... -30% CO_2 BY 2020

Two years after introducing the Original Printy 4.0, which has incredible CO_2 savings of up to 49%* with respect to its predecessor model and offers climate neutrality as standard, Trodat is once again raising the subject of environment and climate protection in the stamp industry to a new level. Markus Würcher, Managing Director of Trodat GmbH, spoke with Dr. Hildegard Aichberger, Managing Director of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF®) Austria, in July 2012 against the backdrops of extremely ambitious targets: wanting to reduce Trodat's CO_2 footprint 30% by 2020 and the absolute necessity of climate-neutral products as the standard instead of as special green product lines.

*ECO-black and ECO-grey. Lower percentage for other colours. More at www.printy.trodat.net

MW: Dr. Aichberger, how has the subject of CO_2 footprint and climate neutrality developed in the economy since our last conversation two years ago?

HA: In the last two years, model companies have increasingly made a mark on the economy with the issues of environment and climate protection. In connection with this, CO_2 footprint reduction has become more of a central objective for organisations. There are also many more companies that go a step further and offer their products as climate neutral by investing in climate-protection projects to compensate for the residual CO_2. In the beginning climate neutrality was mainly an issue in the paper and printing industries, however big companies in other industries are now offering their products or services as climate neutral. It is always important to obey the basic principle 'first avoid CO_2, then reduce CO_2, and then compensate for CO_2. To simply compensate for CO_2 would absolutely be the wrong way to operate. The objective is to not allow CO_2 to occur in the first place. CO_2 is the most important greenhouse gas.

It accumulates due to its longevity in the atmosphere, therefore simply compensating for CO_2 wouldn't solve our climate problem. It would amount to a kind of 'selling of indulgences'. That is why it's so important to take the route that Trodat has already taken with the Original Printy 4.0, and first avoid CO_2 as much as possible, then reduce CO_2, and only in the third step compensate for truly unavoidable CO_2.

MW: Why do you think there's increasing awareness about the subject of environment and climate protection in the economy?

HA: It's now been clearly demonstrated that our climate is warming and that humans are responsible. Doing nothing is the most expensive solution in the long run. It will destroy our prosperity and our economy. When you consider the CO_2 concentration in our atmosphere, you'll find that it has increased dramatically in recent decades.

If it amounted to between 200 and 300 ppm (parts per million) during the preindustrial 400,000 years, it's already between 390 and 400 ppm today and continues to climb (see box). This means that CO_2 concentration is already +33% above the highest natural values of the last 400,000 years.

A concomitant temperature increase of more than +2 °C can endanger our whole livelihood: the growing seasons and the water cycle would change; devastating floods, droughts, and wind storms would result. Sea levels would rise significantly. Many countries and coastal megacities would be massively affected, because large parts of them would be flooded. Since 1990 at any rate, the number of climate-related disasters has doubled. The point here is that +2 °C represents the 'best case scenario' that we can only reach if we immediately apply all our available resources and achieve a CO_2-free society by 2050. If we don't do this, the mean temperature will increase considerably more than +2 °C and the consequences for humans could no longer be assessed.

MW: Everyone's talking about climate neutrality or CO_2 reduction these days. Is the subject already socio-politically relevant?

HA: The 'mainstreaming' in the language is somewhat problematic, because it doesn't help to generate concern among people. Unfortunately we don't have a sense organ to detect creeping climate changes.

MW: So is it the responsibility of politicians to educate the population?

HA: That it is, and a few steps have already been taken. The EU Commission stipulated the so-called '20-20-20 target' in its climate protection and energy policy: greenhouse gases must be reduced by at least 20% by 2020 relative to 2005. The proportion of renewable energy sources (wind, sun, biomass, etc.) must increase to 20% (2005 EU-wide 8.5%, 2010 already 12.4%), and energy efficiency must also increase by 20%.

Thus energy consumption at constant economic output must decrease by 20%. We're already farther along in Austria: the proportion of renewable energy was 31% in 2010. Our stipulated 2020 target is 34%, with which we contribute to the pan-European 20% target. It's crucial that these values represent the absolute minimum to avert a scenario as described previously. The states current action plans are not yet sufficient to meet these requirements. These climate targets are also the requirement that the WWF® places on its best-practice companies and cooperation partners.

MW: Trodat has now set itself the goal of reducing its CO_2 footprint 30% at the company and product level by 2020. How do you view a goal of this magnitude in this context?

HA: Reducing CO_2 emissions 30% by 2020 is the right goal. It's ambitious and challenging. Trodat thus clearly surpasses all of the targets currently prescribed by policy objectives. It proves that Trodat doesn't just want to exploit the subject of environment and climate protection as a communication tool, but really wants to live it with complete conviction. For the WWF® Austria, Trodat qualifies as an absolute best-practice company in terms of environmental and climate protection, not only within the office products industry, but also in the entire economy. This goal is also absolutely outstanding internationally! To be able to achieve such a goal, it is essential to reduce the CO_2 footprint of its main products to a minimum thus committing its core business to environment and climate protection. This will strive for systematic change. Measures in these areas make overriding sense for the WWF® Austria, because their effects are significant due to the relatively higher sales volume. From our point of view, true environment and climate protection orientation manifests itself by the company showing that it commits its main business - i.e. its standard products, to environmental and climate protection, thus maximizing the positive impact. The path taken by Trodat to offer its main products as carbon neutral is therefore exactly the right one. That should be preferred to just offering green secondary product lines because of the more positive climatic effect. Climate neutrality as standard is the only way to achieve a CO_2-free economy by 2050 thereby achieving the 2 °C target.

MW: How do you think the industry will respond to Trodat's announcement that it wants to reduce its CO2 footprint 30% by 2020?

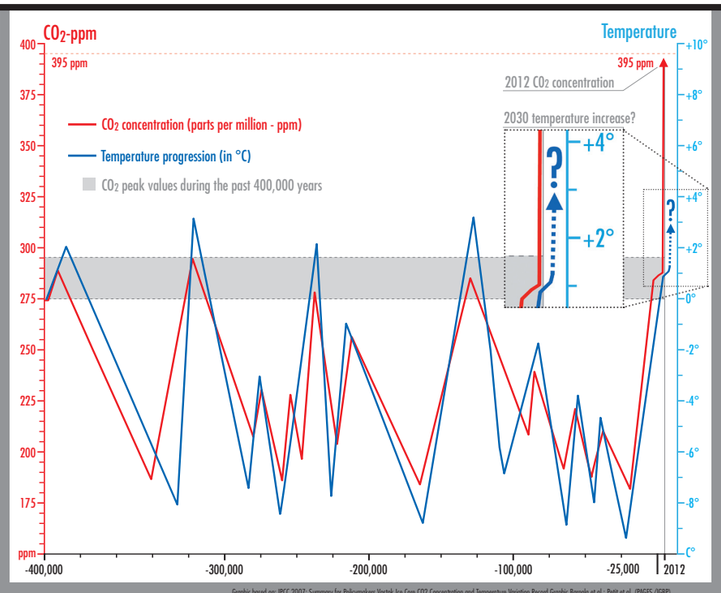
HA: The role-model effect is extremely important in climate protection. I hope that other companies learn a lesson from the positive example set by Trodat and take action to reduce their CO_2 footprint. It's the only way to achieve the goal of a CO_2-free economy by 2050. In any case, I congratulate Trodat on the decision to set such an ambitious CO_2 reduction target for itself and to continue their efforts whilst setting a good example to others.

MW: Dr. Aichberger, I thank you very much for your time.

Dr. Hildegard Aichberger (WWF® Austria) in conversation with Markus Würcher (Trodat GmbH).

Climate researchers predict

that global warming of +2 °C will be reached even at a 450 ppm C02 concentration. This mark could be reached as early as the year 2030 at the current constant average increase of 2–3 ppm per year. It would thus severely impact our children and grandchildren as early as the second half of this century! There have always been temperature fluctuations on earth, but they had cycles of tens of thousands of years. Fluctuations of more than +2 °C have appeared very rarely in Earth's history, but most significantly never 'in an instant', as in the last 200 years since the beginning of the industrial age. This development is so dramatic because the temperature on our planet demonstrably follows C02 concentration, i.e. if C02 concentration in the atmosphere increases, then the earth's temperature also rises.



Graphic based on: IPCC 2007: Summary for Policymakers Vostok Ice Core CO2 Concentration and Temperature Variation Record Graphic Barnola et al.; Petit et al. (PAGES/IGBP)