



Corporate Environmental Responsibility at FAO 2021 Report



Setting the stage

These past two years have seen the emergence of unprecedented challenges, as work routines and daily lives were transformed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 crisis has shown us what is possible when habits are changed. In 2020, for example, [global carbon emissions fell by around six percent](#) but resumed again at the close of the year as restrictions were relaxed to facilitate more economic and travel activity. Unfortunately, in 2021 [carbon emissions have continued to rise](#), and are set to reach record levels, with [projections](#) indicating that emissions are on course to surge by 5 percent, up to 1.5 billion tonnes, representing the second-largest increase in history.

These worrying trends accompany the release of the [new Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\) report](#), published in August 2021. **This report has been described as a ‘code red for humanity’**, with experts asserting that many of the dire climatic and environmental changes observed worldwide are already irreversible. In order to limit global warming to the fast approaching, internationally-agreed threshold of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, we must make drastic changes, and we must act now.



Source: IPCC

In October 2021, The Human Rights Council recognised that [having a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is a human right](#). Calling on member States to implement this new right, the Council is pushing for the urgent social, political, and environmental transformation necessary for climate change mitigation.

Nevertheless, the recent “post-pandemic” return to business-as-usual shows that we are not yet growing back greener. As we commence the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#), if we are to confront the ongoing biodiversity, climate change, and pollution crises, we must capitalize on the possibilities presented by the pandemic. This will be essential if we are to successfully attain the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and the [Agenda 2030](#).



Strategy 2020–2030



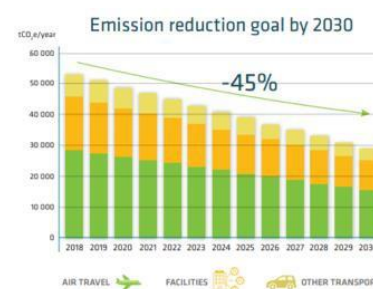
The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is committed to playing its part in achieving these international targets, as embodied by the [launch](#) of the new [Corporate Environmental Responsibility \(CER\) Strategy 2020–2030](#). The new strategy establishes ambitious energy efficiency [targets](#) for facilities, fleet management, and air-travel, which represent the largest emissions sources over which FAO has operational and financial control. The strategy further outlines goals and objectives for many divisions of FAO including travel, events, human resources (HR), procurement, information technology (IT), and facilities. Each division will be responsible for developing measures to cut emissions, reduce waste

generation, and ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into and tailored to the specific work of each division.

The inter-divisional collaboration and dialogue that has been generated by the strategy means that a truly holistic approach to sustainability is fostered, encompassing many cross-cutting themes, and encouraging knowledge-sharing and teamwork.

This encourages a culture of sustainability throughout the Organization, underpinning the way in which FAO conducts its day-to-day operations. This will be important for engendering the widespread behavioural change that will be necessary to meet the strategy's targets.

Cumulatively, the measures implemented over the course of the next decade will contribute to the attainment of a 45 percent emissions reduction **target**, relative to a 2018 baseline. In this way, FAO aligns with [science-based targets](#), as well as [the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN System 2020–2030](#).

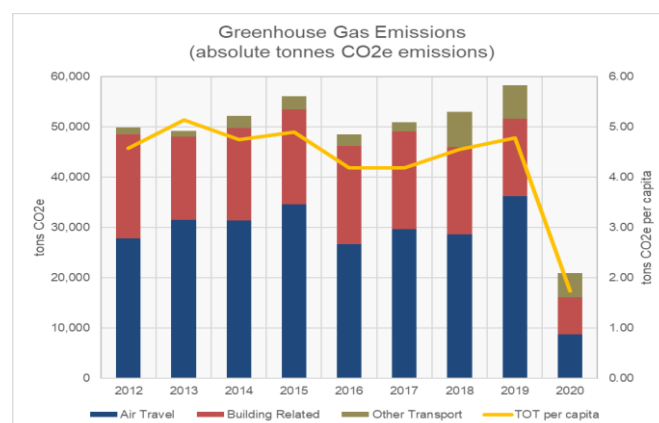


Environmental reporting: GHG emissions, water usage, waste management, and sustainable procurement

Due to the increased number of offices reporting environmental data, information will now be referring mainly to decentralised offices (DOs) *locations* (defined as towns or cities other than headquarters – HQ – where at least one FAO office is present) instead of countries, therefore providing a higher data resolution.

This year, data for offices from 222 locations across 125 countries were included in the environmental inventory exercise, surpassing previous years, and increasing the capture of environmental data from across FAO.

The total FAO emissions recorded in 2020 are 22 381 tCO₂e, corresponding to 1.74 tCO₂e per capita in this reporting year. This represents a decline in global emissions of 61.6 percent compared to the previous year, attributable to the significant world-wide restrictions on travel and office occupancy imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.



However, 2020 has taught us that there are many ways to work and collaborate that can help reduce negative work-related environmental impacts. The Organization was able to keep delivering on its mandate while reducing business travel (air travel emissions declined by 76 percent) and adapting very quickly to new ways of remote working (facilities emissions declined by 52.2 percent). This attests to the value of teleworking, which will become an invaluable tool towards the realisation of the new CER strategy's targets.

While it is evident that some facilities' emissions are now produced at personnel's homes instead of the office, like many other organizations FAO is still taking stock of the challenges and opportunities of the "new normal". Until these are defined, the methodology for the environmental inventory covering FAO facilities and operations will remain unchanged.

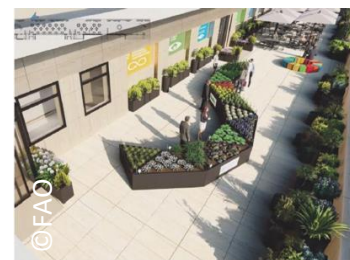


Reported	HQ + 203 Locations (96.40 % of reporting personnel)		HQ + 202 Locations (97.38 % of reporting personnel)			Sustainable Procurement practices (%)
Indicator	Total water (l)	Water per capita (l)	Total waste (kg)	Waste per capita (kg)	Recycling Rate (%)	
Field	81 621 774.57	10 577	498 526	64	15%	28%
All FAO*	101 137 774.57	9 646	1 173 661	111	50%	

* Including reporting locations + HQ.

Achievements in FAO HQ

2021 was a year of transformation for FAO HQ. Notably, the entrance to HQ was renovated and fitted with a wheelchair ramp, LED lighting, and modern communications screens to increase the efficiency and inclusivity of the space. Furthermore, renovation works have begun on the eighth floor of the building featuring an urban garden. The integration of greenery into the building design provides an opportunity to benefit from the range of ecosystem services that urban gardens provide. Indeed, the garden has been populated with 1 400 diverse flora species that are suited to the local climatic conditions, acting as a noise pollution filter and natural climate regulator, as well as being an important source of nectar for pollinators in the city of Rome.



In 2021 FAO has reasserted its commitment to reducing food waste within the organization. Walking the talk, HQ has begun the development of several initiatives thanks to the fruitful collaboration between the Logistics Services Division (CSL) and the Food and Nutrition Division (ESN). Indeed, new measures are being implemented to reduce food waste and promote the sustainability of catering services. To this end, 65 percent of the menu ingredients offered are Bio-certified or are from socially or environmentally sustainable suppliers. Catering contracts contain stipulations for healthy and sustainable diets, and the menus offered in the cafeteria offer international, vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and pork free options. Moreover, an industrial scale has recently been installed in FAO HQ to systematically weigh all types of waste, including organic waste from the cafeteria. This waste can then be sent to a processing station to make compost.



Following an extensive two-year-long consultative process, FAO's [Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition](#) (FAO's Nutrition Strategy) was endorsed at the 166th Session of the FAO Council in April/May 2021. This strategy outlines FAO targets and ambitions around nutrition, adopting a systems approach to facilitate healthy diets and better nutrition. The strategy has synergies with international goals, such as SDG 12, to cut down food waste and loss, [estimated](#) at more than 900 million tonnes annually, and to introduce sustainable consumption patterns.

Achievements in decentralised offices

Despite disruptions caused by the pandemic, there have been many success stories in decentralised offices related to sustainability. These include:

Towards plastic free offices

In FAO Eritrea, the use of plastic bags has been banned. In FAO Kenya, all single use plastics have been banned, and this is complemented by the installation of a waste management and recycling system, including the treatment of wastewater on-site, which is then recycled to irrigate some of the green areas. The use of plastic cups and cutlery has been banned in the FAO Haiti Office since early 2020. The installation drinking fountains in FAO Angola and FAO Mozambique further serves to reduce the use of PET bottles.

Solar power

Solar panels have been installed in the FAO Pakistan offices in Quetta and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The installation of these solar PV systems has reduced GHG emissions produced by diesel generators and given the field offices a constant source of clean energy in areas where the electricity grid is unreliable. In a similar vein, FAO Somalia has implemented solar powered projects to reduce electricity consumption and improve energy efficiency in FAO Somalia funded projects. This includes, for example, solar operated cold chain facilities, cold room containers, and solar direct drive vaccine refrigerators.



Circular food system

Despite an absence of waste management infrastructure in the office locations FAO Pakistan displayed ingenuity in the creation of a circular waste management system. Notably, 2 200 kg of paper and 3 100 kg of organic waste have been recycled and reused locally, promoting the values and principles of a circular economy in the community. A closed loop food system was also developed in the Islamabad office, where organic waste and left-over food is converted into compost. The compost is later used to grow 60 kg of organic fruits and vegetables that are enjoyed by FAO staff.



Green procurement

The [office greening measures](#) in FAO El Salvador, which include measures designed to increase energy efficiency, reduce water consumption by an estimated 30–60 percent (corresponding to around 17 280 litres of water saved annually), provide potable drinking water, and serve the local community and environment, have resulted in FAO El Salvador being nominated for the [CASALCO](#) award for sustainable construction. This is a national award in El Salvador that honours and distinguishes sustainable building design projects that minimize environmental impacts and serve as an inspiration for green building design throughout the country, and in the wider Latin American region.



The way forward

With the new CER strategy now officially inaugurated, the FAO Infrastructure Service, with the CER team, aims to improve environmental communication, advance behavioural change, and stimulate technological innovation and collaboration with decentralised offices. Indeed, in 2021 there are several projects underway. These include:

Food waste monitoring

FAO HQ is Implementing a monitoring system for the evaluation of food offered and analysis of all waste, to minimize food waste and maximize sustainable food choices. Moreover, a feasibility study is underway for a composting machine to be installed within the HQ compound to use the remaining organic waste in-house for gardening and food production.

Renewable energy



Renewable energy will continue to be promoted throughout the Organization. Already, FAO Jordan has commenced the implementation of a new solar project as part of the office greening initiatives. Upon completion, the 13 kWp grid tied solar system is expected to generate 21 111 kWh per year, saving around 11 tCO₂e annually. Additionally, FAO offices in Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, and Burundi have also expressed interest in the installation of solar power systems and are in various stages of implementation.

Environmental training

The CER team is currently in the process of designing a new mandatory environmental training course for FAO staff, to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and tools to understand how everyone can lessen their environmental footprint in professional and personal settings, to expedite a better environment for all. With the incorporation of behavioural science, the environmental training will also provide FAO employees with an overview of the challenges and barriers to adopting new habits, and strategies for overcoming these. Behavioural change will also form a key component of the new CER Strategy.



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