

The National University of La Plata and its Carbon Program: Academic Leadership for Regional Sustainability

The National University of La Plata (UNLP), with over a century of history, stands as one of the most influential and prestigious higher education institutions in Argentina and Latin America. Founded in 1905, this public and free university has consolidated its role as a central hub for academic training, cutting-edge scientific research, and university extension. With a community exceeding 120,000 students, distributed across 17 faculties and more than 150 undergraduate and postgraduate programs, UNLP is not only an educational benchmark but also a cultural, scientific, and technological driving force that propels regional and national development, being an academic and research reference in Latin America.



Its commitment to the democratization of knowledge and social inclusion is reflected in its free and open access, allowing thousands of young people to access quality education. UNLP distinguishes itself by its profound emphasis on research, covering a vast spectrum of disciplines ranging from exact and natural sciences to humanities and social sciences. This diversity and excellence in research enable it to generate relevant knowledge and propose innovative solutions to contemporary challenges, with a growing focus on environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation.

UNLP's Commitment to Sustainability and Climate Change



In the current global scenario, where the urgency of addressing climate change is undeniable, the National University of La Plata has assumed a proactive role in promoting sustainability. Conscious of the inherent responsibility of academic institutions in building a greener and more equitable future, UNLP has integrated the environmental dimension into its fundamental pillars: teaching, research, and extension. This commitment materializes in the training of professionals with a strong environmental awareness, in the generation of knowledge that drives sustainable solutions, and in the implementation of practices that minimize its own ecological footprint.

The UNLP Carbon Program: Academic Leadership in the Voluntary Carbon Market

In line with its vision of sustainability and its public service vocation, UNLP has launched the UNLP Carbon Program. This strategic initiative has been conceived and developed to actively contribute to global decarbonization and the consolidation of a robust and transparent voluntary carbon market in the region, seeking to amplify the development of high-quality carbon credits and democratize access to voluntary markets. The program focuses on establishing a benchmark for quality and integrity in the generation of carbon credits, relying on the academic excellence and scientific rigor that characterize UNLP.

Declaration of Principles and Objectives

The UNLP Carbon Program is founded on an unwavering commitment to the highest standards of quality, transparency, and applicability, designed to drive positive and sustainable environmental impact, with a particular focus on inclusion and the promotion of projects of various scales. Its fundamental pillars are:

- **Development of a Rigorous and Adapted Methodological Framework:** Led by the Faculty of Engineering (in collaboration with the Faculty of Agronomy), the program has designed a comprehensive methodological framework for the verification of carbon sequestration in afforestation, reforestation, and revegetation (ARR) projects. This standard is built on solid scientific principles and aligns with recognized international best practices and methodologies,

such as those of VCS (Verified Carbon Standard) and CDM (Clean Development Mechanism), ensuring global homogeneity while adapting to the biogeographical and socioeconomic particularities of the region.

- **Promotion of Independent Participation and Transparency in Issuance:** The Program is conceived as an open platform for independent forest project developers, who are responsible for implementing their initiatives under UNLP's methodological guidance. The University, as guarantor of integrity, will manage a public registry of Verified Carbon Units (VCUs), ensuring their traceability, uniqueness, and transparency in each issuance.
- **Unwavering Adherence to Carbon Credit Quality Principles:** The Program firmly adheres to the fundamental principles that define a high-quality carbon credit: uniqueness, reality, permanence, additionality, and measurability. This includes the implementation of robust mechanisms for risk mitigation and ensuring that projects do not generate negative environmental or social impacts, thus upholding the "No Net Harm" principle.

Relevance for Carbon Trading Platforms (VCUs)

The UNLP Carbon Program is of particular interest to Carbon Trading Platforms (VCUs) for several key reasons, positioning it as a strategic player in the voluntary market:

- **Addressing the Gap for Small Producers:** In Argentina, most forestry projects are small-scale. Law 25.080, which supports projects under 1,000 hectares, has benefited over 23,000 projects, of which a notable 73% correspond to small producers. However, many of these are excluded from traditional VCU verification schemes due to high costs and complexity. The UNLP Carbon Program is designed to reverse this trend, amplifying and democratizing access to high-quality carbon credit certification for a vast segment of producers who would otherwise be marginalized. It is estimated that the total area planted under this Argentine regulatory framework amounts to approximately 503,524 hectares, and UNLP's model seeks to support the development of these projects, allowing many initiatives to access the benefits of the carbon market.
- **Reinforcing Public Credibility and Trust:** The participation of an academic institution of UNLP's stature, recognized for its impartiality and scientific rigor, will instill an additional layer of credibility and trust in the carbon market, differentiating credits generated under its program. UNLP's non-commercial nature reinforces the impartiality and commitment to science and transparency of the framework.
- **Catalyst for Regional Dynamization:** UNLP has the potential to be a key driver for the development and professionalization of the carbon market in Latin America. Its program not only facilitates the generation of high-quality projects but, as a knowledge center, will attract sustainable investments and foster best practices in the forestry sector and beyond.
- **Link Between Research and Real-World Application:** The UNLP Carbon Program materializes academia's capacity to translate scientific research into practical and scalable solutions for the challenge of climate change, bridging a vital gap between theoretical knowledge and on-the-ground implementation.
- **Strategic Human Capital Formation:** By operating a program of this nature, UNLP becomes a breeding ground for the training of highly qualified professionals in carbon management, an indispensable resource for sustainable growth and market maturity in the region.
- **Promotion of Standardization and Best Practices:** By developing its own standard, aligned with global best practices and calibrated for local realities, UNLP will facilitate the adoption of rigorous methodologies, promoting integrity and quality in the Argentine and regional context.
- **Impact and Future Vision**

The UNLP Carbon Program not only seeks to reduce environmental impact through the promotion of carbon sequestration projects but also to position the university as a national and international benchmark in sustainability. By demonstrating the feasibility of generating verifiable and high-quality carbon credits, UNLP inspires other organizations and encourages the participation of key stakeholders, especially small producers, in the carbon economy. Furthermore, the program directly contributes to the formation of a more conscious and environmentally committed citizenry, preparing future generations for the challenges of the 21st century.

The program's future vision includes expanding its actions, seeking additional international certifications, and collaborating with other institutions and public and private sector actors to promote sustainability on an even larger scale. UNLP is determined to be a leading university in building a more sustainable and resilient future.