

## General Terms

These definitions serve as a reference guide and are not intended to be a complete listing, however, they do provide the basic insights to an individual just beginning an investigation into the sustainability topic.

**Sustainability:** the quality of causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time ([Cambridge Dictionary](#)), to pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations ([US EPA](#))

**Corporate Sustainability:** a business approach that creates long-term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risks deriving from economic, environmental, and social developments ([Yale](#))

**Carbon Footprint:** the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions associated with all the activities of a person or business. This may include other forms of emissions such as methane or nitrous oxide. ([Britannica](#))

**Carbon Neutral:** having or resulting in no net addition of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere ([Merriam-Webster](#))

**Circular Economy:** an economy that uses a systems-focused approach and involves industrial processes that are regenerative by design and maintain resources at their highest value for as long as possible ([US EPA](#))

**Climate Change:** periodic modification of Earth's climate brought about as a result of changes to the Earth's atmosphere as well as interactions between the Earth's atmosphere and various geologic, chemical, biological, and geographic factors ([Britannica](#))

**Climate Risk:** term split into two categories; transition risk: risks related to a transition of a low carbon economy and physical risk: risks related to the physical impact of climate change ([US EPA](#))

**Corporate Social Responsibility:** a company-driven business model that seeks to maximize its positive impact on society and the environment. This can include a broad spectrum of societal, economic, and environmental concerns ([Britannica](#))

**Carbon Dioxide:** a colorless gas, one of the most important greenhouse gases linked to global warming ([Britannica](#))

**Cradle-to-Grave:** an approach to evaluate the environmental performance of a product by considering the potential impacts from manufacture to product use to end-of-life management, a variation of life cycle assessment ([ScienceDirect](#))

**Cradle-to-Gate:** an approach to evaluate the environmental performance of a product by considering the potential impacts upon change of ownership from the manufacturer ([ScienceDirect](#))

**Carbon Offset:** an action (such as the planting of trees or carbon sequestration) that compensates for the emission of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases to the atmosphere ([Merriam-Webster](#))

**Direct Emissions:** emissions that occur from sources that are controlled or owned by an organization (See Scope 1 emissions)

**Earth Overshoot Day:** marks the day of the year when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services exceeds what Earth can regenerate in a year ([Earth Overshoot Day](#))

**Ecolabel:** marks placed on product packaging or in e-catalogs that can help consumers and institutional purchasers quickly and easily identify those products that meet specific environmental performance criteria and are therefore deemed "environmentally preferable" ([US EPA](#))

**Extended Producer Responsibility:** a practice and a policy approach in which producers take responsibility for management of the disposal of products that are designated as no longer useful by consumers ([Britannica](#))

**ESG:** abbreviation for environment, social, and governance; a way of judging a company by things other than its financial performance, for example, its policies relating to the environment and how happy its employees are ([Cambridge Dictionary](#))

**ESG Standard:** an agreed level of quality requirements, that people think is acceptable for reporting entities to meet ([Global Reporting Initiative](#))

**ESG Framework:** provide the 'frame' to contextualize information, normally put into practice in the absence of well-defined standards. ([Global Reporting Initiative](#))

**Global Warming:** the phenomenon of increasing average air temperatures near the surface of Earth over the past one to two centuries ([Britannica](#))

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** any gas that has the property of absorbing infrared radiation emitted from Earth's surface and reradiating it back to Earth's surface, thus contributing to a greenhouse effect ([Britannica](#))

**Greenwashing:** the act or practice of making a product, policy, activity, etc. appear to be more environmentally friendly or less environmentally damaging than it really is ([Merriam-Webster](#))

**Indirect Emissions:** emissions as a result from an organization's activities, but are actually emitted from sources owned by other entities (See Scope 2 and Scope 3 emissions/[US EPA](#))

**Impact Investing:** when investors pursue strategies that create positive environmental or social benefits, in addition to strong investment returns ([Forbes](#))

**Linear Economy:** a business model that relies on a take-make-waste structure that is detrimental to the environment, cannot supply the growing populace of our planet, and naturally leads to strained profitability ([Research Gate](#))

**Life Cycle Assessment (LCA):** is a technique to make more informed decisions through a better understanding of the human health and environmental impacts of products, processes and activities ([US EPA](#))

**Product Stewardship:** a product-centered approach to environmental protection and calls on those in the product life cycle to share responsibility for reducing the environmental impacts of products ([US EPA](#)).

**Renewable Energy:** usable energy derived from replenishable sources ([Britannica](#))

**Scope 1 Emissions:** direct emissions that occur from sources that are owned by an organization (example: fuel combusted in heavy machinery on-site or natural gas-powered heaters) ([US EPA](#))

**Scope 2 Emissions:** indirect GHG emissions associated with the purchase of electricity, steam, heat, or cooling. These emissions occur at the facility generating the electricity yet are accounted for by the organization using the energy. ([US EPA](#))

**Scope 3 Emissions:** emissions resulting from activity from assets not owned or controlled by the reporting organization, but that the organization indirectly affects in its value chain. Also, scope 3 includes all emissions not included in the Scope 1 and 2 boundaries. ([US EPA](#))

**Triple Bottom Line:** also known as People Planet Profit, the idea that a company's performance must be measured not only in relation to profits but also to its effect on the environment and society as a whole ([Cambridge Dictionary](#))

## Stakeholders, Frameworks, and Events

**EcoVadis:** this platform is used to provide holistic sustainability ratings of companies, covers a broad range of non-financial management systems including: environmental, Labor & Human Rights, Ethics, and Sustainable Procurement ([EcoVadis](#))

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):** the mission of the EPA is to protect human health and the environment, it is a government organization that develops and enforces law, gives grants, studies environmental issues, sponsors partnerships, and teaches people about the environment ([US EPA](#))

**Global Reporting Initiative (GRI):** an independent, international organization that helps businesses take responsibility for their impacts, by providing the with a global common language to communicate those impacts (see standards above)([GRI](#))

**Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):** the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change ([IPCC](#))

**ISO Standards:** series of international environmental management standards, guides, and technical reports ([ISO Standards](#))

**Kyoto Protocol:** adopted in December of 1997 and entered into force in February 2005 due to a complex ratification process. This operationalizes the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce GHGs in accordance with individual targets ([UNFCCC](#))

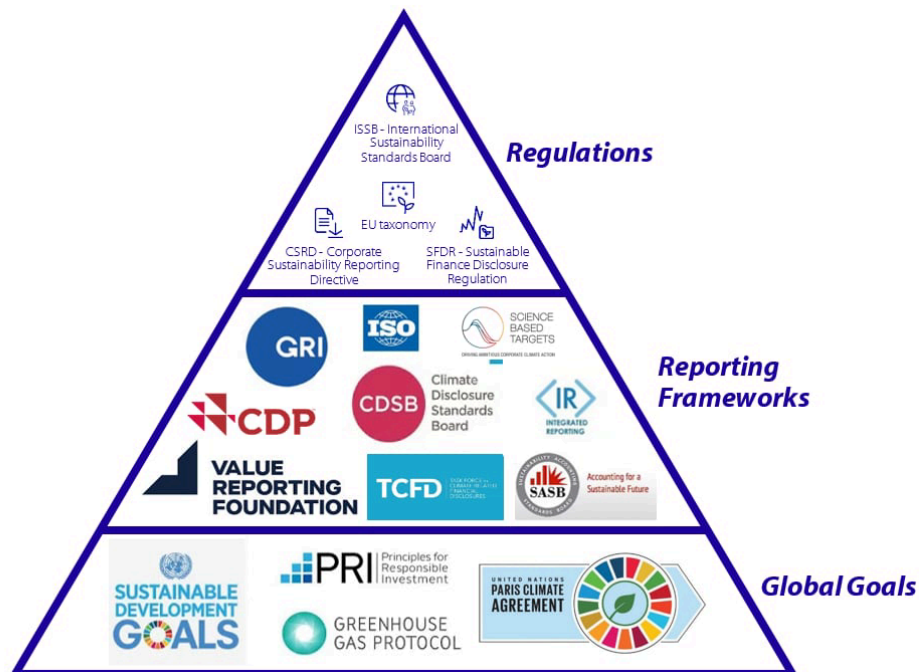
**Paris Agreement:** a legally binding international treaty on climate change, adopted in 2015 by 196 parties, its overarching goal is to hold “2°C above pre-industrial levels” and pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” ([UNFCCC](#))

**Supplier Assurance Platform:** platform that provides a systematic approach to managing risk and due diligence at scale throughout a supply chain ([SUPPLIERASSURANCE](#))

**Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB):** standards that guide the disclosure of financially material sustainability information by companies a to their investors (see standards) ([SASB](#))

**Taskforce on Climate-Related Disclosures (TCFD):** a developed framework to help public companies and other organizations effectively disclose climate-related risks and opportunities through their existing reporting process (see framework) ([TCFD](#))

**United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs):** were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs are integrated—they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability. ([Sustainable Development Goals](#))



<https://www.rabobank.com/knowledge/d011294242-an-introduction-to-the-sustainability-reporting-landscape>

This graphic represents the relationship between ESG regulations, reporting frameworks, and global goals. ESG “standards” are represented in the “frameworks” category. Both are defined in the above definitions.