

# Addressing the Top 4 Criticisms of Carbon Neutrality

Gabriela Alway | Ariva | Marketing

In anticipation of the release of our new carbon neutral brochure, we're dedicating the month of November to busting some of the myths and addressing the primary criticisms of carbon neutrality as they pertain to our program

Sustainability has become a trending topic and a universally recognized priority for most businesses and consumers. Attention, resources, and investments are being dedicated to the reduction of carbon emissions to varying degrees. In evaluating best practices, many come across the term 'carbon neutrality' along their journey. Sometimes the term is accompanied by mixed messages, with occasional claims that carbon neutrality is merely a clever form of greenwashing. While these concerns have a valid basis in certain instances, it's essential to recognize that no two carbon neutral initiatives are the same. To make an informed decision, one should carefully evaluate factors such as transparency, certification credibility and the tangibility of actions taken.

In the paper and packaging industry, consumer decisions are at times influenced by a sense of confusion and uncertainty. Some opt for 100% recycled materials over the carbon neutral option, historically believing it to be the more environmentally responsible choice. However, this belief does not align with the true ecological impact when compared to the carbon footprint of our paper offerings. Our paper brands have been designed with a strong focus on sustainability at the source, a commitment to a circular economy, and a small carbon footprint profile. On the other hand, the level of GHGs tied to processing recycled fibre is inherently larger than that of our brands due to weaker and shorter fibres. From cleaning, deinking, refining, and strengthening short fibres, energy-intensive processes are required to produce a reliable sheet that meets standards.

In anticipation of the release of our new carbon neutral brochure, we're dedicating the month of November to busting some of the myths and addressing the primary criticisms of carbon neutrality as they pertain to our program. For each week in November, we'll address a criticism and shed light on the true impact of Ariva's Carbon Neutral Program. Ariva is committed to transparency and helping our customers feel good about their decision to purchase sustainably produced coated and uncoated paper with a strong environmental portfolio that results in measurable environmental impact.

## Criticism #1: The ability to purchase carbon offsets can delay real action

The most prevalent and important criticism of carbon neutrality is that companies can still engage in environmentally hazardous activities, emit large amounts of greenhouse gases, only to later purchase carbon offsets to label themselves as "carbon neutral". This can create a false sense of progress and delay meaningful action.

It is important to prioritize efforts to reduce emissions at their source rather than relying solely on offsets. Ariva's approach to sustainability is holistic, offering paper manufactured responsibly at the mills, and allowing customers to participate in a program that not only offsets the small amounts of carbon tied to their projects, but supports local initiatives that capture carbon from the environment. We strive to make an impact that is close to home, literally!

Our coated and uncoated paper is manufactured by industry leaders in sustainability - Sappi North America, and Domtar brands manufactured at the Windsor, Quebec Mill - whose carbon footprints are significantly lower than the industry average in their categories according to the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) . For years, sustainability has been a core priority for both organizations, with just some of their most notable achievements listed below. (See [Domtar](#) and [Sappi NA's](#) 2022 annual sustainability reports)

Domtar's Windsor Quebec Mill	Sappi Mills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Has one of the lowest rates of water consumption in the industry</li> <li>1 Runs on green energy from forest biomass</li> <li>1 30% GHG reduction since 2010</li> <li>1 90% of manufacturing by-products are re-used</li> <li>1 99% of the electricity purchased from the grid comes from renewable energy</li> <li>1 Precision tree-harvesting using high-tech, not clear-cutting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Sappi North America's Sustainable Forestry Policy</li> <li>1 Over 70% of total energy consumed by Sappi North American mills is derived from renewable sources</li> <li>1 Waste minimization and efficient use of materials</li> <li>1 Utilize alternative fuels such as construction and demolition wood, tire-derived fuel and reclaimed waste oil</li> </ul>

Ariva has identified the brands that align with our customers' values, and go one step further by offering to offset the low levels of carbon produced from their paper, exclusively through Ariva's program. For us, carbon neutrality is more than a marketing advantage; it's a complementary option that underscores our commitment. It's not a substitute for the substantial efforts invested in sustainable production at the mills, but a way to help our customers stand out in the market.

*Stay tuned for the continuation of this article which will include: accountability/transparency, additionality, and permanence.*