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1.Schools, airports, high-rise towers: architects urged to get ‘bamboo-ready’

From an article by [Yassin El-Moudden](#), Guardian website, 22 Jan 2026

This week the Institution of Structural Engineers called for architects to be “bamboo-ready” as they published a manual for designing permanent buildings made of the material, in an effort to encourage low-carbon construction and position bamboo as a proper alternative to steel and concrete.

Bamboo has already been used for a number of boundary-pushing projects around the world. At Terminal 2 of Kempegowda international airport in Bengaluru, India, bamboo tubes make up the ceiling and pillars. The Ninghai bamboo tower in north-east China, which is more than 20 metres tall, is claimed to be the world’s first high-rise building made using engineered bamboo.



The Arc at the Green School in Bali, Indonesia. Photograph: Institute of Structural Engineers

At the Green School in Bali, a bamboo-made arc serves as the gymnasium and a striking example of how the material is reshaping sustainable architecture.

The use of composite bamboo shear walls have proved to be resilient against earthquakes and extreme weather in countries such as Colombia and the Philippines, where sustainable, disaster-resilient housing has been built with locally sourced materials.

The construction industry accounted for one-third of global carbon emissions in 2022, with more than half of that being a result of the use of cement and cementitious materials. As urbanisation continues, bringing with it greater pressures for housing and other infrastructure, the challenge facing the sector is how to meet demand while staying on track to meet net zero targets.

Bamboo has a fast growth rate – of about three to six years, compared with timber which is measured in decades – and its larger varieties are particularly suitable for building use.

In its natural shape, the bio-based material has a long historical pedigree of being used in construction. However, the manual points to “knowledge gaps” that have prevented full use of its potential – partly due to colonisation and its influences on technical education.

David Trujillo, the lead author of the manual and an assistant professor in humanitarian engineering at the University of Warwick, said he hoped it would “empower engineers to use their local resources” such as bamboo.

Bamboo is already readily available in tropical and subtropical climates, and changes in the Mediterranean climate have led to larger varieties of bamboo being grown as a crop

in Portugal too, potentially opening the way for the material to be used for building purposes more widely in Europe.

It is not appropriate for buildings exceeding two storeys, but Trujillo said bamboo-constructed buildings acted as a carbon store and that the harvesting of the crop could help with the recovery of soil that had been degraded by monocultures. Growing bamboo also requires little in the way of pesticides or fertilisers.



The bamboo roof of a club house in Colombia. Photograph: David Trujillo/University of Warwick

Trujillo added: “The idea that we can move people away from using carbon-intensive materials and towards low-carbon materials or, better still, carbon-fixing materials seems like a very wise way of minimising the emissions from urbanisation.” He hopes the manual will help in persuading “lecturers around the world to incorporate it in their taught content so that we educate our next generation of engineers and architects to be bamboo-ready”.

2. EDP commissions first global hybrid renewables project

From Energy Source & Distribution Magazine website, January 14, 2026

Global renewables firm EDP Renewables has commissioned its first global hybrid generation project combining hydropower and onshore solar in Portugal. The Pracana complex, located in central Portugal, will deliver 89MW of capacity, marking another significant step for the energy sector and reinforcing the company’s commitment to the energy transition.

The new hybrid park is located in the municipalities of Mação and Proença-a-Nova, in the districts of Santarém and Castelo Branco respectively, and will generate enough energy to supply around 51,800 households while avoiding the emission of approximately 35,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

It combines a photovoltaic solar plant, with 90,000 panels and a capacity of 48MW, with the existing hydroelectric infrastructure at the Pracana dam on the Ocreza River, inaugurated in 1951 and with a capacity of 41MW.

EDP Renewables board member Pedro Vasconcelos said, "Pracana is another milestone in our strategy: by combining hydropower and onshore solar, we reinforce system stability, accelerate the energy transition, and reduce territorial impact. It is EDP's first project of this kind globally and proves that innovation and efficiency can go hand in hand."

The new solar plant, now integrated with the dam, began construction in January 2025, and its estimated annual solar energy production is 87GWh.

3. These farmers are producing record crops despite droughts and floods

From an article by [Ed White](#), Reuters, December 16, 2025

Summary

- Canadian farmers resort to a suite of measures to try to outrun climate change
- Record harvests of spring wheat and canola defy dire climate scenarios
- Technology and seed science offer hope for future crops - but at a steep price

WAWANESA, Manitoba, Dec 15 (Reuters) - When farmer Simon Ellis first drove his combine into this year's crop, he expected "catastrophic failure," after a season of flooding followed by a long drought. But instead of shriveled kernels, plump seeds of wheat, oats and soybeans poured into his combine.

Ellis, 38, a fourth-generation farmer in Wawanesa, Manitoba, credits investments in pricey systems including minimum and zero-till farming which help protect soil; tile drainage, an underground system to prevent flooding; slow-release fertilizer pellets which are more effective, and advice from a professional agronomist on weedkillers. "We are constantly making little tweaks," he said. "That's how we're going to be able to keep fighting the changing climate."

Across much of western Canada, farmers like Ellis have been turning out strikingly better crops despite hotter and drier conditions - far above what farmers in the region could have expected in better conditions years ago, according to Canadian government data, thanks in part to widespread embrace of climate adaptation strategies.

While greater yields in Canada and elsewhere are depressing global prices for grains, they are keeping many farmers in business.

RECORD HARVESTS DESPITE DROUGHT

Adaptation practices - which tend to be costly and require cutting edge technologies - have enabled many farmers to ride out a drought that began in 2020.

Earlier this month, the Canadian government announced record harvests of spring wheat and canola for 2025. And because most of the grains produced in Canada are shipped and consumed abroad, those gains have major implications for the rest of the world's ability to feed itself affordably.

Australia, another large global grain exporter, has also reported rising [crop yields](#) despite drier conditions.

This combination of methods and technology is not just helping Canadian growers keep up with climate change, but stay ahead of its ravages, according to interviews with 25 farmers, scientists and agriculture industry leaders, and a review of more than a dozen academic papers.

Spring wheat, used to make high-quality bread, yielded 58.8 bushels per acre this year, according to the government data release. That's a gain of 77% from 30 years ago, based on a three-year average. Canola yields nearly doubled, reaching 44.7 bushels per acre, also based on a 1994-1996 average.

While most climate science paints a bleak picture for global food supply, with a [study](#) in Nature this year forecasting up to 40% reduction in North America's wheat harvest by 2100, the agricultural experts Reuters interviewed said that with climate adaptation strategies the prairies can continue to produce bigger and bigger crops in the future.

"Back in the day, 30, 35 bushels an acre (for wheat) would have been a bumper crop," said Rob Saik, a Canadian agronomist who has consulted with governments all over the world. "Now it's an abject failure."

A NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT REGION

Even before climate change brought more unpredictable and extreme weather, western Canada was a notoriously difficult region to farm.

The central prairies, a land of green and golden short grasses and thin, scrubby brush, get only about half as much rainfall as Iowa, and have a much shorter growing season. Climate change has made it even harder. Environment and Climate Change Canada says the country is warming at double the global average and that extreme events have become more common. On the prairies, annual snowfall, a key source of spring moisture, has declined and summer extremes of rain and drought have increased, with rain often coming in enormous torrents, or not at all.

"Extreme events, like floods, heatwaves, wildfires, and severe storms, are increasingly damaging to our economy, ecosystems and built environment," the federal department said in a 2024 report.

INCREMENTAL GAINS, NOT MIRACLES

Scientists and agronomists say Canada's gains don't come from a single, dramatic factor, but from steady, incremental progress with farming methods and inputs.

Many seeds now come stacked with insect, disease and weed resistance, thanks to conventional breeding as well as genetic modification. Fertilizer application is designed to minimize disturbance to the soil surface by being placed at the same time as the seed goes in.

Fungicides, weedkillers and nutrients allow crops to outcompete their natural enemies.

Some of the strategies recall pre-industrial practices, such as intercropping, growing multiple crops at the same time.

Experts also credit automation such as self-guiding tractors that apply fertilizer at different rates based on soil tests and satellite mapping.

TECHNOLOGY'S STEEP PRICE TAG

Much of what has allowed Canadian farmers to deal with climate change involves expensive and complex equipment. A smart combine costs upwards of C\$1 million (\$722,125.94). A high-speed-data-enabled tractor and seeding drill cost around C\$2 million (\$1.44 million).

Kip Eideberg, senior vice president of government and industry relations for the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, which represents John Deere, Case New Holland and other manufacturers, said precision systems have saved Canadian farmers 9% in herbicide and pesticides, 6% in fuel, and 4% in water use. That saves money for farmers operating on razor-thin margins, he said.

Most large-scale farmers have access to such technology in their tractors, combines, sprayers and management computers, Terry Griffin, a Kansas State University agricultural economist, said. But an older generation of farmers often doesn't want to take on digital challenges, while younger farmers don't have the money for machines or agronomic advice.

SEED SCIENCE - THE INVISIBLE FACTOR

Another equally important factor for farmers' gains: breeding genetically superior crops that are hardier, drought-tolerant and produce bigger yields.

"We're just starting down that path," said Rick Mitzel, CEO of farmer-and-industry-funded mustard seed development organization Mustard 21. The company is developing drought-tolerant plants as an alternative to canola. The varieties "come out of the ground quicker, develop roots quicker, get leafing faster," Mitzel told Reuters in an interview.

The farmer-controlled South East Research Farm in Redvers, Saskatchewan has been testing crops such as camelina, which is most likely to be planted in Canada for sustainable aviation fuel, that could offer farmers better yields and more resilience.

Executive director Lana Shaw doesn't think climate change will happen without losses to the Canadian farm community. Some farmers will choose to not adapt and will simply retire. Some will adapt and fail. And some farmers will adapt and thrive. "Under pressure," she said, "they can adapt very fast."

Pracana is EDP's sixth hybrid project in Portugal, the 11th in the Iberian Peninsula and, together with the Golancz hybrid park in Poland, brings the group's multi-technology projects in Europe to 12.

4. Can data centres slake their insatiable thirst for water?

From an article by Sarah LaBrecque December 17, 2025. Industry Insight from Ethical Corporation Magazine, a part of Thomson Reuters.

- Summary
- Average mid-size data centre uses 1.4 million litres of water daily for cooling
- Global water demand will outstrip supply by 40% by decade's end
- Indirect water use from electricity generation accounts for up to 75% of total
- Microsoft pilots zero-water cooling design in Phoenix and Wisconsin from 2026
- The average semiconductor factory uses as much water as 33,000 homes

December 16 - Surging use of AI has led to a frenzy of construction activity to build new data centres, particularly in the U.S. Estimates put the total number of these facilities in operation worldwide this year at 6,111, with upwards of 2,000 more set to come online by 2030.

There has been a lot of focus on the implications for power grids, but less on the toll this unbridled growth will take on a commodity that is in even shorter supply: fresh water.

The average mid-size data centre uses about 1.4 million litres of water a day for cooling servers, according to Verisk Maplecroft, and these requirements will increase as the climate gets hotter.

"Data centres have become super-users of fresh water at a time when globally, demand for fresh water is expected to outstrip supply by 40% by the end of the decade," a recent report by NatureFinance states. What's more, 45% of these centres "are located in river basins where water availability is a high risk".

One city where this issue is playing out is Phoenix, Arizona. The city's metro region is one of the fastest growing in the U.S. and a booming data centre hub, with more than 150 facilities either in operation or in the planning stages, according to Kirsten James, lead author of a new report on the impact of data centres on regional water stress. Periods of prolonged drought, an over-allocation of water supplies from the Colorado

River, as well as dwindling groundwater resources make Phoenix a “severely water-stressed region”, according to the Ceres report..

So why are data centres attracted to this region? “There’s a lot of different factors that go into siting these data centres,” says James. Phoenix has low humidity, which reduces the risk of equipment corrosion, lower energy costs (than neighbouring California, for example), tax incentives and a favourable regulatory environment. Also, there’s a lower risk for natural disasters – aside from extreme heat – and, importantly, a major fibre-optic pipeline that links Texas and Southern California.

The companies that own and operate these vast centres – so-called hyperscalers such as Microsoft, Meta and Google, and those providing “co-location” services, for instance, CyrusOne and Iron Mountain – say they are aware of the impacts of their operations, and are seeking to mitigate them.

Data centres use water to regulate humidity and to cool down servers, but increasingly companies are exploring low- or zero-water methods. Microsoft has released a new data centre design that uses zero water for cooling and states that “new projects in Phoenix, Arizona, and Mt Pleasant, Wisconsin, will pilot zero-water evaporated designs in 2026”. Edged, another computing infrastructure provider in the region, will use a waterless cooling system at its Phoenix location.

Meanwhile, Beale Infrastructure switched to a closed-loop air cooling system at its proposed Project Blue data centre near Tucson, Arizona, after an unprecedented outcry from the local community there, which opposed the huge amounts of water and electricity the facility would consume.

According to Renee LaManna, sustainability manager at CyrusOne, “all new facilities (in Arizona) will incorporate our latest sustainability standards, including advanced closed-loop cooling systems that reuse liquid continuously with no evaporation, consuming almost zero water after the initial fill, which is critical in Arizona's desert climate.”

But there’s a trade-off: waterless cooling systems tend to be much more energy-intensive. “Because they require more energy to run, air-cooling systems are generally less efficient at cooling data centres than water-cooling systems, resulting in higher energy use,” states the Ceres report.

And that brings us to the elephant in the room: indirect water use, notably what’s used to generate the electricity that powers the facilities. Though less discussed, indirect use is by far the largest source of water withdrawals connected to data centres, accounting for up to 75% of total consumption, according to the report.

The total amount can vary depending on the type of electricity generation used to power the facility. For example, hydroelectric and coal-fired plants generally have much higher water intensities compared with natural gas power plants, while solar- and wind-powered plants have small water footprints.

So, are data centre companies addressing their indirect water impacts? “When it comes to indirect water consumption, that’s information an energy provider would need to give to a data centre provider, and that’s not necessarily happening,” says Konstantina Koulouri, one of the authors of the NatureFinance report. She points out that electricity companies don’t have any incentive to share that information.

In general terms, there is a dearth of disclosures around both direct and indirect water use by data centres, she says, something that NatureFinance is currently working to address. The research lab is a knowledge partner of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, and is developing sector-specific guidance for the technology sector around disclosure metrics.

Data centre and semi-conductor companies will be included in this guidance, a draft version of which is due to be published in January. “Part of the guidance is proposing metrics to the industry to report on, that we think are material and important for someone in the financial industry to be aware of,” explains Koulouri.

Ceres points out that to get a full picture of data centres' water risks, investors also need to understand the substantial amount of water used to manufacture the millions of semiconductors that power them. The average semiconductor factory today uses as much water as 33,000 U.S. homes.

5. Inside the battle to power AI

From an article by Ben Payton, December 18, 2025 Updated January 10, 2026. Industry Insight from Ethical Corporation Magazine, a part of Thomson Reuters.

- Summary
- Global data centre power demand expected to double to 200-plus gigawatts by 2030
- U.S. data centre demand could hit 100-130GW by 2030, leaving 80GW shortfall
- Nuclear could meet 10% of AI power demand as renewables fill remaining gaps
- But SMR developers will struggle to deploy units before 2030s, missing near-term demand
- Geothermal offers low-carbon option for data centres in Iceland and American West

December 16 - Data centres require huge amounts of electricity, as well as water for cooling. Even before artificial intelligence began to take off, grids were coming under strain around data centre clusters, such as Virginia, Dublin and Singapore. With the rise of power-hungry AI applications, the International Energy Agency expects global data centre power demand to double by 2030.

Boston Consulting Group projects that by 2030 data centre power demand will rise to 100-130GW, compared to 45-50GW today. It warns that supply constraints will leave the U.S. facing a power shortfall of up to 80GW.

Given the long wait to connect to local power grids in some areas, tech companies are willing to consider radical solutions for private power sources. Repurposed aircraft engines are being used to power data centres in the U.S. China has begun building an underwater data centre, using seawater to cool processors. Google announced in November that it will consider putting data centres in space.

Tech companies have historically claimed to seek green energy to meet power demands. This has somewhat slipped down the agenda, however, as finding enough power to enable AI to accelerate becomes the overriding priority.

A total of 114GW of new gas-fired capacity is in the development pipeline in the U.S. as of mid-2025 – more than double the level from a year earlier. Data centres account for almost half of the growth in the country’s forecasted rise in power demand, according to the IEA.

Some tech firms are backing carbon capture and storage as a technology that can mitigate emissions from data centres powered by fossil gas. Google, for example, announced in October that it had signed a first-of-its-kind agreement to support a gas power plant with CCS in Decatur, Illinois, which it says will reduce 90% of the plant’s emissions, compared with unabated gas, when it comes online in early 2030. CCS, however, is still a nascent and expensive technology. The NGO Beyond Fossil Fuels warns that new EU data centres, being built without CCS, could account for 39 million tonnes of carbon dioxide by 2030.

Over the longer term, if tech companies want to mitigate the carbon footprint of data centres while ensuring a reliable power supply, other alternatives need to enter the mix. This is where the nuclear option comes into view. Some hyperscalers have embraced conventional reactors: Microsoft agreed last year to restart Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania. But another option is to use small modular reactors. SMRs work in a similar way to conventional reactors, but on a smaller and more flexible scale.

An SMR “offers clean baseload power around the clock”, says Andrew Richards, vice president of government affairs at TerraPower, an SMR developer founded by Bill Gates. “Unlike renewables, it’s on all the time, so it just fits in perfectly.”

Small-scale reactors have been used for decades in ships and submarines, but no SMR has come into commercial operation in western countries. That may soon change. TerraPower’s first reactor is currently under construction in Wyoming. The company announced a collaboration with Sabey Data Centers in January to explore deploying SMRs at sites in the Rocky Mountains and Texas. Google, meanwhile, signed a power purchase agreement with SMR company Kairos Power last year, with a first site to come online in Tennessee in 2030.

The Trump administration is seeking to accelerate the deployment of SMRs through streamlining regulatory processes. The UK government is also supportive. “The fact that you’ve got such a strong backing from a political standpoint to make it happen gives us a little bit more confidence that it will become real,” says Jeff Miller, Americas power and utilities sector lead at EY-Parthenon.

Yet some developers acknowledge uncertainty in how data centres will use SMRs. “There’s a lot of hype around data centres right now as potential customers ... and there’s many reasons why this makes sense,” says Thomas Jam Pedersen, CEO of Copenhagen Atomics. Yet he cautions that no data centre has actually completed a transaction for an SMR. And he believes that rather than using SMRs as a private power source, it makes more sense for data centres to procure power from SMRs that is delivered through the grid.

Then there are question marks over safety and security.

“When we’ve deployed nuclear facilities and nuclear reactors in the past, it’s always been in an isolated location, where we can have good visibility of the area around,” says Ross Peel, research fellow at King’s College London. But with SMRs potentially built alongside data centres in built-up areas, “it becomes a little bit more difficult to apply security in the same way”.

And while SMRs offer a low-carbon solution, critics point to environmental hazards.

“Unexpected things can happen,” says Doug Parr, chief scientist and policy director at Greenpeace UK. He fears that more reactors, in more locations, increases the risks of accidents and incidents. Parr also laments the lack of a “deliverable solution” to the problem of waste and spent fuel from reactors.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle, though, is that SMR developers – even in the most optimistic scenarios – will struggle to deploy units before the 2030s, too late to meet rapidly growing demand. Duncan Stewart, director of TMT research at Deloitte Canada, says: “That suggests that SMRs, as valuable as they may be longer term, don’t address the near-term question.”

He says another low-carbon technology that could help is geothermal power. Iceland, where around 30% of electricity comes from geothermal, is already a mini-hub for the European data centre industry. Microsoft is looking to tap into geothermal power in Kenya, while multiple companies are developing data centres around geothermal hotspots in the American West.

Kate Hardin, executive director of Deloitte’s Research Center for Energy and Industrials, suggests nuclear power could meet around 10% of AI-related power demand in the U.S. “We see nuclear over time – not tomorrow, but over time – helping to meet this window that we’re trying to close.” Hardin notes that the mix of power will depend on the type of data centre and its location, and points out that data centres are increasingly looking to run some of their most power-intensive applications outside of peak times, lessening pressures on local grids.

A data centre typically takes 18-24 months to get up and running, she says, which is well-matched to the development timeline for a solar-plus-storage project. Renewables are also considerably quicker to deploy than a gas-fired alternative. Supply chain delivery bottlenecks mean a gas turbine ordered today will typically not be ready until around 2030.

Few operators would bet only on intermittent renewables – even with storage – to provide power, given that data centres typically demand 99.999% uptime. Yet, when combined with a grid connection or other back-up, renewables with storage can make abundant commercial sense, even if tech companies are no longer as committed to net zero as they might once have claimed.

6. US exit of key UN climate treaty criticized as self-sabotage

From an article by Valerie Volcovici, January 9, 2026, Reuters

WASHINGTON, Jan 8. The United States' decision to withdraw from the United Nations' key climate treaty is a "colossal own goal" that will harm the U.S. economy, jobs and living standards, United Nations climate chief Simon Stiell said on Thursday.

"While all other nations are stepping forward together, this latest step back from global leadership, climate cooperation and science can only harm the U.S. economy, jobs and living standards, as wildfires, floods, mega-storms and droughts get rapidly worse," Stiell said in a statement.

U.S. President Donald Trump, a vocal critic of renewable energy who has called Climate Change a "con job" and a hoax, went beyond his previous action of withdrawing the U.S. - world's biggest historical greenhouse gas emitter - from the Paris climate agreement by removing the country from the underlying U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

On Thursday, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced the U.S. would immediately withdraw from the UNFCCC's main climate finance mechanism called the Green Climate Fund, and its governing board. The US also withdrew from the key UN scientific body on climate change called the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. U.S. scientists played a key role in the IPCC's assessments.

The move drew criticism from European officials as well as environmental groups. Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore said the U.S. exit from the IPCC, which won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2007, aims to sow doubt around climate science globally even as the rest of the world sticks by the UN climate treaty. "By withdrawing from the IPCC, UNFCCC, and the other vital international partnerships, the Trump Administration is undoing decades of hard-won diplomacy, attempting to undermine climate science, and sowing distrust around the world," he said.

7. Flawed economic models mean climate crisis could crash global economy, experts warn

From an article by Damian Carrington Guardian Environment editor, 5 Feb 2026

Tipping points, such as the collapse of critical Atlantic currents or the Greenland ice sheet, would have global consequences for society. Some are thought to be at, or very close to, their tipping points but the timing is difficult to predict. Combined extreme weather disasters could wipe out national economies, the researchers, from the University of Exeter and financial thinktank Carbon Tracker Initiative, said.

The new report drew on expert judgments from 68 climate scientists from research institutions and government agencies in the UK, US, China and nine other countries. A key finding was that while economic modelling traditionally links climate damages to changes in average temperatures, societies and markets suffer most from extremes, such as heatwaves, floods and droughts.

Another finding was that GDP can mask the full cost of climate damage by failing to account for deaths and ill health, social disruption and degraded ecosystems. GDP can actually increase after disasters owing to spending on recovery, the researchers added.

They said that rather than waiting for perfect models of risk, greater emphasis should be placed on extremes, not just central estimates, and on the vulnerability of the entire financial system. Investors should also speed up the move away from fossil fuels as a fiduciary duty to avoid large future losses, said Mark Campanale, CEO of Carbon Tracker, “The net result of flawed economic advice is widespread complacency amongst investors and policymakers. There’s a tendency in certain government departments to trivialise the impacts of climate on the economy so as to avoid making difficult choices today. This is a big problem – the consequences of delay are catastrophic.”

Laurie Laybourn, at the Strategic Climate Risks Initiative, said: “We are currently living through a paradigm shift in the speed, scale and severity of risks driven by the climate-nature crisis. Yet many regulations and government actions are dangerously out of touch with reality.”

8. Global economy must move past GDP to avoid planetary disaster, warns UN chief

Extracted from an article by Matthew Taylor Guardian Environment correspondent, 9 Feb 2026

The global economy must be radically transformed to stop it rewarding pollution and waste, UN secretary general [António Guterres](#) has warned.

Speaking to the Guardian after the UN hosted a meeting of leading global economists, Guterres said humanity's future required the urgent overhaul of the world's "existing accounting systems" he said were driving the planet to the brink of disaster.

"We must place true value on the environment and go beyond gross domestic product as a measure of human progress and wellbeing. Let us not forget that when we destroy a forest, we are creating GDP. When we overfish, we are creating GDP."

For decades, politicians and policymakers have prioritised growth – as measured by GDP – as the overarching economic goal.

But critics argue that endless, indiscriminate growth on a planet with finite resources is driving not only the climate and nature crisis but increasing inequality.

Guterres said: "Moving beyond gross domestic product is about measuring the things that really matter to people and their communities. GDP tells us the cost of everything, and the value of nothing. Our world is not a gigantic corporation. Financial decisions should be based on more than a snapshot of profit and loss."

In January, the UN held a conference in Geneva titled Beyond GDP attended by senior economists from around the world – including Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, leading Indian economist Kaushik Basu and equity expert Nora Lustig.

The trio are part of a group set up by Guterres that has been tasked with devising a new dashboard of measures of economic success that takes "human wellbeing, sustainability and equity" into account.

A report published by the group late last year argued that, as the world wrestled with repeated global shocks over the past two decades, the need for an economic transformation had become increasingly urgent – from the financial crash of 2008 to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It said those events were exacerbated by the "triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution" and, in addition, warned that rapid technological change was upending labour markets and exacerbating growing inequality.

Prof Basu, who co-chairs the UN group alongside Lustig, said: "Nations are so locked into the game of beating other nations in terms of the GDP metric, that the wellbeing of ordinary citizens and sustainability are getting ignored."

"If all the new income accrues to a few individuals, and the GDP grows, all citizens are expected to cheer. This is feeding hyper-nationalism, inequality and polarisation."

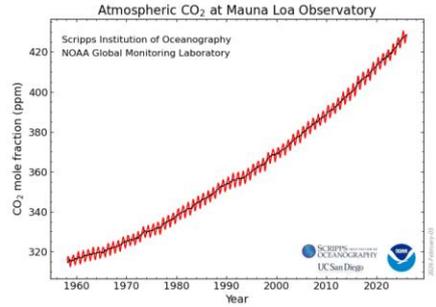
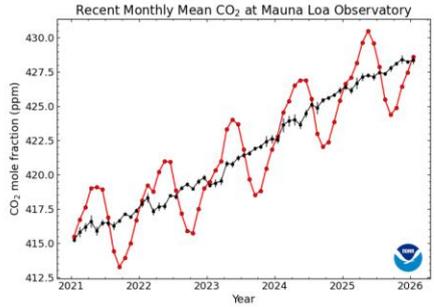
Prof Lustig said GDP had never been "designed to measure human progress, yet it remains the dominant benchmark of success."

"Economic growth can coexist with poverty, exclusion, violence, and serious violations of human rights – outcomes that remain largely invisible in conventional economic accounts ... The group's aim is not to replace GDP but to complement it, helping governments and the public assess whether development is truly improving human wellbeing, advancing equity, and safeguarding sustainability now and for future generations."

9. Global Monitoring Laboratory data: Carbon Dioxide, Methane and Nitrous Oxide Charts

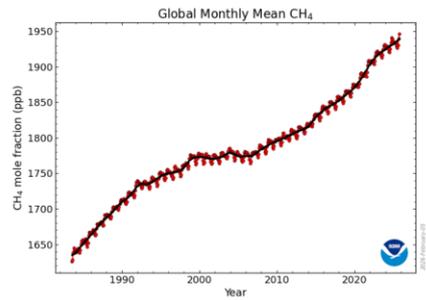
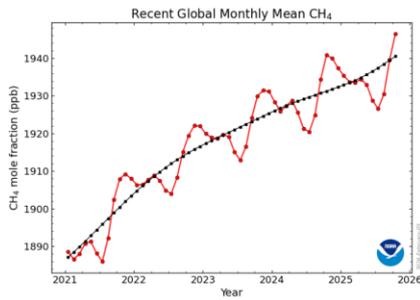
Monthly Average Mauna Loa CO₂

January 2026: 428.62 ppm
January 2025: 426.65 ppm
Last updated: Feb 05, 2026



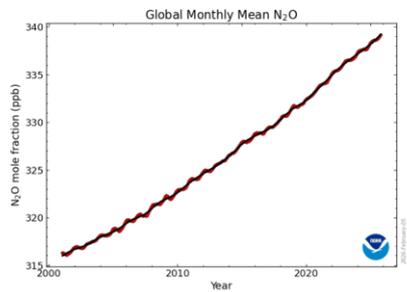
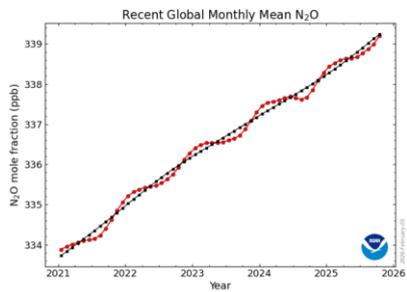
Global CH₄ Monthly Means

October 2025: 1946.47 ppb
October 2024: 1940.79 ppb
Last updated: Feb 05, 2026



Global N₂O Monthly Means

October 2025: 339.21 ppb
October 2024: 337.85 ppb
Last updated: Feb 05, 2026



Ross Rutherford

ESR Newsletter Editor

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