

World Cup 2022 – Ecological Impact

On a planet that has reached its ecological limits, the fight against global warming has suddenly become, or almost become, everyone's fight. Installing electric panels, driving electric cars, using more public transport and making more use of renewable energy, all means are good to reduce our ecological footprint.

Since Qatar was awarded the organisation of the World Cup in 2010, it has not ceased to fuel controversy, whether because of the obvious violation of human rights or because of its ecological impact. Indeed, opinions seem to be divided about the ecological impact of this edition of the World Cup in times of crisis. Between rumours, promises and reality, we will analyse various points of view in the following synthesis.

The first source we will examine is a video published on the official YouTube channel of the Qatar World Cup 2022. In this clip, Abdulrahman Al Muftah, a Qatari engineer and sustainability and environmental expert, outlines the measures that the FIFA and the host committee have put in place to ensure that this year's event will be fully carbon neutral. As an official FIFA collaborator who has worked on the project himself, he joins the promises made by FIFA President Gianni Infantino. FIFA's and the supreme committee's plan for sustainability consists of 4 points: Raising awareness among the stakeholders, learning about the sources of pollution, reducing emissions in the transport, hotel and construction sectors, and finally investing in "green projects" to counterbalance the CO2 emissions. He describes this edition of the international competition as being the first to be carbon neutral and as a model for the many sports events to come. The use of an expert and engineer in the video is clearly intended to make its content more credible. In other words, it is to gain the trust of the audience. He uses sophisticated and more professional vocabulary and this is what increases the credibility of the message and the actions of the FIFA.

Secondly, we will review an article published on the web page of the "AlJazeera" TV channel, which is the most popular news channel in Qatar. The title of the article is "Will the World Cup in Qatar be carbon-neutral?" With this title, the author refers to the numerous concerns about the credibility of the claims made by the FIFA and The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy. The various criticisms made against FIFA's claims are reviewed, such as the lack of accuracy in the calculation of the CO2 emissions or the accusations of so-called greenwashing. However, the author tries to counterbalance this by mentioning the positive measures taken by the World Cup organizers, such as the fact that the stadiums can be dismantled and reused for future events, and the four-step plan developed by the FIFA and the Qatari committee to reduce the ecological footprint of the tournament. He also explains the fact that, to achieve carbon neutrality, the CO2 emissions will be offset in the form of carbon credits and that numerous projects like solar panels are planned. Being a Qatari news channel, it was more than obvious that the author would defend the actions of his country.

The last source we will review is a video posted on the YouTube channel of the American news platform Semafor. The person behind the voice over questions the promises made by FIFA regarding the CO2 emissions of the World Cup in Qatar. The video also features external speakers to clarify certain points. He announces his point of view right from the start; he does not believe a word of the promises made by FIFA and the Qatari sustainability committee. He gives many examples that show the contradictions in the FIFA's "green" actions. Building all the stadiums near each other in the city of Doha is far from being as advantageous and eco-friendly as the FIFA claims. Indeed, to accommodate the large number of visitors, cruise ships had to be parked near the city, temporary camps were set up, and air shuttles were organized to bring visitors from nearby cities and other countries. All this commotion is the origin of considerable CO2 emissions. He also criticizes the methods that the FIFA and Qatar are using to achieve zero CO2 emissions. They are using carbon offsets, which aim to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the air. Between lack of legal regulations, discredited methods and financial conflicts, these offsets are made with credits representing the "absolute lowest quality standards in the world". The person in this video wants to convince us of his point of view mainly by using statistics, but also by referring to investigations made on the companies/people involved in the organisation of this World Cup. Relying on facts and numbers tends to significantly increase the credibility of the information.

Personally, I don't take the statistics and promises made by FIFA seriously at all, because they don't hold water. Many of the factors that cause significant CO2 emissions, such as the 160 or more flights per day to transport the supporters, as well as the significant emissions of refrigerant gases from air conditioners, are not included in the FIFA calculations. Hosting a World Cup in a country like Qatar, which is one of the highest per capita CO2 emitters in the world, and bringing in more than 2 million visitors, can in no way be "Carbon Free".

In addition, the ecological impact of the 2022 World Cup is also felt in other countries. Indeed, in some countries, public viewings are still organised despite the World Cup being in winter and require the installation of heaters, huge screens and other materials that are very costly in terms of energy. We are in the middle of an ecological crisis, so it is necessary to show solidarity and to reduce our energy consumption.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdWBm4Zd1c>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/sports/2022/10/19/host-qatars-world-cup-carbon-neutral-claims-under-fire>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdWBm4Zd1c>