# Aviation professionals call for urgent cuts to flight numbers to tackle climate impact



A newly formed collective of aviation professionals, known as Call Aviation to Action, has raised alarms regarding the aviation industry's failure to adequately address its impact on climate change. The group, which is comprised of individuals who share a love for flying but are increasingly concerned about environmental issues, advocates for transformative changes within the industry, including regulating flight numbers to mitigate emissions.

Karel Bockstael, a co-founder of the group and the former vice-president of sustainability at KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, expressed concerns over the industry's reliance on overly optimistic technological advancements and a business model that prioritises continual growth in flight numbers. He stated, "We see the good that aviation can do but we also see that we must reinvent our industry to restore its positive contribution to the world." Bockstael warned that without significant change, aviation could account for approximately 25% of all human-caused emissions by 2050, a statistic he deemed "a very shameful position."

The aviation sector’s emissions are currently excluded from national climate pledges made to the United Nations due to their international nature. Instead, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is responsible for regulating aviation emissions. However, Bockstael argued that ICAO has "failed dramatically" in its mandate, producing only the Corsia scheme, which permits carbon offsets for growth above a designated threshold. Critics have labelled this scheme as "unambitious and problematic," with its effectiveness yet to be realised as no airline is currently mandated to utilise carbon credits.

Tom Reynolds, an airline pilot and member of Safe Landing—a coalition of aviation workers focused on climate concerns—voiced his commitment to addressing the climate crisis. "As a commercial pilot, I’m trained to recognise risks and act, and the climate crisis is one we can’t ignore," he said. He conveyed optimism for the aviation industry's future, suggesting that with decisive leadership and appropriate investments, it could evolve into a more sustainable entity.

The aviation industry's carbon footprint is significant; it generates more CO2 emissions per mile than any other transport sector and is predominantly utilised by wealthier individuals, with 1% of the global population responsible for half of all aviation emissions. Current climate strategies within the sector have been rated as "critically insufficient" by Climate Action Tracker, indicating a pressing need for more effective measures.

ICAO projects that passenger numbers will double by 2042, arguing that advancements in aircraft efficiency, sustainable fuels, and the Corsia scheme can effectively control emissions. However, independent analysts have expressed skepticism regarding the feasibility of these measures, particularly given recent stagnation in fuel efficiency improvements.

Bockstael contended that the exponential growth anticipated in air travel undermines any long-term emissions reduction aspirations outlined by ICAO—targeted for net-zero by 2050. The Call Aviation to Action group is advocating for absolute emissions cuts aligned with established scientific CO2 budgets, alongside a fair approach to regulating global flight demand. This could involve additional measures such as flight or carbon taxes to manage passenger numbers sustainably.

Finlay Asher, an aerospace engineer and member of Safe Landing, noted that the proposals from Call Aviation to Action could herald a new era of innovation in the aviation sector. He remarked, "Our industry is in need of an upgrade: new aircraft designs, new forms of zero-carbon power, and new airport layouts to support these," suggesting that such advancements would generate employment while making air travel more eco-friendly.

The formation of Call Aviation to Action has already garnered interest from dozens of professionals within the industry, including engineers and executives from airlines and airports, many of whom had previously felt unable to voice their concerns publicly.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.ft.com/content/3d9b0706-7730-49fa-8761-c48696ab06a2> - This piece reports that European airline emissions are projected to exceed pre-pandemic levels in 2025, underscoring the aviation industry's struggle to reduce emissions despite commitments to net-zero by 2050, supporting the article's point about the industry's insufficient climate strategies.
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4. <https://www.iata.org/en/programs/sustainability/corsia/> - This page provides an overview of the CORSIA scheme, including its goals and implementation phases, corroborating the article's discussion of ICAO's role in regulating aviation emissions and the scheme's limitations.
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