CORSIA
Fact sheet

In 2016, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) adopted a global market-based mechanism, the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA), to address CO2 emissions from international aviation.

CORSIA is the first global market-based measure for any sector and represents a cooperative approach that moves away from a “patchwork” of national or regional regulatory initiatives through the implementation of a global scheme that has been developed through consensus among governments, industry, and international organizations.

The international standards for the implementation of CORSIA have been adopted as an Annex to the Chicago Convention.

Mitigating CO2 emissions

CORSIA aims to stabilize international civil aviation net CO2 emissions at 2019 levels, from 2021, using offsetting programs.

Offsetting is an action by a company or individual to compensate for their emissions by financing a reduction in emissions elsewhere.

They are a fundamental component of global, regional and national emissions reduction policies. Offsetting programs have operated for decades and continue to be an effective mechanism to underpin action against climate change.

CORSIA was designed to be a short- to medium-term strategy (2021-2035) to achieve carbon neutral growth in international aviation until low-emission technology such as Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) can be scaled up and electric and hydrogen-powered technology fully developed in the coming decades.

Offsetting is not intended as an alternative to new technology but as part of a suite of measures to stabilise and reduce emissions. We envisage that as new technology such as SAF becomes widespread, the need for offsets will diminish.

Environmental integrity

Many offsetting projects bring additional social, environmental or economic benefits relevant to sustainable development. Such offsets can be sourced from various types of project activities, including, for example, wind energy, clean cook stoves, methane capture, forestry and other emissions-reducing or avoidance projects.

To ensure the environmental integrity of CORSIA, the ICAO Council has approved a list of emissions units that can be used for compliance. The Council’s decision is informed by a recommendation from a Technical Advisory Body and guided by environmental criteria to guarantee that emissions units deliver the desired CO2 reductions.
The ICAO Council programmes and emissions units eligible for CORSIA’s 2021-2023 pilot phase are (as of July, 2021):

- American Carbon Registry
- Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART)
- China Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Voluntary Emission Reduction Program
- Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)
- Climate Action Reserve
- Global Carbon Council (GCC)
- The Gold Standard
- Verified Carbon Standard

Eligibility is based on principles commonly applied under existing trading mechanisms and well-accepted carbon offset certification standards.

- A key requirement is that the greenhouse gas reduction or removal used as an offset be ‘additional’ to business-as-usual activity. Offsets must also represent a permanent reduction of emissions that cannot be reversed. Similarly, an activity that generates offsets should not result in unintended increases in emissions elsewhere.
- To quantify the greenhouse gas reduction benefits from an offsetting project, a baseline must be determined to represent what would have happened if the project had not been implemented.
- Emissions reductions will need to be quantified using accurate measurements, valid protocols, and be independently audited.
- Emissions Units Programs will need to demonstrate that they have procedures in place to track units and to avoid that an emissions reduction is counted more than once towards attaining climate change mitigation.
- Emissions units programs will also need to have safeguards in place to address environmental and social risks.

Offsetting requirements

Offsetting requirements will apply from 2021. At the end of each 3-year compliance period, operators will have to demonstrate that they have met their offsetting requirements by cancelling the appropriate number of emissions units.

In order to take into account of the special circumstances and respective capabilities of states, ICAO member states agreed to implement offsetting requirements in phases.

- From 2021 until 2026, only flights between states that volunteer to participate in the pilot and/or first phase will be subject to offsetting requirements. The countries that have volunteered covers about 77% of all international aviation activity.
- From 2027, virtually all international flights will be subject to mandatory offsetting requirements, representing more than 90% of all international aviation activity. The exceptions are flights to and from Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and states which represent less than 0.5% of international RTKs, unless these States participate on a voluntary basis.