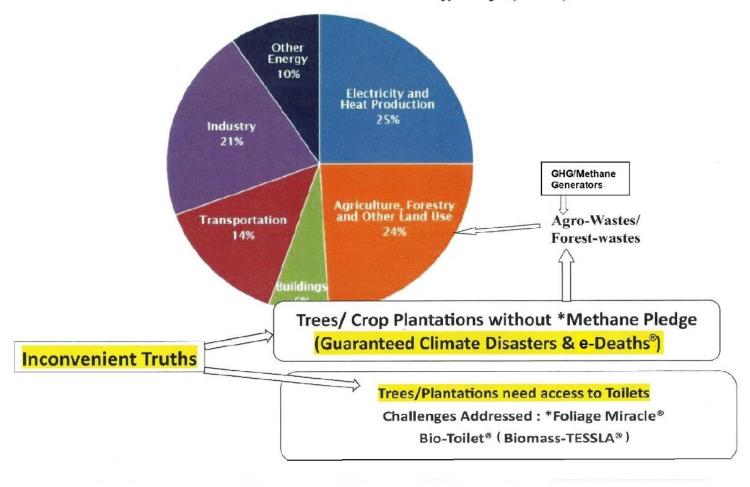




A Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic Sector

A US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)



Net-Zero Livable Planet-X® Project

Bill Gates gets real about climate change:

Planting trees is 'complete nonsense'

but the end of the oil and gas era is finally in sight

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Bennett Raglin/Getty Images for The New York Times

Despite rising temperatures worldwide, unprecedented natural disasters, and the climate refugees they'll create, Bill Gates remains a climate optimist. Perhaps this is buoyed by his own role in fighting climate change. Not only has he founded the climate investment firm Breakthrough Energy, he's also donated millions through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and he personally cuts a \$10 million check each year to carbon capture company Climeworks to offset his

own carbon emissions. So when he speaks on climate, people tend to listen, and he had a lot of thoughts for the "Climate Week" as the United Nations gathered for a General Assembly in New York City.

"I'm the person who's doing the most on climate in terms of the innovation and in how we can square multiple goals," Gates said during an onstage interview at the New York Times' Climate Forward Summit.

The threats, while severe and acute, have solutions and therefore won't lead to the end of the world, he says. "There's a lot of climate exaggeration," he said earlier this week at a separate event, the Earthshot Prize Innovation Summit, which he attended with billionaire Michael Bloomberg and Prince William of the UK. "Climate is not the end of the planet. So the planet is going to be fine."

He reiterated that sentiment at the Times event a few days later. "There are effects on humanity, the planet less so," Gates said. "It's a fairly resilient thing. But the reason I'm engaged is because it affects human welfare." He went on to say that he views the climate crisis primarily through the lens of malnutrition, which will only become exacerbated as it becomes increasingly difficult to grow crops in equatorial regions due to global warming.

His optimism stems from his belief that humanity will find a way to solve the problems climate change will undoubtedly present. "It's pretty clear we're not going to go to extreme scenarios," Gates said. "Emissions will peak and then start to go down. They won't go down as fast as we want them to and so the temperature will continue to rise and once the temperature has risen it doesn't go down very quickly, unless you do massive carbon removal."

By "emissions," of course, Gates is referring to carbon dioxide emissions that largely occur when humans burn oil and natural gas—i.e., every time you drive your non-electric car or fly on a plane. Despite slow progress until now, with the notable exception of Elon Musk's Tesla, the auto industry expects to see widespread electric vehicle adoption by the next decade. Climate nonprofit The Rocky Mountain Institute estimates EV sales will increase sixfold by 2030 and the White House—which has enacted some of the most broad climate policies under President Joe Biden—has set a goal of having at least half of all new cars sold in the U.S. be electric vehicles.

'Are we science people or are we idiots?'

Advances in carbon removal technology are just one example of the sort of solutions Gates sees on the horizon for the world. Once these innovations become commercialized and implemented at scale, they'll offer the world, and in particular developing nations (or "poorer countries" as he termed them) a means to implement environmentally friendly technology without incurring additional costs. "Middle income countries, that are 60% of emissions, and say to them 'Hey, you have to make steel a new way, but that steel will not be more expensive,'" Gates said at the Earthshot Summit. "Likewise for cement, beef, or dairy."

For example, to curb deforestation in the Amazon, Gates advocated for a strategy that would look to make a palm oil substitute cheaper than palm oil, he told the Times. A policy of just banning deforestation on a certain portion of land would be a temporary measure because it wouldn't eliminate the overall demand for palm oil. Furthermore, a change in government might simply reverse that policy because the demand for palm oil would remain.

Gates, however, was skeptical of other recent tactics used to mitigate climate change. He said it was "complete nonsense" that planting enough trees would take care of the climate problem. "Are we science people or are we idiots?" Gates asked rhetorically.

His fellow Silicon Valley billionaire founder Marc Benioff has a plan to plant one trillion trees by the end of the decade. A study by MIT found that planting one trillion trees would eliminate about 6% of the carbon dioxide the world needs to stop emitting by 2050 to reach the goals set out in the 2015 Paris Accords. President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)—which Gates called a "fantastic climate bill" this week— incidentally includes \$1.5 billion in grant money for cities to plant trees in neighborhoods that lack them.

Instead of unproven methods like planting trees, Gates said he prefers carbon taxes as ways to fund future green technologies, in particular carbon capture, which aims to take CO2 out of the atmosphere. Although he acknowledged that in most cases large fossil fuel and electricity companies would pass those costs on to consumers, making it a politically unpalatable policy for elected officials. "If you try to do climate things by brute force you'll sometimes get people that say, 'Hey I like climate. I'm for climate. I don't want to bear that cost and reduce my standard of living," he told the *New York Times*.

Gates, however, was pleased with last year's IRA passed last year under President Joe Biden. The IRA featured some of the largest climate investments in U.S. history, inducing some \$200 billion in funding for clean energy and electric vehicle development. Gates personally intervened to help convince Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) to pass the bill. To those who criticized the bill for not doing enough to address climate change because it still allowed for drilling on federal land, Gates offered a winking encouragement to continue their climate activism. "If some people think some other politician would have gotten more, great! They should vote for that person."

This story was originally featured on Fortune.com

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