



European Commissioner Mr Wopke Hoekstra
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels, Belgium

Subject: reward CO₂ sequestration as the basis of the climate-positive circular economy

Amsterdam, December 5, 2023

Dear Mr Hoekstra,

The COP28, where we meet, is no longer about why, but about how. The Netherlands will play an important role in providing innovative solutions. Capture of CO₂ in soils, buildings and oceans has major systemic acceleration effects for the transition from the fossil to the regenerative society. Farmers can store 31 gigatons CO₂ every year¹ in living soil, restoring soil and peat. Builders can use materials that farmers grow in buildings, with the CO₂ stored for a long time (straw, wood, bamboo, etc.). Seaweed entrepreneurs also produce raw materials and innovate new, scalable forms of natural carbon storage on the open oceans.

We write to you because the work of these farmers, builders and sea heroes not only sequesters - cleans up - CO₂ but also triggers the phasing out of fossil systems. This systemic effect has hardly been mapped, and offers great opportunities for innovative entrepreneurs, the European economy and, of course, the climate. Moreover, these activities not only result in mitigation, but also adaptation. Examples: healthy soil (on which perennial fibre/agricultural crops² grow) holds much more water than degraded land. Biobased buildings keep out more heat. Near-shore seaweed protects against coastal erosion. Moreover, because this combined carbon-removing sector produces bio-based materials, it forms the basis of the circular economy.



The synergy of this 'NatureTech' (man with nature) carbon sequestration is a trump card for this COP28 climate conference. What is needed to rapidly develop and scale up these systemic climate solutions? One, identify: a conceptual framework. Two, quantify: measure and calculate sequestration and positive impacts. And three, value: leveraging sequestration as a policy tool for transition funding.

Identify

The conceptual framework is provided by the farmers and builders at the forefront. They show the great potential of Nature-based Carbon Dioxide Removal (Nb CDR). The IPCC has now proposed a Taxonomy for CO₂ removal (Annex 1.) showing the wide range of Nature-based 'carbon sinks'. A crucial element of this framework is that companies that capture CO₂ become the raw material suppliers of the circular economy. One example is Ballast Nedam: on 6 December, we will announce our joint determination and valorisation of sequestration in the scalable Nature House³.

Quantify

Robust quantification of sequestration is the second condition. We are therefore very enthusiastic about the European Commission's initiative to coordinate certification of carbon sequestration, which was adopted⁴ by the European Parliament on 21 November. We are happy to advise in this process. Supported by ASN Bank, Province of Zuid-Holland and Province of Gelderland, a quantification methodology has been set up and is now being tested in practice. This framework called Oncra (Open Natural Carbon Removal Accounting, oncra.org), launched at COP27 a year ago, has since quantified 181,000 tonnes of CO₂ sequestration and enabled about a quarter of a million euros in transition funding for the first group of farmers, builders and seaweed farmers.

Value

Therein lies the third condition: using policy instruments based on CO₂ sequestered with nature. Transition financing based on CO₂ sequestered with nature is an effective way to achieve multiple policy goals, namely: 1) directly measurable climate impact in the form of less CO₂ in the atmosphere, 2) realising circular biobased economic growth by no longer using old plants (oil, gas, cement) but new plants as raw materials, 3) achieving nitrogen targets, 4) achieving building targets because biobased construction can be done quickly and within nitrogen constraints, and 5) achieving health targets because nature-inclusive agriculture (farming systems with combinations of food and fibre crops) produces healthier vegetables, fruit and meat because of the healthier soil.



We therefore make three recommendations:

1. Designate nature-based sequestration of CO₂, alongside emission reduction, as a spearhead of integrated climate policy: Nature-based Carbon Dioxide Removal (Nb CDR) as integration of climate policy and circular economy;
2. Work from practice, with farmers and builders, in organising quantification of sequestration in soil, oceans and materials, and align implementation of EU carbon removal certification⁴ with other policies (an example: make room in Natura 2000 policy for active ecosystem restoration through Nature-based Solutions).
3. Develop transition financing instruments based on nature-based carbon sequestration, in particular a CO₂ sequestration fund.

This approach leads to demonstrably sequestered CO₂, phasing out fossil resource streams and building the circular biobased economy, with nature and health as a bonus. Innovative farmers, builders and seaweed farmers thus become the heroes of the new, circular biobased economy because they really do clean up CO₂, and produce healthy materials, raw materials and food. Quantifying CO₂ storage is the basis of building the new economy.

We wish you much success on our joint mission both at COP28 and beyond, and will be happy to work with you in realising the new, climate-positive and attractive, loving new society.

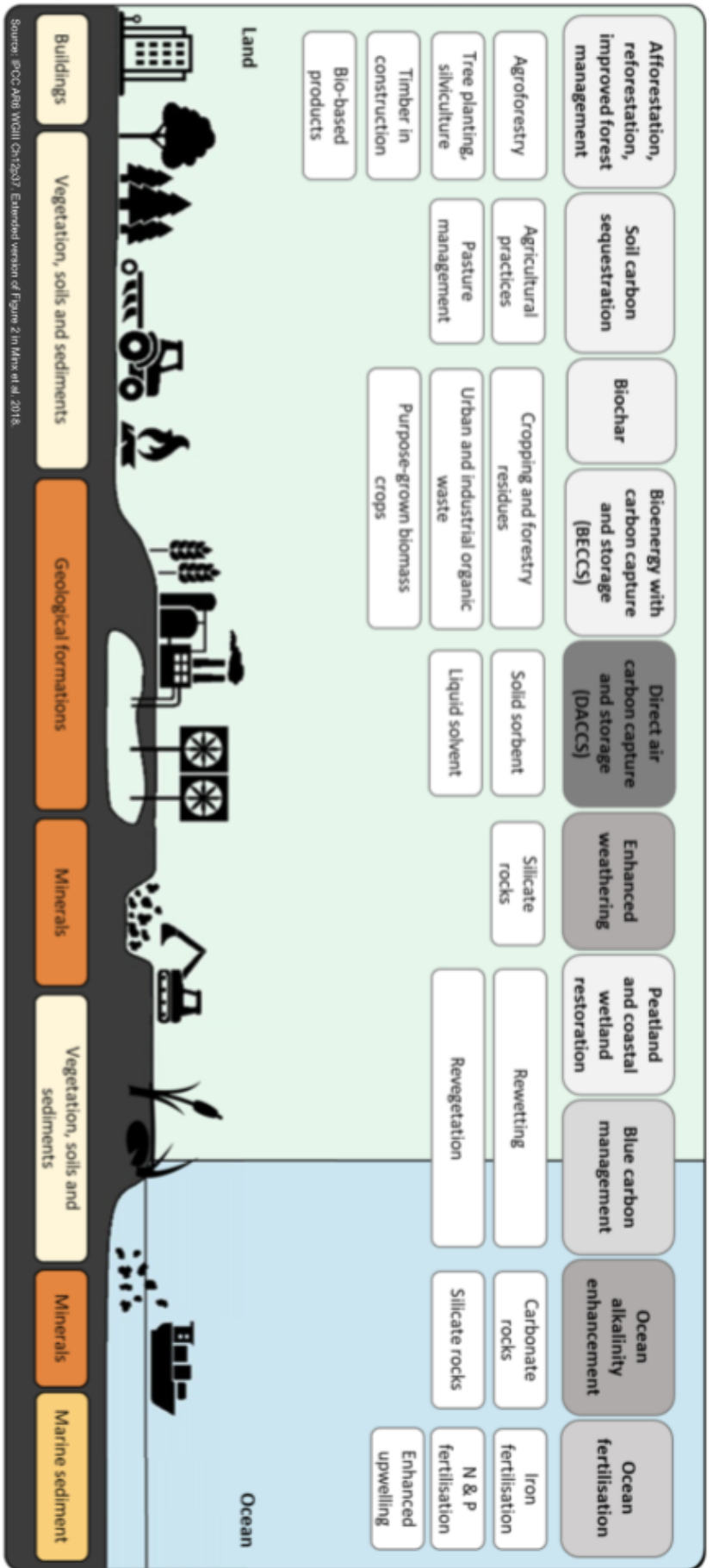
Yours sincerely,

Ruud Koornstra, Coordinator SDG7, chair Climate Cleanup Foundation
Sven Jense, director Climate Cleanup Foundation and Oncra
Laura Rooseboom, director of Startgreen Capital



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1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jul/04/improving-farming-soil-carbon-store-global-heating-target>
 2. www.constructionstoredcarbon.org, <http://buildingbalance.eu>
 3. <https://tinyurl.com/5dv279ez>
 4. <https://oncra.org/european-parliament-approved-carbon-removal-certification-framework/>

United Nations (IPCC) Carbon removal taxonomy



Source: IPCC AR6 WGIII Ch12a37, Extended version of Figure 2 in Mirs et al., 2018.

United Nations (IPCC) Carbon removal taxonomy with Onkra Protocols

