics, ammonia (fertilizer), carbon-based fuels, steel, and many others. When these materials were invented, the negative impact they would create wasn't fully understood, and significant innovation was required to develop them.

Society must now collaborate across all its parts and generate an intensive innovation cycle to create carbon-free or carbon-neutral products and processes on a tight timetable with a sense of urgency.

### **A Sense of Urgency Needed**

Another innovation cycle must also be implemented to reduce water consumption; fifty percent of globally available blue or drinkable water will be consumed by 2030. This is important because of the carbon-water-food connection. Everything must be kept in sync because of this tight relationship.

Earlier, there was a mention of a tight timetable. A specific milestone date of 2030 has been established. This date is the result of decades of analysis and research by scientists. Meeting this date requires a concerted effort among all sectors of an economy. The goal is to keep the average global projected temperature rise to 1.5C (2.7F) to minimize the damage to coastline communities, farmland abandonment to drought, city retrofitting, loss of electrical generation, infrastructure relocation, and water refugees.

Most countries have committed to reducing GHG emissions to meet the 2030 date. The U.S. has committed to a fifty percent reduction by 2030. This is the total of all emissions across its economy, not necessarily a one-number fits all. The targets are often specific by sector.

- Water Footprint Network (WFN)
- SASB (Sustainability Accounting Standards Board)
- LEED (U.S. Building Council)
- IPCC (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)

### The Good News

Fortunately, over a couple of decades, an intricate web of specialist organizations, analytical frameworks, and methodologies has been organized to help make the transition to a carbon-free (or neutral) economy:

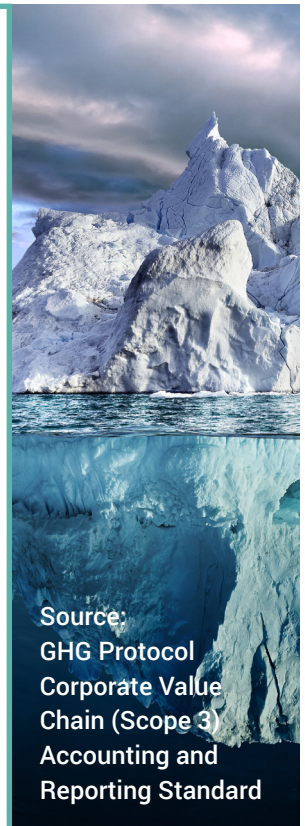
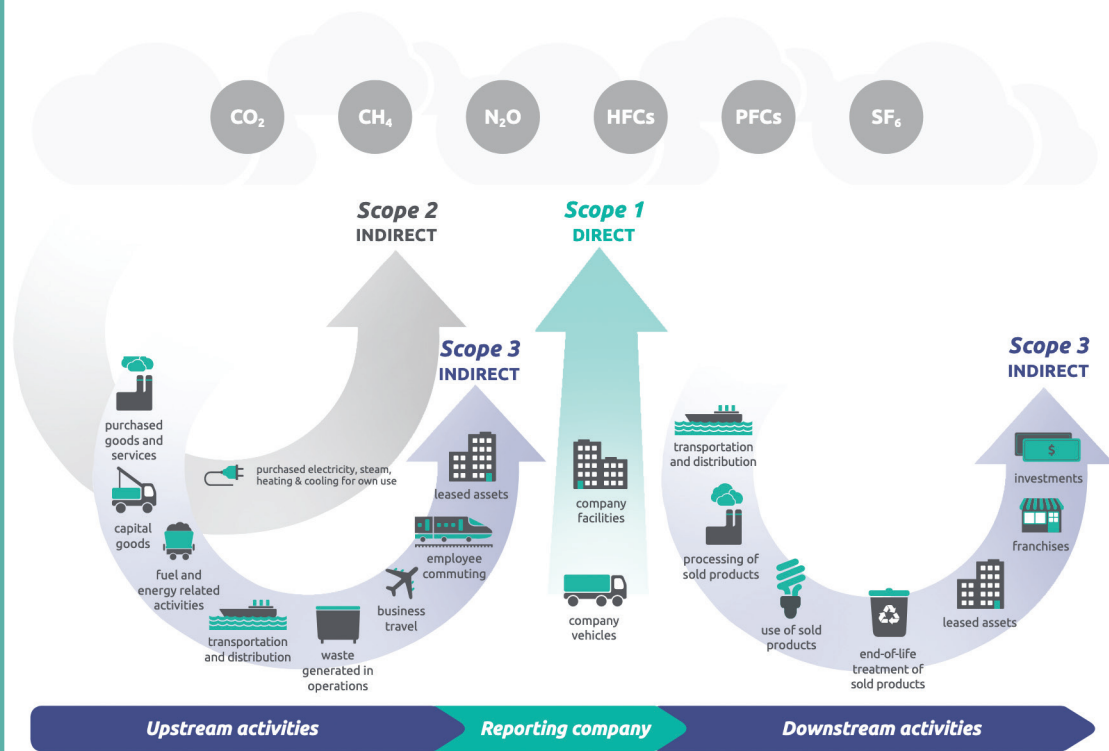
- Scientists who are dedicated to creating data conversions into something useable that we have confidence in because of the science-based approach.
- A key leader in helping both the governmental community and industry with a forum and guidance has been the United Nations (UN).
- Numerous non-profit organizations (NGOs), most notably the:
  - Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol by the World Resources Institute (WRI).
  - The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).
  - Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)

### Top-Down Pressure

With a useable and proven set of tools available and accelerating climate change, combined with large mega-corporations (Fortune 500) deploying them, there is pressure for all enterprises, independent of size, to adopt and use them effectively. Why? Historically, large mega-corporations have functioned as research and development (R&D) laboratories on advanced technologies and methods. Most of these large corporations have mastered the tools mentioned above and report their GHG emissions and water use reduction progress annually.

But large corporations who are starting or planning to start applying pressure on their supply chain partners aren't free of top-down pressure. They are often feeling pressure from large institutional investors. And there is a respected forum where they meet, the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP).

Figure [1.1] Overview of GHG Protocol scopes and emissions across the value chain



Source:  
GHG Protocol  
Corporate Value  
Chain (Scope 3)  
Accounting and  
Reporting Standard



**1 Beer = 79 US  
Gallons of Water**



**1 Hamburger = 634 US**

Illustration 2. Source: Water Footprint Network (WFN).

**If your company hasn't started doing a Green House Gas (GHG) inventory, I recommend getting your act together and putting it on the corporate agenda. It's better to be ahead on the power curve than behind.**

The CDP was launched over twenty years ago to house its members' GHG emissions status and future reduction plans. Today, most members utilize the GHG Protocol to inventory their GHG emissions and strategies for future reductions. We will examine the GHG Protocol later in this discussion.

Members can require key suppliers to develop and submit their reduction plans into the CDP repository on the corporation side. The CDP members also focus on water use. In addition to its role as a keeper of GHG emissions data, it also functions as a forum for developing best practices and broadcasting them.

The financial influence of the members is immense; the institutional investors control over one \$110 trillion. Another pressure point is a supply chain special interest group whose members spend over \$5 trillion annually.

### **The GHG Protocol**

The GHG Protocol has become a de facto standard and was released in 2000, with an extension in 2007. The extension to the protocol covered the value chain (supply chain + post-production and life

cycle) and was developed collaboratively with the International Standards Organization (ISO). Because its development was collaborative and inclusive, it has experienced rapid adoption. Part of its appeal is that its structure is readily understood by those with accounting and general ledger experience.

There are three major types of entities that are covered in the GHG Protocol, and they are called scopes. **Scope 1** is designed for the enterprise with complete management or financial control, and it establishes a boundary of responsibility. There are also rules governing joint ventures and other unusual agreements. **Scope 2** covers the purchase of electrical energy from external sources.

**Scope 3** covers the value chain and is the biggest challenge. Until now, Scope 3 has been optional, but there is pressure for it to be reported since the upstream part of it, the supply chain, covers the majority of GHG emissions for the most finished products.

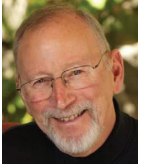
The GHG Protocol uses the concept of inheritance. The GHG emissions generated to make an item are passed on to the buyer of the article, and the emissions generated by the buyer processing that item are added to the cumulative ledger. One way of looking at it is that carbon emissions are continuously embedded or entered in the register as they are processed to completion. Illustration 2 (left), despite being about water, is a good illustration because it uses a methodology similar to embedded emissions but is centered on consumed water. The amount of water consumed cumulatively in this example will surprise you. [https://sandiego.ascm.org/Eco\\_Sustainability](https://sandiego.ascm.org/Eco_Sustainability)

### **The Water Emergency**

Since climate change is a significant contributor to the seemingly endless drought for the Western U.S. and many other regions worldwide, a discussion on the water is essential.

Traditional methods of measuring water consumption obscure the actual consumption. They measure only direct water use and don't include the cumulative water consumption for any product.

Illustration 2 highlights how misleading the traditional method of only being concerned about direct water consumption is. It is essential, but it is misleading without measuring the indirect, cumulative consumption. An excellent example is the United Kingdom; it's a stormy wet place. Despite that, it is a net importer of water via the products it imports. The genuine concern is from what regions



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**Since climate change is a significant contributor to the seemingly endless drought for the Western U.S. and many other regions worldwide, a discussion on the water is essential. Traditional methods of measuring water consumption obscure the actual consumption.**

these products are imported and if the product is water-intensive to produce, and if that region has water scarcity.

The current projection is that fifty percent of the world's drinkable water will have been consumed by 2030. We've been extracting more annually than the replenishment amount needed to keep a water safety net. The situation demands a more accurate method of measuring consumption, and the author

recommends researching the Water Footprint Network methodology.

### A Recommendation

If your company hasn't started doing a GHG inventory, I recommend getting your act together and putting it on the corporate agenda. It's better to be ahead on the power curve than behind. The top-down pressure will eventually find you. If you've already started the journey, kick it up a gear. And don't forget the water problem. If you need clarification on any point, the author can be reached at [eco@sandiego.ascm.org](mailto:eco@sandiego.ascm.org).

### Thanks for the Invite

When I received the invitation to write this short overview, it reminded me of how vital a pallet is in getting goods moved around shop floors, distribution centers, and logistics. It's a noble piece of equipment. Note: There is an ongoing and extensive webinar series on the ASCM San Diego Chapter website open to the public - [https://sandiego.ascm.org/Eco\\_Sustainability](https://sandiego.ascm.org/Eco_Sustainability). ■



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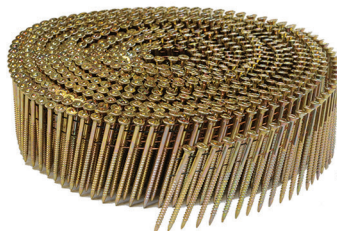
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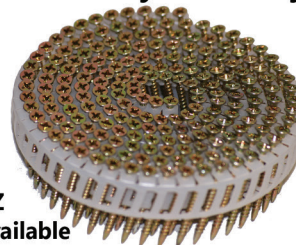
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