

# Sustainability FAQ

When it comes to sustainability, we know that getting the right answers matter.  Which is why you'll find answers to all the most frequently asked questions here.

Your partner
in progress

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## Q: What is the meaning of sustainability?

**A:** Sustainability is the practice of meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, by balancing environmental protection, economic growth, and social equity.



## Q: What is the difference between ESG and sustainability?

**A:** ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) is a set of criteria used to evaluate a company's operations and performance in terms of environmental impact, social responsibility and governance practices.

ESG relates to sustainability by promoting practices that ensure long-term ecological balance, social well-being and ethnical management.

## Q: What are the sustainable development goals?

**A:** The Sustainable Development Goals (or SDGs) are a series of goals designed to tackle the world's most important challenges around sustainability. They include goals related to ending poverty, providing access to education, protecting and preserving life, fixing inequalities and tackling climate change. The Sustainable Development Goals were created in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

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## Q: What are greenhouse gases (GHGs)?

**A:** Greenhouse gases (GHG) are gases in the earth's atmosphere that trap heat, enhancing the natural greenhouse effect, contributing to global warming and climate change. Key examples of GHG include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases.

## Q: What is climate change?

**A:** Climate change is a long-term difference in weather patterns and temperatures. In the past this has been due to volcanic activity or changes in the sun, but more recently the driver has been human activity.







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## Q: What are the biggest causes of climate change?

**A:** The biggest causes of climate change are the burning of fossil fuels (such as coal, oil, and natural gas) caused by energy-related activities, by industrial processes, use of transportation, deforestation, and agricultural practices, all of which increase the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere.

## Q: What is the impact of climate change?

**A:** The impact of climate change is significant, for example:

- Natural environments, wildlife habitats, ecosystems and global systems can be affected by extreme weather events, flooding, droughts, extreme heat, wild fires.
- Melting glaciers and ice caps, contribute to rising sea levels, leading to increasing coastal erosion.
- Economic impacts such as damaging property, infrastructure, impacting agricultural systems, food production and disrupting supply chains.
- Human health and wellbeing may be affected by flooding, loss of property, displacement of populations, increasing incidence of disease, anxiety and stress.





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## Q: What is Net Zero?

**A:** Net Zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere, and the amount removed from it. Achieving Net Zero means that any greenhouse gases that are emitted are removed by actions that withdraw an equivalent amount of gases from the atmosphere, within a specified scope and boundary, and over clearly defined reporting. The goal is to have a net zero impact on the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, helping to stop climate change.

## Q: What is carbon neutrality?

**A:** Similar to Net Zero, carbon neutrality seeks to achieve a balance between emitting and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere. By definition, carbon neutrality is the condition in which, during a specified period of time, the GHG emissions have been reduced as a result of GHG emissions reduction or GHG removal and, if any residual GHG emissions remain, these are offset by actions that remove an equivalent amount of gases from the atmosphere, outside the reporting scope / boundary (e.g. through tree planting).

## Q: What is renewable energy?

**A:** Renewable energy is when energy sources that replenish themselves are used. For example, wind and sunlight are powered by nature.





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## Q: What is a carbon footprint?

**A:** A carbon footprint is a measure of the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused directly and indirectly by a product, a service, an activity, an organization, an individual, or even a country, taking into account the inputs and outputs across the whole lifecycle. It includes identifying emissions across the entire value chain, from burning fossil fuels for energy generation, transportation, manufacturing, and disposal of goods, as well as from land use changes and other activities that release GHG into the atmosphere. The carbon footprint concept helps identify, assess and manage the impacts of various entities and activities, aiming to reduce GHG emissions to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

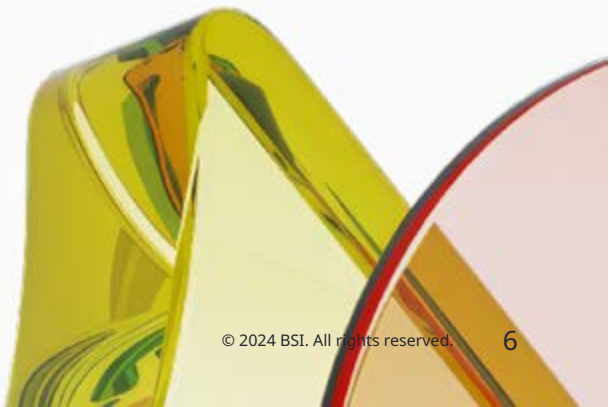
## Q: What is sustainability reporting?

**A:** Sustainability reporting involves the disclosure of an organization's environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance, aiming to communicate its impacts and commitments to stakeholders. It aims to promote transparency, accountability, and improvement in sustainability practices while demonstrating how the organization addresses environmental and social challenges.

## Q: What does greenwashing mean?

**A:** Greenwashing is when a company positions themselves and their products as environmentally friendly or sustainable without actually working to reduce their environmental impact. This is a deceptive practice which governments globally are looking to regulate.





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## Q: Why is it important to think and act in a sustainable way?

**A:** It is important for organizations to act in a sustainable way because it helps mitigate environmental impacts, reduces operational risks, enhances brand reputation, attracts socially responsible investors and customers, and ensures long-term profitability and resilience in a changing world.



## Q: How can my organization work towards being more sustainable?

**A:** Adopting and implementing effective environmental policies and processes can help promote and support sustainable business practices. ISO 14001, the international standard for environmental management systems, provides a specification and guidance on how to consider and manage multiple aspects of your business activities, such as operational planning and control, procurement, product development, manufacturing, storage, distribution, etc. — so that environmental impacts can be reduced and mitigated.

## Q: How can my organization manage energy usage?

**A:** Business processes that consume energy are a significant contributor to GHG emissions and climate change. Organizations that actively seek to reduce energy consumption will significantly reduce their carbon emissions. ISO 50001 is an international standard that helps an organization to improve it's energy performance by reducing energy use, reducing energy consumption, and improving energy efficiency.

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## Q: Why is using water efficiently important?

**A:** Whilst water is abundant on Earth, only between 1–3% is freshwater, of which approximately 0.5% is considered accessible. Therefore water efficiency is important as rising temperatures can exacerbate water scarcity and increase the frequency and intensity of droughts. Efficient water management helps conserve this critical resource, reduces energy use associated with water pumping and treatment, preserves ecosystems dependent on freshwater sources, and enhances resilience to climate impacts on water availability for both human and natural systems.

## Q: What is the circular economy?

**A:** The circular economy is a regenerative approach to business operations where products and materials are kept in use for as long as possible, through strategies such as reuse, repair, remanufacturing, and recycling. This contrasts with the traditional linear economy, which follows a 'take-make-dispose' model. The circular economy aims to minimize waste, maximize resource efficiency, and reduce environmental impacts while creating economic and social value.





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## Q: What is sustainable infrastructure?

**A:** In the context of buildings and infrastructure, carbon management refers to the systematic approach of measuring, reducing, and offsetting carbon emissions associated with the entire lifecycle of construction, operation, and decommissioning of built assets. It involves strategies such as improving energy efficiency, using low-carbon materials and construction techniques, optimizing transportation and logistics, implementing renewable energy sources, and accounting for embodied carbon in materials and construction processes. The goal is to minimize the overall carbon footprint of buildings and infrastructure to mitigate climate change impacts, and to contribute to the achievement of carbon neutrality or net-zero carbon emissions.

## Q: What are sustainable events?

**A:** Event sustainability management involves planning, organizing, and implementing events in a way that minimizes negative environmental, social, and economic impacts, while maximizing positive legacies and benefits. It includes strategies such as reducing waste generation, conserving resources such as water and energy, promoting sustainable sourcing of materials, encouraging responsible transportation options, supporting local communities, and engaging stakeholders to foster a culture of sustainability throughout the event lifecycle. The aim is to create memorable and successful events that contribute positively to the host community and environment.



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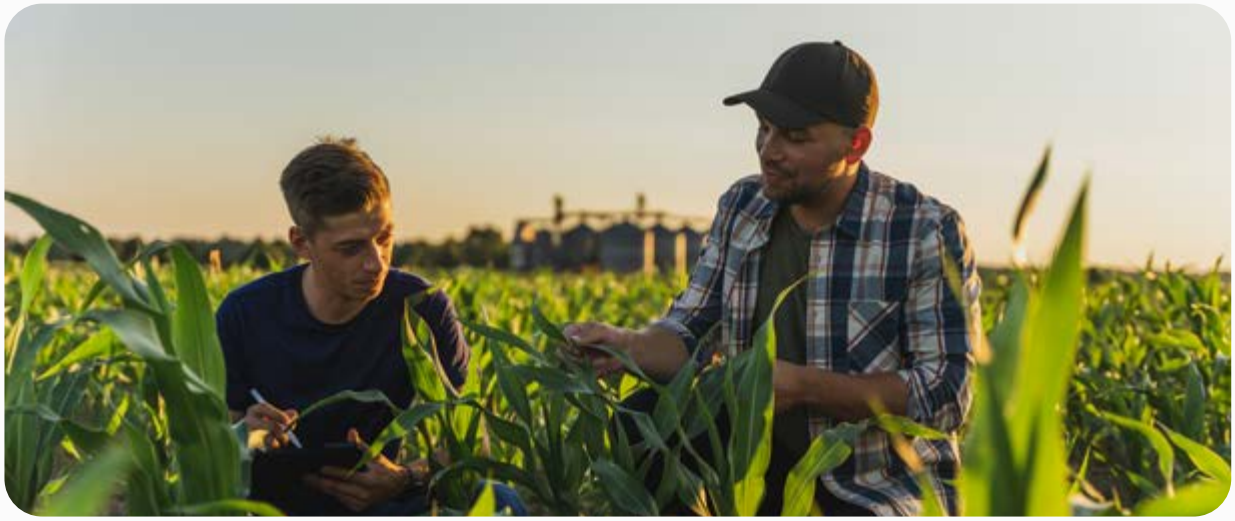
# Q: How can sustainable organizational practices contribute to a more equitable, just, and sustainable society?

## A:

Adopting sustainable organizational practices not only benefits the environment but also enhances occupational health and safety, promotes effective sustainable procurement, strengthens social accountability, and addresses risks related to modern slavery. These efforts collectively contribute to creating a more equitable, just, and sustainable society where businesses play a vital role in driving positive social change.

- **Social accountability:** sustainable business practices uphold high standards of social accountability by being transparent about their operations, supply chains, and impacts on communities. This fosters trust among stakeholders and ensures responsible business conduct.
- **Sustainable procurement:** sustainable business practices involve implementing robust sustainable procurement policies that prioritize ethical sourcing of materials and products. This includes considering environmental impacts, labour conditions, and social responsibility throughout the supply chain.
- **HSW:** Adopting sustainable business practices often involves prioritizing occupational health and safety standards to protect workers. Businesses committed to sustainability also recognize that a healthy workforce is crucial for long-term success. By investing in occupational health and safety measures, they can reduce workplace accidents and illnesses, thereby improving overall employee well-being.
- **Modern slavery:** sustainable businesses conduct rigorous due diligence in their supply chains to identify and mitigate risks of modern slavery and forced labour. This includes auditing suppliers, ensuring compliance with labour laws and international standards, and supporting initiatives to combat human trafficking and exploitation.



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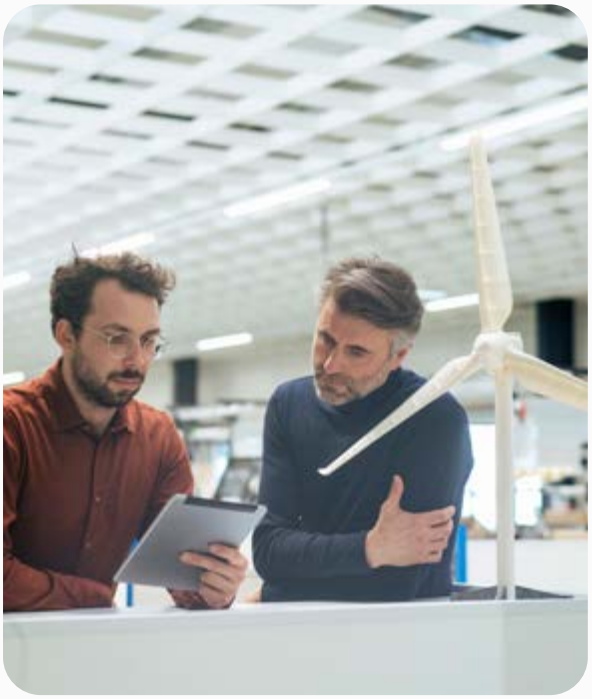
## Q: Why is governance/anti-bribery important?

**A:** Good corporate governance, including robust anti-bribery policies, processes, and practices, is essential for ensuring ethical standards, legal compliance, and transparency within organizations. By adhering to these principles, businesses mitigate risks associated with bribery and corruption, enhance their reputation, build trust among stakeholders, and promote long-term sustainability. Effective governance not only protects against financial and reputational harm but also fosters a culture of integrity and responsible business conduct, contributing to overall organizational success and stakeholder confidence in an increasingly competitive and scrutinized business environment.

## Q: Where can I learn more about sustainability courses and qualifications?

**A:** Information relating to existing sustainability training courses and qualifications can be found at bsigroup.com





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