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Executive summary: Introduction to the ICAT series of policy assessment guides

Climate change requires rapid and deep transformations across all sectors and all parts of society, shifting away from carbon-intensive modes of production and consumption towards low-emission solutions. The urgency of this transition was underscored by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), which highlights that immediate and substantial action is needed across all systems to limit global warming.

The Paris Agreement sets out an Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) for countries, to build mutual trust and confidence, and promote effective implementation of their climate actions. The Paris Agreement also requires countries to prepare nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and successively raise their ambitions towards achieving the objectives of the Agreement. Transparency through evidence-based policymaking can support effective implementation and accelerated climate action.

The Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT) helps countries meet these goals by equipping them with tools and capacity to assess the impacts of their policies and actions. ICAT integrates methodological guidance, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing to strengthen the transparency, effectiveness and ambition of climate action worldwide.

Assessing the impacts of climate policies and actions

Together, these guides support assessment of national-level impacts of actions on GHG emissions, sustainable development outcomes and transformational change potential, as well as the impacts of actions at the subnational level by non-state actors. Crucially, the guides provide a practical framework for advancing **NDC implementation**, helping translate national climate targets into effective policy action and implementation. They can be used throughout the policy cycle, assessing options before policy adoption, tracking progress and enabling course correction during implementation, and evaluating real-world outcomes after implementation.

They are complemented by process guides that strengthen the quality and transparency of assessments through effective **stakeholder participation** and **independent technical review**.

Together, they help users to:

- Quantify GHG emission reductions and removals
- Assess environmental, social and economic co-benefits and trade-offs
- Evaluate transformational change towards long-term decarbonization
- Strengthen policy design and implementation through evidence-based decision-making
- Enhance transparency, consistency and confidence in results through technical review
- Support the Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) of policies and actions
- Support transparent reporting under the ETF and other frameworks
- Strengthen funding proposals and help mobilize resources for implementation

ICAT Series of Policy Assessment Guides

Introduction to the ICAT series of policy assessment guides

Impact Assessment Guides

GHG Impacts



Agriculture



Renewable energy



Buildings efficiency



Transport pricing



Forest

Cross-cutting



Sustainable development



Transformational change



Non-state and subnational action

Process Guides



Technical review



Stakeholder participation

Advancing climate action through transparency

ICAT guides are aligned with the **ETF** established under article 13 of the Paris Agreement.

They help countries to:

- Estimate baseline emissions and policy impacts
- Monitor implementation and track progress towards NDCs
- Inform biennial transparency reports (BTRs)
- Strengthen links between policy assessments, national GHG inventories and measurement, reporting and verification systems
- Provide consistent, transparent data for the global stocktake

By using the ICAT guides, countries can generate credible evidence that **supports effective decision-making and advances climate action**, while also improving policy design, informing reporting, and building trust among stakeholders, donors and citizens.

Purpose and structure of the Introductory Guide

The **Introductory Guide** serves as the entry point to the ICAT series of policy assessment guides, cross-cutting guides and process guides. It explains how the various ICAT guides are structured and interlinked, showing how they can be used individually or together to conduct comprehensive impact assessments of climate policies and actions. The guide consolidates core elements common to all ICAT GHG impact assessment guides, including purpose, scope, guiding principles, alignment with the Paris Agreement and linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also introduces key concepts, terminology and procedures for planning and carrying out GHG impact assessments, ensuring a consistent and transparent approach across sectors and policy types.

The Guide is structured in two parts:

Part I provides an overview of the ICAT series of policy assessment guides, their potential uses, and how they support the objectives of the Paris Agreement and domestic policy-making processes.

Part II outlines the steps for planning and conducting assessments of GHG impacts, covering topics such as assessment quality principles, stakeholder engagement, setting objectives, and methodological considerations such as data needs and baselines. Together, these elements provide a coherent framework to support the design, implementation and reporting of policy impacts.

The ICAT series of policy assessment guides

The series includes ten assessment guides as well as the Introductory Guide. The guides are organized into three main groups:

GHG impact assessment guides

Provide methodologies for estimating the GHG impacts of policies and actions in key sectors:

Agriculture – Provides general principles and procedures for quantitatively estimating GHG impacts from agricultural policies addressing the major sources/pools in the sector: livestock (enteric fermentation, manure management), fertilizer management, soil carbon pools and rice cultivation.

Renewable energy – Covers commonly implemented renewable energy policies, such as feed-in tariffs (including premiums), auctions (including tenders), tax incentives, net metering, and variable renewable energy (VRE) integration with grid-battery storage, that promote deployment of renewables for electricity generation.

Buildings efficiency – Addresses regulatory and financial policies promoting energy efficiency in new and existing buildings, including standards, labelling and incentives.

Transport pricing – Focuses on pricing instruments including fuel subsidy removal, fuel taxes, road pricing, and incentives for efficient or low-emission vehicles, addressing both emissions reduction and wider co-benefits.

Forest – Supports the assessment of forest-related policies such as afforestation, sustainable forest management, and avoided deforestation and/or degradation, helping address uncertainties and access climate finance.

Cross-cutting guides

Broaden the analysis beyond GHG impacts to capture the multiple dimensions of policy outcomes:

Sustainable development – Enables the assessment of environmental, social and economic co-benefits and trade-offs, helping policymakers design policies that contribute to the SDGs.

Transformational change – Provides a stepwise approach to assess the extent to which a policy triggers systemic and lasting change towards low-emission, resilient development pathways.

Non-state and subnational action – Helps quantify and integrate the impacts of climate actions undertaken by non-state and subnational actors

(such as cities, regions and companies) into national trajectories and reporting systems.

Process guides

Support transparency, participation and continuous improvement across all assessments:

Stakeholder participation – Guides users in engaging stakeholders effectively to enhance inclusiveness, legitimacy and support for policies, paying attention to marginalized groups such as women, youth and local communities.

Technical review – Provides a framework for independent review of assessments to strengthen consistency, credibility and learning, helping build confidence in reported results among governments, financiers and stakeholders.

Using the guides together

The guides can be applied individually or in combination, depending on user needs.

For example:

- A **renewable energy** assessment can be complemented with the **Sustainable Development** and **Transformational Change** guides to assess both GHG reductions and broader socioeconomic benefits.
- Incorporating the **Stakeholder Participation** and **Technical Review** guides enhances inclusiveness, transparency and quality assurance.

This modular approach allows flexibility while ensuring methodological consistency across assessments, enabling users to integrate results into broader monitoring and reporting frameworks.

Collaboration and application

The ICAT policy guides were developed in collaboration with **technical experts and partner organizations worldwide.** They have been applied in more than **50 countries** to strengthen national systems for transparency, impact assessment and reporting.

Through these applications, ICAT continues to build global capacity for **evidence-based policymaking, accountability and enhanced climate ambition.**

Case studies and examples of country applications are available on the ICAT website: **www.climateactiontransparency.org**.

ICAT'S offer to countries

ICAT provides support to help countries use the assessment guides. Support is tailored to specific country needs and priorities, covering all aspects of their work under the Paris Agreement's ETF. Countries choose the methodologies that they would like to use as part of their ICAT project, and decide what the focus of the work should be, such as:

- Building and/or enhancing their transparency systems, based on needs assessment for monitoring, reporting and verification capacity
- Tracking progress made in implementing and achieving NDCs, including developing qualitative or quantitative indicators
- Using methodologies and tools to assess the impacts (GHG emissions and removals, and socioeconomic and other environmental impacts) of specific policies, measures, actions and plans
- Integrating or aggregating transparency at the subnational level and for non-state actors, as relevant for the national transparency systems and national institutional arrangements
- Identifying domestic benefits and synergies from enhanced climate action, including mobilizing finance for policy implementation

Countries interested in such support are invited to contact the ICAT Secretariat at ICAT@unops.org.