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# INTEGRITY INITIATIVES

High-quality carbon credits have the potential to significantly enhance climate action and bridge the gap between existing commitments and the much-needed decarbonisation of the global economy. Conversely, the effectiveness of climate action is compromised if carbon credits are of low environmental and social integrity.

It is crucial to provide reliable and practical advice to assist purchasers in an ever more complex VCM. Such guidance will empower buyers to differentiate between high-quality and low-quality credits.

There are different tools and initiatives available that provide an assessment of carbon credits. Below are some of the key developments in carbon credit integrity initiatives that governments, companies, and carbon market stakeholders can apply to mitigate reputational and regulatory risks.

## The Carbon Credit Quality Initiative ([CCQI](#))

The **Carbon Credit Quality Initiative (CCQI)** is steered by three non-profit organisations: the Environmental Defense Fund, World Wildlife Fund (WWF-US), and Oeko-Institut. It offers an online scoring tool to assess different types of carbon credits. The methodology behind the [free and interactive tool](#) is based on seven quality objectives including robust determination of GHG emissions, avoiding double-counting, addressing non-permanence, facilitating a net-zero transition, institutional arrangements and processes, environmental and social impacts as well as host country ambition.

Carbon credits are rated on a scale from one (lowest score) to five (highest score), allowing carbon credit buyers and sellers to assess the overall integrity of the credits they are purchasing or selling.

The CCQI interactive scoring tool helps assess whether a particular type of carbon credit is likely to be high-quality. To use the tool, start by selecting the relevant option in the “Type of mitigation project” field. Then, complete the remaining prompts, which are used to generate scores based on the project’s methodology. For each quality objective, you can view more detailed information by clicking on the corresponding score card, allowing for a deeper understanding of how the credit performs against each criterion. In 2024, the tool was expanded to also

evaluate nature-based solutions (NBS) credits, including REDD+ and afforestation/reforestation projects, based on new criteria that assess biodiversity impact and alignment with local climate policies.

You can also access a range of [factsheets](#) for different activity types on their website.

## The Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative ([VCMI](#))

VCMI is an international non-profit organisation. In April 2025, the organisation updated their [Claims Code of Practice rulebook](#) on how companies can make voluntary use of carbon credits as part of credible, science-aligned net-zero decarbonisation pathways. It is meant to build trust and confidence in how companies engage with VCMs and helps them in making credible climate claims. On the supply-side, the [VCM Access Strategy Toolkit](#) provides guidance for countries to engage in high-integrity VCMs in support of national climate targets and economic prosperity.

As Figure 1 illustrates, VCMI distinguishes between different marks for companies based on the percentage of carbon credits they intend to purchase and retire: Silver, Gold, or Platinum. The recently issued guidelines are designed to help companies communicate their achievement of Carbon Integrity Claims more clearly and effectively.

Figure 1: VCMI Carbon Integrity Claims associated with the credible use of carbon credits



Source: [VCMI \(2023\)](#) p.28.

# The Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market ([ICVCM](#))

ICVCM seeks to create a benchmark to raise the quality of carbon credits. It aims to set and enforce global standards and thereby foster high-quality carbon credits that channel finance towards real and additional greenhouse gas reductions and removals.

Through collaboration with stakeholders across the market, the Integrity Council has developed 10 **Core Carbon Principles (CCPs)**. These principles serve as fundamental guidelines for carbon credits of high integrity, as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: ICVCM 10 Core Carbon Principles



Source: [ICVCM \(2023\)](#)

The Integrity Council's Core Carbon Principles [Assessment Framework](#) sets out the detailed criteria it will use to assess whether carbon-crediting programmes and categories of carbon credits meet the [Core Carbon Principles \(CCPs\)](#). Carbon-crediting programmes assessed as CCP-eligible will be able to use the **CCP label** on carbon credits from approved categories. In early 2024, the ICVCM began assessing carbon-crediting programs and categories of carbon credits (i.e., methodologies) for adherence to the CCP Assessment Framework. This includes both program eligibility and categories/methods.

Programmes can apply for assessment by submitting evidence that they meet the CCPs. The [Assessment Status](#) page lists the carbon crediting programmes and methodologies that have received the approval stamp from the ICVCM. As of February 2026, a total of 38 methodologies have been granted CCP approval.



## Ongoing 2025–2026 Evaluations

- December 2025 – February 2026: ICVCM continued approving additional categories of methodologies such as reforestation, improved forest management, and rice methane reduction methodologies for CCP qualification.
- February 2026: ICVCM announced further CCP approvals for specific methods from Isometric, Gold Standard, and ACR.
- Currently (2026): ICVCM continues to evaluate additional methodologies on a rolling basis. The assessment process:
  1. Requires CCP-Eligible programs to submit methodologies for evaluation.
  2. Involves review and evaluation by ICVCM against the CCP criteria.
  3. Produces draft evaluation reports, reviewed by a Standard Oversight Committee.
  4. Results are then presented to the Governing Board for final decisions.

There is no fixed end date published by ICVCM for completing all methodology evaluations. Instead, the process is ongoing, with categories being approved or conditionally approved as assessments are completed and decisions are taken.

### *Other relevant efforts*

- In addition to the initiatives described above, various public actors and regulatory bodies are stepping up to enforce regulations governing the carbon market. These include efforts to build capacity, engage stakeholders, harmonise regulations, and create monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- Legislative actions and directives are being adopted in several countries and constituencies, for example;
  - The [EU green claims directive](#), seeking to protect consumers from greenwashing. The EU adopted the draft directive in March 2024, then paused the process as it was finalising negotiations in June 2025. The directive is back in the review stage with no new timeline. However, environmental advertising will be regulated by another European Green Deal directive – [Empowering consumers for the green transition \(EmpCo Directive\)](#) – that was published and adopted in March 2024.
  - Marketing and advertising agencies are also taking steps to provide guidance to monitor carbon neutral/net zero claims being made and the type of evidence that underpins them.

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