



COP26 - PRESS RELEASE

French start-up NetZero announces world's first partnership for scaling biochar, one of the few long-term carbon removal solutions currently available

Glasgow, 9 November 2021 – NetZero, a French start-up focusing on carbon removal in the tropics, has announced a major partnership with the Government of Cameroon to build at least 50 biochar production sites in the country before 2030, allowing to remove from the atmosphere at least 250,000 tonnes of CO₂ every year. A first site, built in record time, has just been completed in the city of Nkongsamba, making it Africa's first industrial-scale biochar production plant.

NetZero was notably founded by Axel Reinaud, former Managing Director and Senior Partner at the Boston Consulting Group (BCG); Aimé Njiakin, an entrepreneur of the agribusiness in Cameroon; and Jean Jouzel, world-renowned climatologist and former Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The start-up aims to bring at scale biochar, one of the few solutions capable of guaranteeing long-term carbon removal from the atmosphere, and currently the most efficient approach to do so. NetZero's business model is based on selling high-quality carbon credits on the booming long-term carbon removal market.

According to the IPCC, carbon removal (also known as carbon sequestration) is instrumental in reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. Removal comes on top of the massive efforts required to reduce emissions at the source. In the short term, removal can help accelerate the reduction of net emissions; in the long run, removal is the only way to neutralise unavoidable emissions.

A climate solution validated by the IPCC since 2018, biochar is a solid product with charcoal-powder appearance, produced from agricultural residues. The carbon contained in these residues is extracted using a pyrolysis process, allowing to stabilise for hundreds of years the carbon initially captured in the atmosphere through photosynthesis.

On top of its climate impact, biochar provides two additional benefits. First, when mixed with topsoil, it significantly improves water and nutrient retention, thus increasing crop yields, especially in the tropics. Second, the production process of biochar allows to co-generate renewable electricity. Thus, NetZero's model simultaneously tackles 3 pressing challenges: fighting climate change, supporting agricultural development, and improving access to energy.

Cameroon, represented by its Minister of Environment Pierre Hélé, has announced this innovative partnership with NetZero during a press conference at COP26. This is the world's first biochar scale-up plan, and Cameroon becomes the world's first country to include biochar in its climate and sustainable-development strategy. The agreement states that the Government of Cameroon will help identify locations for new sites and mobilising local stakeholders, while NetZero will bring the operational expertise and the funding.

Beyond Cameroon, NetZero's ambition is to rapidly expand in tropical Africa, South America, and South-East Asia. Its global goal is to reach 1 million tonnes of CO₂ removed annually before 2030.

For more information: www.netzero.green or press@netzero.green