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FACTSHEET - Carbon Dioxide Removal

Country Report: France

France recognises carbon dioxide removal (CDR) as necessary to achieve its legally binding objective of carbon neutrality by 2050. The national framework is centred on the Stratégie Nationale Bas-Carbone, which sets legally binding carbon budgets and integrates both natural and technological removal pathways. However, the policy landscape remains fragmented and largely strategy-driven, with no comprehensive legal framework specifically governing CDR or carbon management. Natural carbon sinks—particularly forests and agricultural soils—play a central role in France's approach, while technological solutions such as carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) are still emerging.

Legal Framework & Targets

France's climate policy is structured around the Stratégie Nationale Bas-Carbone[1] (SNBC). The SNBC establishes the legally binding objective of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and multi-year carbon budgets. It serves as the central reference point for all climate and energy policies, ensuring overall policy coherence. Within this framework, France acknowledges the necessity of CDR but adopts a comparatively cautious approach. Carbon removal is primarily framed through the protection and enhancement of natural sinks, including forests, agricultural land, and, more broadly, eco-systems such as coastal and marine environments.[2] Technological pathways, including CCUS, are recognised but remain less developed both in policy design and regulatory detail. However, France's National CCUS Strategy published in July 2024 estimates a storage potential between 4 and 8 $MtCO_2$ annually by 2030 and up to 30–50 $MtCO_2$ by 2050.[3] Despite the publication of these specific numbers, the legal framework for CDR in France remains fragmented and strategy-based, with no dedicated or comprehensive legislation specifically addressing carbon removal and management.

Economic Instruments

France's primary carbon pricing instrument is the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), which is complemented by a national carbon tax. The EU ETS applies primarily to the power and industrial sectors, while the domestic carbon tax (Contribution Climat Énergie) applies to sectors such as transport and buildings.[4] Together the instruments cover about 60 % of France's greenhouse gas emissions in CO_2 equivalents.[5] With regard to economic support for CDR, there is no dedicated, large-scale financial mechanism specifically designed to incentivise the deployment of engineered carbon removal technologies. The main dedicated instrument is the Low Carbon Label (Label bas-carbone), a voluntary certification mechanism supporting emissions reduction and carbon sequestration projects. It focuses exclusively on natural sinks and promotes activities such as afforestation, reforestation, and sustainable land management.[6]

1 Ministère de la transition écologique et solidaire, Stratégie nationale bas-carbone (2020). The current strategy is under revision and an amendment is to expected (Project of National Low Carbon Strategy 3).

2 Direction générale de l'aménagement, du logement et de la nature, Direction de l'eau et de la biodiversité, Stratégie nationale pour la biodiversité 2030 (2023); French Government, Stratégie nationale pour les océans et les zones côtières 2024-2030 (2024); Ministère de la Transition écologique, Plan pluriannuel pour l'énergie 2019-2023, 2024-2028 (2019), 17-18.

3 Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, État des lieux et perspectives de déploiement du CCUS en France (2024), 14.

4 Centre for European Policy (cep), Carbon Pricing in France and Germany, 2019.

5 OECD, Pricing Greenhouse Gas Emission: Key Findings for France, 2024.

6 Ministère de la transition écologique et solidaire, Label bas-carbone, see https://label-bas-carbone.ecologie.gouv.fr/.

Infrastructure & Permitting

Infrastructure for carbon transport and storage in France is still at an early stage of development, with no fully operational large-scale CO_2 transport network currently in place. The French government recognizes the need to develop such infrastructure as part of its CCUS strategy. The regulatory framework for carbon storage is largely derived from European law, particularly the EU CCS Directive[7], which has been transposed into the French Environmental Code. Beyond this, France lacks specific regulations dedicated to CDR or carbon management. Instead, projects are governed by general environmental law, including requirements for permitting, environmental impact assessments, monitoring, and public participation. However, according to the CCUS strategy, there are plans to regulate the CO_2 transport infrastructure.[8]

Monitoring, Reporting, Verification & Transparency

France's MRV framework for carbon removal relies on existing European and international systems. Natural removals are accounted for within the LULUCF sector, while technological removals are partially integrated into industrial emissions accounting based on mainly the EU ETS. Negative emissions are not yet treated as a distinct legal category. At the project level, the Low Carbon Label provides a structured MRV system, based on ministry-approved methodologies and independent third-party verification. While MRV for natural sinks is relatively developed, significant gaps remain for engineered CDR.

Just Transition & Equity

France lacks a comprehensive framework addressing just transition or equity considerations specifically in relation to carbon removal or carbon management in France. While Fance's CCUS Strategy identifies a national CCUS trajectory including potential on- and offshore storage sites[9], there is no explicit identification of protected worker groups, regions, or funding mechanisms linked to CDR deployment. Carbon management and CCUS are associated with industrial sectors (especially hard-to-abate sectors such as cement and steel), but the social implications of their development are not explicitly addressed.[10]

7 Directive 2009/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the geological storage of carbon dioxide.

8 Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, État des lieux et perspectives de déploiement du CCUS en France (2024), 4.

9 Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, État des lieux et perspectives de déploiement du CCUS en France (2024), 13.

10 Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, État des lieux et perspectives de déploiement du CCUS en France (2024), 19 f.

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