

Product Carbon Footprints and Carbon Credits for Buyers and Indian Exporters

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A product carbon footprint is a calculation, not a pass mark, and it is only as good as its boundary, its data and who checked it. Carbon credits are a separate thing: a bought claim against emissions elsewhere, and since 27 September 2026 they can no longer back a "carbon neutral" product claim to EU consumers. India now runs its own credit market under BEE.

The Short Version

- Ask any footprint which standard, which boundary and who verified it. Without all three it is a number, not evidence.
- ISO 14064 is for an organisation or a project, ISO 14067 is for a product. Don't accept one in place of the other.
- Every real credit has a serial number you can look up in a public registry, retired in someone's name.
- From 27 September 2026 EU law bans product claims of being neutral or reduced in impact that rest on offsets.
- India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme has obligated industries, including textiles and paper, and a separate offset route open to other firms.

Two numbers get confused all the time in supplier emails. One is "our T-shirt is 4.2 kg CO₂e" and the other is "our factory is carbon neutral". The first is a footprint, a measurement. The second is usually a footprint minus some credits someone bought, and in the EU that second sentence is now a legal risk on a consumer product.



This guide covers both, and where they meet. It sits in our [certifications and compliance hub](#). If your question is the EU's border tax on carbon for steel, aluminium, cement and fertiliser, that's [CBAM](#), and we don't repeat it here.

1. A Footprint Is a Calculation With Three Choices Inside It

Every product carbon footprint (PCF) hides three choices, and they change the answer more than the factory does.

- **The boundary.** Cradle to gate stops when the goods leave the factory. Cradle to grave runs through shipping, use and disposal. For clothing the use phase (washing and drying) sits inside cradle to grave and outside cradle to gate, so two honest numbers for the same tee can look nothing alike.

- **The data.** Primary data is the factory's own electricity bills, fuel logs and yields. Secondary data is an average from a database. A footprint built on averages tells you about an average factory, not yours.
- **The method.** The main ones are the GHG Protocol Product Standard and ISO 14067. The GHG Protocol standard covers the full life cycle from raw materials to disposal ([GHG Protocol](#)), and the two bodies announced a joint working group in February 2026 to merge their product rules.

So the first question to any number is never "is it low?". It's "low compared to what boundary, on whose data, checked by whom?".

2. Which Standard Proves What

Standard	What it covers	What it does not prove
GHG Protocol Corporate Standard	A company's Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions	Anything about one product
GHG Protocol Product Standard	One product's life cycle	That the number was checked, unless verified
ISO 14064-1	An organisation's greenhouse gas inventory	A product footprint
ISO 14064-2	A project's reductions or removals	That the project is in a credit registry
ISO 14064-3	How a third party verifies the above	Anything if the verifier isn't accredited
ISO 14067	One product's carbon footprint	That the product is low carbon, only that it was counted properly

The trap I see most often – a supplier sends an ISO 14064 verification statement for the whole company when you asked for a product number.

It's a real document. It's just the wrong one.

3. What a Carbon Credit Is and How to Check One

A carbon credit is one tonne of CO₂e reduced or removed by a project somewhere, issued by a programme and tracked by serial number. The best-known voluntary programmes are Verra (the Verified Carbon Standard) and Gold Standard, and both publish public registries where every credit's project, vintage and status sit in the open.

To check a credit claim –

1. Ask for the registry name, the project ID and the serial number range.
2. Look it up in the programme's public registry yourself.
3. Check it's **retired**, not just held. A retired credit has been used and can't be sold again. The retirement note should name the claimant and the purpose.
4. Read the project type and vintage. Old credits from projects of doubtful benefit are cheap for a reason, and the market has had loud arguments about some forestry and cookstove projects.

A credit doesn't change the product's footprint by a gram. It's an offset claimed next to it.

4. Why "Carbon Neutral" Is Now Risky in Europe and Elsewhere

The EU's Directive (EU) 2024/825, which amends consumer law, applies from 27 September 2026. Among other things, it bans claims that a product has a neutral, reduced or positive climate impact when the claim rests on offsetting. Generic words like "eco" or "green" also need recognised

excellent performance behind them (read via [Bird & Bird's summary](#), the Official Journal text was not read). The UK and Australia already police similar claims under general consumer law, which we cover in [eco-labels and green claims](#).

That's a consumer-facing rule. Your corporate climate report can still mention credits, but the swing tag can't say "carbon neutral tee" on the strength of them.



5. What an Importer Should Check

If you buy from India and a customer, a retailer or your own Scope 3 reporting asks for supplier carbon data, this is what to do and when.

1. **At supplier selection.** Ask whether the factory measures its own electricity and fuel by month. Factories with rooftop solar or a renewable power agreement usually have the paperwork, and a factory that can't

say how many units of power it used last year can't give you a primary-data footprint.

2. **When you ask for a footprint.** Name the method (ISO 14067 or the GHG Protocol Product Standard), the boundary (cradle to gate is enough for most buyers) and the functional unit ("one T-shirt, 180 gsm, size M").
3. **When it arrives.** Check for a verification statement from an accredited body and that its scope names the product, not just the company. In India, verifiers accredited for greenhouse gas work include bodies under NABCB and BEE's new accredited carbon verification agencies for the national scheme.
4. **Before you print anything.** Don't put a supplier's credit-backed "neutral" claim on EU consumer packaging. Use the footprint figure with its method and boundary, if you use anything.
5. **For steel, aluminium and other CBAM goods.** Embedded emissions data goes through CBAM reporting, a separate track. See [CBAM](#).

Red flags – a footprint with no boundary stated, a round number for every SKU, a "certificate" from a platform rather than a verifier, or credits with no serial numbers.

6. India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme

India notified the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) in 2023 (S.O. 2825(E)) and amended it to add an offset route (S.O. 5369(E)). The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) runs it, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission regulates trading, and the [Indian Carbon Market portal](#) handles registration ([BEE](#), read 17 October 2026).

It has two parts –

- **The compliance mechanism.** Obligated industries get emission intensity targets under the Greenhouse Gases Emission Intensity Target Rules

2025. Beat the target and you earn carbon credit certificates, miss it and you buy them. The portal's sector list includes textiles, paper and cement.

- **The offset mechanism.** Firms outside the obligation can register projects under approved methodologies and earn certificates.

On 17 October 2026 the portal showed 220 compliance registrations and 78 offset registrations, and CERC's 2026 regulations on buying and selling credits were listed as published. Press reports quoted BEE expecting certificates and trading from October 2026. We found no official notice confirming trading had started, so check the current status on the portal before you plan around it.

Why it matters to a foreign buyer – an Indian textile mill inside the scheme now has audited energy and emissions intensity data, because it has to. That data is the raw material for a credible footprint.

7. How an Indian Exporter Builds a Verified Footprint

This is the route most export factories take when a buyer asks for product carbon data.

Step 1 – Pick the product and the method. Agree with the buyer which SKU, which method (ISO 14067 is the common ask) and which boundary. Half a day, and save the email.

Step 2 – Gather twelve months of activity data. Electricity bills, diesel and fuel purchases, boiler fuel, raw material quantities, yields, waste, and inbound transport. One to three weeks, and it's where most factories get stuck because nobody kept fuel logs by line.

Step 3 – Get upstream data where you can. Ask your yarn, fabric or steel supplier for their own figures. Where they can't give them, use a

documented database value and say so.

Step 4 – Calculate. In house with a trained person, or with a consultant. A spreadsheet is fine for a first footprint if the method is followed. Two to four weeks.



Step 5 – Get it verified. Hire an accredited verifier for ISO 14067 or the GHG Protocol. It reviews the data, may visit, and issues a verification statement naming the product and the boundary. Allow four to eight weeks, and check the current fee with the verifier. Common findings – missing months of fuel data, electricity counted at the wrong grid factor, and allocation between products that can't be explained.

Step 6 – Send the buyer the right pack. The footprint report, the verification statement and a one-page summary with method, boundary, functional unit and data year. Don't send a "carbon neutral" badge.

Step 7 – Refresh yearly. Footprints go stale when power sources or yields change. A yearly update on the same method is what buyers expect.

Step 8 – If you want to earn credits. A renewable energy or efficiency project can go through CCTS offsets or a voluntary programme. Register on the Indian Carbon Market portal as a project developer, use an approved methodology, then get validation and verification from an accredited agency. That's a months-long project, not a quick win.

If you're a buyer with twenty suppliers and a reporting deadline, chasing activity data out of each factory is real work. [SourcingSync](#) can run that collection for you.

8. A Worked Example

This example is an illustration built from the rules above, not a real firm.

A UK fashion brand buys organic cotton tees from a Tiruppur knitter. Its retail customer asks for a product carbon footprint for one style.

The brand asks for ISO 14067, cradle to gate, "one tee, 180 gsm, size M". The knitter pulls twelve months of power bills (some from rooftop solar, with meter readings), boiler fuel and yarn quantities, and asks its spinning mill for the yarn's footprint. The mill, which sits in the textiles sector of India's scheme, already has audited energy data and supplies a figure. Database values fill the dyeing chemicals. An accredited verifier signs off after one finding on fuel allocation is fixed.

The brand gets a verified number per tee with its method and boundary, and it does not print "carbon neutral" on the tag. More on the product in our [cotton T-shirts guide](#).

FAQ

Is ISO 14067 a certificate? ^

It's a standard for counting. A third party can verify a footprint against it, and that verification statement is what buyers want.

Can my supplier offset its footprint to zero? v

How do I know a carbon credit is real? v

Does India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme cover small exporters? v

Is this the same as CBAM? v

Next Steps

- Decide method, boundary and functional unit before you ask any supplier for a number.
- Check every credit claim in a public registry.
- Read [eco-labels and green claims](#) before you publish any climate claim.
- See the [digital product passport](#), which may carry footprint data for some products.