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# Unlocking the Potential of SMBs in Climate Action



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# Methodology

The following report has been informed by both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include Meta's Global State of Small Business Survey of more than 35,000 small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) across 30 countries and territories conducted in July 2021, as well as a Global SMB Survey from Ipsos that was conducted for Meta in July 2022 and included 37,800 SMBs across 43 markets. The study was augmented by 15 in-depth interviews with SMBs from the France, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria and the UK to understand SMB motivations and stories around climate action.





# Foreword

Extreme weather events such as droughts, flooding and heatwaves across Europe are only the most recent visible signs of climate change and are having devastating impacts on communities. As temperatures continue to rise, it is clear that everyone—including businesses, governments and consumers—will need to take action to combat the effects.

At Meta, we recognise the urgency to act against climate change and have set an ambitious target to be net zero by 2030.

Beyond adjusting our own operations, we appreciate that we can further our impact by supporting the various communities that use our tools, such as SMBs.

SMBs are at the heart of the economy and comprise 99% of businesses in the EU. Given their significance, SMBs have an opportunity to play an important role in furthering climate action. SMBs are often lifestyle ambassadors and purveyors of inspiring experiences that touch the lives of millions of people every day. When SMBs go green, they send strong messages of change to their suppliers, customers and local neighbourhoods. Their offerings to customers and demands to suppliers can create and accelerate trends like going vegan, using cargo bikes, avoiding fast fashion or switching to solar power. In this way, not only do SMB actions reduce their own emissions, but they also can shape the actions and behaviours of others in their communities.

Just as digital technology is helping SMBs transform how they sell to and engage with customers,<sup>1</sup> it will also play an important part in unlocking the opportunities that accelerate climate action. Over 200 million businesses use Meta's technologies every month to connect with customers, hire employees and grow their businesses. We are already engaging with SMBs through our [Guide to Green initiative](#), which aims to equip SMBs with practical steps to take action. We also conduct regular surveys of SMB leaders on the Facebook app through the Data for Good at Meta research programme, which seeks to understand the experiences and challenges of SMBs and to share actionable datasets and insights with SMBs, policymakers and the public in a privacy-preserving way.

We know, however, that the road ahead is long and complex. We have authored this report to guide our future support for SMBs and to contribute to the dialogue around SMBs' relationship with climate change. The report focuses on SMBs within Europe and aims to explore the following questions:

What is the current sentiment of SMBs toward climate change?

What challenges most affect SMBs' climate action and impact?

What opportunities exist to scale and accelerate SMBs' climate action?

How might digital technology enable and amplify SMBs' climate action?



— Angie Gifford, Vice President,  
EMEA, Meta

# Executive summary

## Climate change is here and requires immediate action from society to mitigate its impact.

SMBs (defined here as businesses with fewer than 250 employees) are at the heart of society and are a critical piece of the climate challenge. This report examines the relationship of SMBs and climate action, focusing on the broad challenges they face and how partners across society, as well as digital technology, can support them on their journey.

Just as digital technology is helping SMBs transform how they sell to and engage with customers, it can also play an important part in enabling their climate-focused transformation.

SMBs occupy a critical position in the economy and society, providing significant opportunities for them to play a key part in climate action:



**Collective action to reduce their own emissions can materially shift the dial.**



**As the glue across many supply chains, SMBs can influence enterprises and entire industries through their actions.**



**SMBs can harness their presence and relationships in local communities to drive consumer micro-behaviours, which ripple across the economy.**

Most SMBs view climate change as a pressing problem. For example, 80% of SMBs surveyed by the SME Climate Hub in 2022 considered reducing their emissions ‘a high priority.’<sup>2</sup> Research shows motivation to act is driven by a desire to do the right thing for society and also by the opportunity to gain a competitive advantage. However, SMBs are often constrained by finances, knowledge and time and, therefore, struggle to translate their climate ambitions into meaningful action. For example, 89% of SMBs surveyed by Eurobarometer in 2022 reported that they had taken some action to be more resource efficient, but only 20% have a strategy in place to reduce their carbon footprint and become climate neutral.<sup>3</sup>

This creates an opportunity for governments and large enterprises to support SMBs in realising their sustainability goals. Digital technology has a role to play in shaping this support and will also directly help SMBs enable their own climate action by connecting them to people, ideas and data.

Our research has demonstrated 3 broad areas in which SMBs would benefit from support to realise their climate-related goals:

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## 01

### **Providing and boosting the value case**

SMBs must be razor-focused on their bottom line, particularly in times of difficult economic conditions. Often, the costs and uncertain returns associated with taking climate action limits the ability of SMBs to act in transformative ways. Showcasing success stories, facilitating the sizing of commercial opportunities and providing funding are all ways to catalyse SMBs to act.

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## 02

### **Identifying what matters most**

Even if SMBs have resources to invest, the complex landscape of climate change presents a challenge in knowing where to direct them. There is an opportunity for clearer standards, policies and guidelines tailored to the SMB sector to help cut through the noise to address what climate actions they should be considering.

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## 03

### **Making it easier to deliver changes**

SMBs must juggle competing priorities, and their limited capacity means prioritisation often comes down to what is deemed urgent, not necessarily what is deemed important long-term. Training, tools and technical capacity to reduce the burden on time-poor SMBs could help them progress climate action in parallel to their day-to-day activities.

Digital technology can play a key role in helping SMBs achieve their climate goals, for example, by enabling the conduct of business through more sustainable practices that substitute for energy-intensive actions. Social media and other digital communications technologies may also help further amplify the impact of SMBs' climate actions by bringing SMBs together to learn from and influence each other. Furthermore, digital technology can create a ripple effect across the economy by enabling SMBs to engage with both enterprises and consumers regarding their own climate actions and behaviours.

We are already seeing SMBs demonstrating a greener approach to business and many positive moves to support SMBs on their journey. They are a key piece of the climate puzzle, and there will be no net zero without them. However, for their potential to be realised, attention must focus not just on SMBs but also on the governments, industry partners and technologies positioned to support them in achieving their goals.



“The possibilities that our technology will unlock for people only matter if we have a safe and thriving planet.”<sup>4</sup>

— Mark Zuckerberg, Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Meta

# The need for climate action and the role of SMBs

## Climate change is here.

Humanity is on code red,<sup>5</sup> with immediate action needed to slow the irreversible damage to our planet. We are already seeing the devastating effects of global warming—2022 is expected to be the warmest year on record,<sup>6</sup> and 2021 had the highest CO<sub>2</sub> levels in 2 million years.<sup>7</sup> Unless significant changes are made, global temperatures are expected to increase by up to 5°C by the end of the century.<sup>8</sup>

The increasing frequency of extreme weather conditions is being felt across the world. In Europe, where these impacts had previously seemed distant, many are starting to see climate change first-hand. In the summer of 2022, Europe saw an extreme heatwave, with record-breaking temperatures leading to public health warnings and major infrastructure disruptions.<sup>9</sup> It was estimated there were 1,977 wildfires across the region in 2022 through July alone, 3 times more than usual, causing thousands of residents across France, Portugal and Spain to evacuate their homes.<sup>10</sup>

These climate change catastrophes have had a direct, negative impact on the economy. For instance, in Italy, water shortages and droughts have led to a drop of as much as 45% in corn and animal feed yields and a 30% reduction in wheat and rice production.<sup>11</sup> In Germany, low water levels on the Rhine forced barges to carry only 15-20% of their usual loads, significantly disrupting transport of oil, chemicals, grains and other heavy loads

on this crucial waterway.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps even more worryingly, given the ongoing energy crisis, high water temperatures in the Rhône and Garonne rivers led to restricted outputs from some of France's nuclear energy plants.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Norway has limited their output from hydroelectric plants to avoid empty reservoirs this winter.<sup>14</sup>

These crises are hurting businesses of all sizes. In a survey conducted in 2021 by the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and Accenture of CEOs in 113 countries, CEOs in Europe and Africa reported that their top risk is supply chain disruption due to extreme weather.<sup>15</sup> In the UK, an article by the London School of Economics and Political Science has cited that SMBs affected by flooding reported spending between £12,000 and £250,000 in related costs, and 50% expect the financial impacts to increase over time.<sup>16</sup> Businesses across Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) are also concerned by the negative impacts supply chain disruptions could have on the health of their workforce, with Middle Eastern businesses highlighting this as their top risk (see Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1:** Top risks that businesses see as a result of the physical impacts of climate change<sup>17</sup>





Region	Top challenges
Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply chain interruptions due to extreme weather events</li> <li>• Dramatic changes to water supply</li> <li>• Negative health impacts across the workforce</li> </ul>
Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply chain interruptions due to extreme weather events</li> <li>• Negative health impacts across the workforce</li> <li>• Operating challenges due to physical impacts on assets (e.g., heatwaves, storms)</li> </ul>
Middle East and North Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative health impacts across the workforce</li> <li>• Operating challenges due to physical impacts on assets (e.g., heatwaves, storms)</li> <li>• Dramatic changes to water supply</li> </ul>

## Pressure is building across society for climate action.

Given the many impacts of climate change as well as the increased level of urgency, stakeholders across society are demanding action. Climate change is top of mind for consumers,

employees, governments and investors. This focus translates meaningfully to the day-to-day operations and bottom line for SMBs by opening new opportunities as well as obligations.

**FIGURE 2:** Different stakeholder groups are increasingly recognising the importance of climate action.<sup>18, 19, 20</sup>

	<h3>Consumers</h3> <p>66% of consumers want companies to take a stand on current and relevant issues like sustainability.</p>
	<h3>Employees</h3> <p>88% of employees want to work for a company with a positive social impact.</p>
	<h3>Governments</h3> <p>Governments and regulatory entities demand that brands become more sustainable: 196 countries have joined the Paris Agreement to tackle climate change.</p>
	<h3>Investors</h3> <p>Impact investing is becoming more common—socially responsible investment has increased by 82% and eco-investing has increased by 72% in the last 2 years.</p>

People are becoming increasingly concerned about climate change and its impacts. One 2022 global survey of 108,942 Facebook app users conducted by Yale and Meta found that the majority of people in 109 of 110 surveyed countries, territories and regions viewed climate change as a threat to their country or territory over the next 20 years (see Figure 3).<sup>21</sup> We also see this concern through increased conversations on the topic. Analysis of public Facebook posts showed engagement with sustainability-related content increased more than six-fold in the year between July 2020 and July 2021.<sup>22</sup>

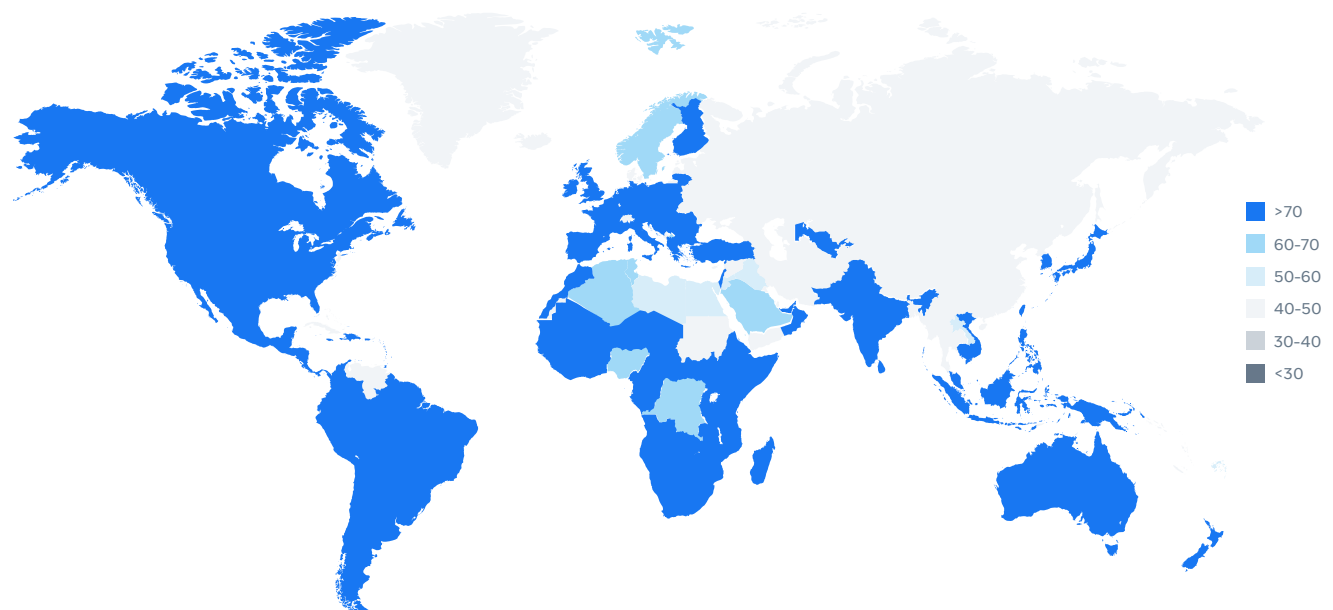
Within this increased focus on climate change, there is a recognition of the role that businesses can play, with 62% wanting companies to take a stand on issues per Meta's research as part of the SMB Climate Hub.<sup>23</sup> In EMEA, 77% of respondents believe a company or brand's sustainability efforts are important in their decision to try a new product, per YouGov's finding in a study commissioned by Meta.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Sustainability Foundational Study conducted by Kantar in 2021, they found that consumers are willing to reward companies who demonstrate sustainable practices, with 39% willing to pay more for products that are better for the environment.<sup>25</sup>


Governments are also acting, with Europe leading the way. In 2021, the EU set a binding Union climate target to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 55% from 1990 levels by 2030.<sup>26</sup> This goal has motivated national governments to take targeted action. Germany, for instance, introduced the LUCID packaging register, which requires companies in Germany to pay for the recovery and recycling of their packaging.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, in the UK, a new regulation is coming into effect in April 2023 to ban single-use plastic plates, cutlery and polystyrene cups.<sup>28</sup> Regulations such as these will have a significant impact on businesses' operations.

**FIGURE 3:** Perceptions of the threat of climate change in the next 20 years<sup>29</sup>

Percent who think climate change is a 'very' or 'somewhat' serious threat over the next 20 years







“Even 5 years ago, when I founded my company, sustainability wasn’t a big deal. But, now, we can’t escape it. It’s on the cover of magazines and in Netflix documentaries. It’s everywhere!”

— Pat Kane, Founder, reuzi  
Ireland-based online marketplace  
for sustainable products  
Available at: [reuzi.ie](https://reuzi.ie)

## **SMBs are a critical piece of the climate action puzzle.**

The discourse and activism around climate action has typically focused on larger enterprises and governments given the impact that could be achieved by reducing their individual emissions. Recently, however, there has been a growing appreciation that meaningful climate action will require proactive efforts from across society. For example, a recent global survey that Meta conducted in partnership with the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication highlighted strong demand for action by people, governments and industries. Within Europe, Germans were the most likely (43%) to say that businesses are the most responsible for reducing the causes of climate change.<sup>30</sup> All stakeholders can collaborate to incentivise, measure and facilitate desired actions and behaviours to address climate change.

SMBs hold particular significance in the economy. They account for 99% of businesses in the EU, provide nearly two-thirds of total employment in Europe and contribute to over half of Europe's GDP.<sup>31</sup> Their collective voice has the power to steer industries and markets, while the smaller nature of their operations means they are often close to customers. This means that when SMBs take climate actions, they send a strong message to local communities and can influence behaviours.

These characteristics provide an opportunity for SMBs to play a key role in climate action, which can manifest in 3 main ways:

### **01**

#### **Collective action to reduce their own emissions can materially shift the dial.**

Although their individual environmental impact is small, the sheer scale of the SMB community means the action they take on reducing emissions can substantially contribute to mitigating climate change. The potential impact of reduced SMB emissions differs greatly across industries and regions. In Europe, SMBs collectively account for 63% of business emissions.<sup>32</sup> In Africa, SMBs proliferate in the agricultural sector and represent 80% of the midstream value chain. This presents an opportunity for SMBs in Africa to drive the shift toward climate-smart agriculture.<sup>33</sup>

**“I know my actions are very small, but I think everything counts. For example, I’m conscious of using fuel. For deliveries, I’ll try to walk to the post office or make it within a trip I’m already doing (such as when going to the supermarket).”**

— Ruby Blaken, Owner, Second Snuggle  
UK-based platform helping parents resell maternity and children’s clothing  
Available at: [secondsnuggle.co.uk](https://secondsnuggle.co.uk)



## 02

### **As the glue across many supply chains, SMBs can influence enterprises and entire industries through their actions.**

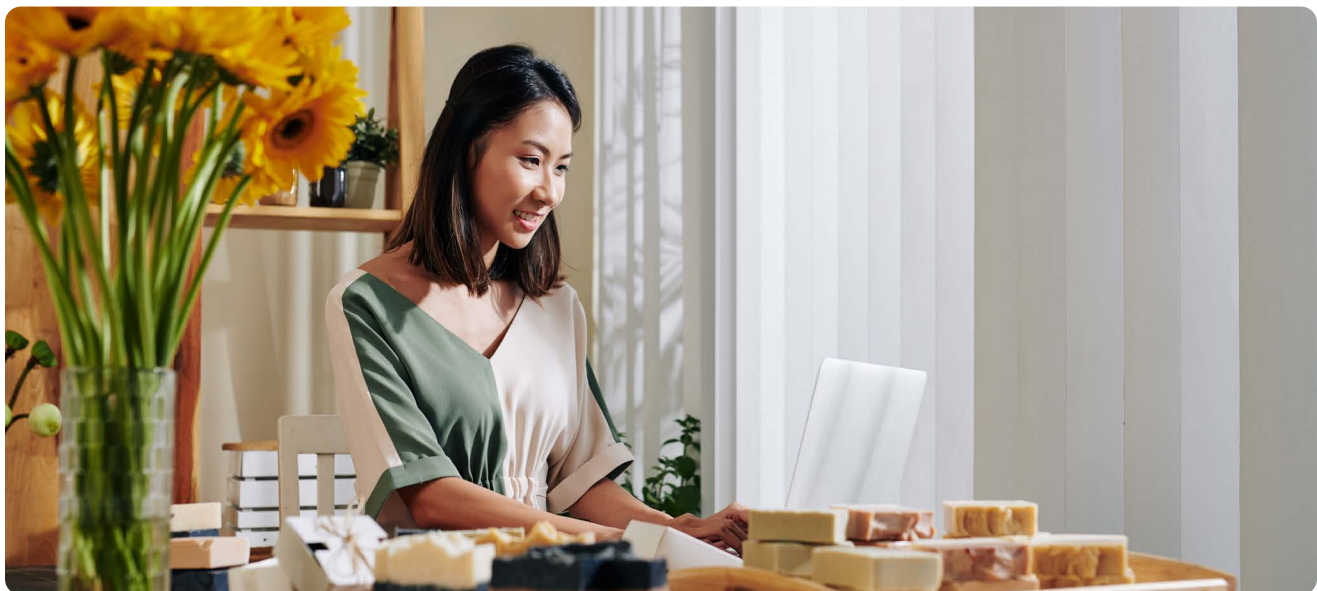
In sectors including manufacturing, chemicals and textiles, SMBs play a vital role in the production, packaging and distribution of raw materials and component products to larger enterprises. In fact, 77% of SMBs in the UK with more than 10 employees consider themselves part of a supply chain, according to a report published by NatWest in 2022.<sup>34</sup>

The power of an individual supplier to influence an enterprise customer may be limited, but the aggregate potential to transform an industry is immense. For example, SMBs account for nearly half of employment in the EU manufacturing sector, which has historically been a large contributor to emissions.<sup>35</sup> The opportunity for SMBs to proactively take the lead in adopting higher standards can directly change the procurement and business behaviours of downstream enterprises—particularly as supply chains become more transparent.

## 03

### **SMBs can harness their presence and relationships in local communities to drive consumer micro-behaviours, which ripple across the economy.**

SMBs' influence also extends beyond the business world. Be it the corner shop down the street or the local plumber who visits from house to house, SMBs are often owned and operated by members within the community. Their prominence and personal relationships with customers mean SMBs have the ability to influence how consumers think and act around climate issues. Such initiatives can be purely altruistic in nature (such as campaigning to raise awareness) but can also include commercially beneficial actions such as highlighting climate actions in marketing to attract climate-conscious customers. A 2019 UK Federation of Small Business survey found 38% of SMBs donated time and 32% donated skills to their local community.<sup>36</sup> SMBs are clearly already energised around community impact, and there is an opportunity to channel this toward encouraging climate action.





## Hippersons Boatyard is taking a leadership role to promote green action within their local community.

Based in the Broads National Park in the UK, Hippersons Boatyard is a family-run business that is taking a leadership role in promoting climate action within their local community.

They are working with the broader community of businesses and residents to conduct rewilding projects and recycling drives and promote other local, environmentally conscious businesses.

Not only that, they are also embedding green action into their business operations by initiatives such as using lower-carbon fuel alternatives (synthetic diesel and electric). They are also incentivising their customers to be environmentally conscious (e.g., offering

discounts to customers using the Greater Anglia national train, a more environmentally-friendly mode of transportation).

**“It’s beautiful here in the Broads National Park, and we want to do our part in making sure it remains as such.”**

— **Nate Sparrow, Owner, Hippersons Boatyard**  
UK-based boatyard with private mooring for rent, day boats for hire and other aquatic activities  
Available at: [hippersons.co.uk](https://hippersons.co.uk)





# SMBs recognise their role and want to act.

SMBs also have a strong desire to act—80% consider reducing their emissions ‘a high priority,’ according to a survey conducted by SME Climate Hub in 2021 across 194 SMBs.<sup>37</sup> Similar sentiment is reflected in Meta’s Global State of Small Business Survey. Analysis of this survey data by the World Trade Organization shows high willingness of small businesses to change business practices to reduce climate change is consistent across 10 countries surveyed (see Figure 4).<sup>38</sup>

Interviews conducted with SMBs in 2022 to inform this report broadly indicated that SMBs’ desire to take action is linked to one or both of 2 factors: societal and commercial benefit.

## There is a clear drive from SMBs as they feel climate action is simply the right thing to do.

With family businesses making up 60% of companies in Europe, it is unsurprising that many SMB decisions are driven by personal and core business values.<sup>40</sup> The SME Climate Hub survey also found that 96% of SMBs cited ‘the right thing to do’ as a key motivation for their actions on climate change. SMBs’ proximity to local communities means they are often on the frontline experiencing the impacts of climate change and can likewise experience first-hand the results of positive action. In fact, a survey of over 37,000 SMBs globally by Ipsos in July 2022 demonstrated that 80% of SMBs reported that adopting environmentally-friendly business practices was important to their local community.<sup>41</sup>

**FIGURE 4:** Willingness to change business practices to reduce climate change<sup>39</sup>

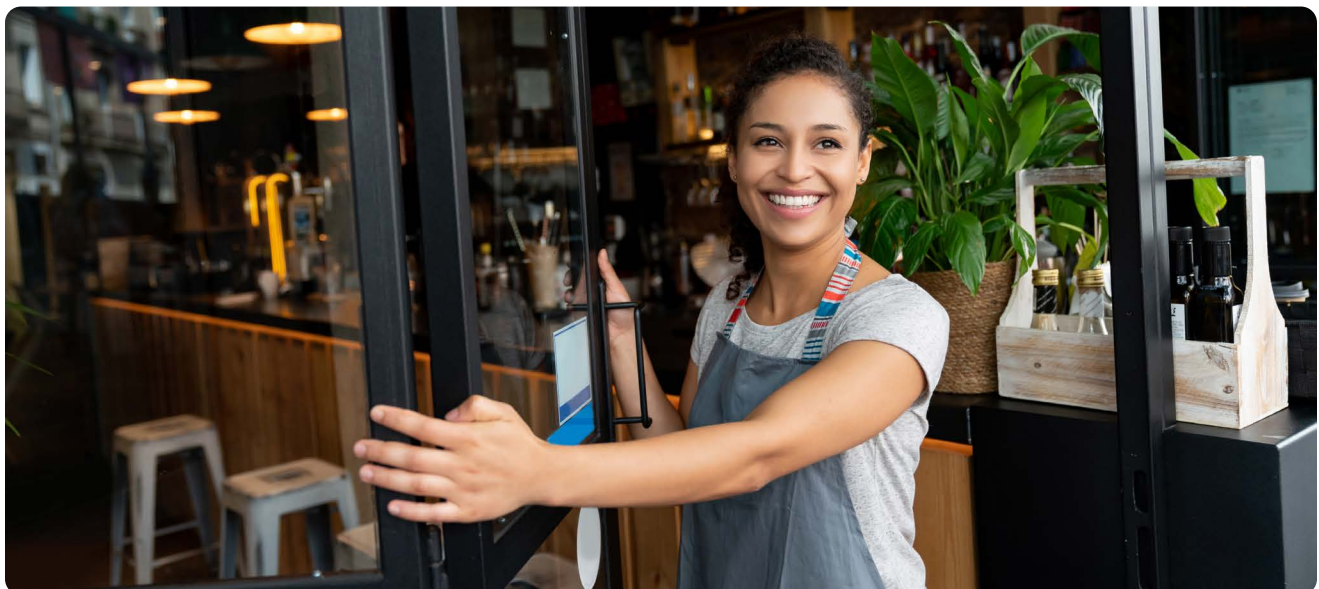


**“Sustainability is something I’m conscious about and thinking about all the time. It’s important from a personal perspective, rather than a business perspective. Personally, I like to think about my sustainability in day-to-day life, which then passes over to the business. And, I feel personal perspectives influence small businesses like mine a lot more, particularly as we are family run.”**

— Helen Pritchett, Owner, Soap Sisters  
UK-based bath and body product company  
operating both B2C and B2B businesses  
Available at: [thesoapsisters.co.uk](https://thesoapsisters.co.uk)

## **Some SMBs are harnessing sustainability as a competitive advantage.**

Sustainable businesses are expected to create an incremental \$10 trillion of global GDP growth by 2030,<sup>42</sup> presenting significant opportunities for those who lead the way. SMBs recognise this opportunity to unlock business value from authentic climate action. In a 2021 survey, the SME Climate Hub found that 73% of small businesses were motivated to prioritise climate action to enhance the reputation of their brand, 61% to differentiate their business from competitors and 42% to meet customer expectations.<sup>43</sup> In the July 2022 Global SMB survey from Ipsos, 63% of SMBs also reported that undertaking climate actions would enable them to gain new customers.<sup>44</sup>



# SMBs need support to increase their impact.

Even as they are motivated to make changes, many SMBs struggle to translate their climate ambitions to transformative action. For instance, while 89% of SMBs surveyed by Eurobarometer in Europe have taken some action to be more resource efficient, only 20% have a strategy to reduce their carbon footprint and become climate neutral.<sup>45</sup>

It is clear that SMBs have the desire to meaningfully push the needle on climate action, but they would benefit from support to make this happen. There are 3 broad areas where they need this support, according to findings from the 2021 SME Climate Hub's survey:

## 01

**Proving and boosting the value case—69% of SMBs require external funds to take climate action<sup>46</sup>**

## 02

**Identifying what matters most—63% have delayed their climate actions due to a lack of skills and knowledge<sup>47</sup>**

## 03

**Making it easier to act and deliver—40% have delayed their climate actions due to a lack of time<sup>48</sup>**

This section explores the challenges and opportunities associated with each of these areas. There is a critical role for digital technology as a key enabler for SMB climate action across all 3 areas.

## Digital technology is a key lever to support SMB climate action.

Digital technology is currently enabling SMB climate action in the form of providing access to climate-related information and sharing SMBs' climate journeys with their customers and suppliers. Companies like Meta are making concerted efforts to provide digital tools and resources to SMBs and are seeing traction. Our Climate Science Centre already attracts more than 3.8 million followers across more than 150 countries.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, online resources such as the SME Climate Hub and the Meta Boost Guide to Green programme provide tools and resources to understand what climate action they can take. As of September 2022, over 1.3 million SMBs were reached with Guide to Green trainings. Data for Good at Meta also leverages the scale of the Facebook app to conduct global surveys of SMB leaders and provides privacy-protected information to the public about small businesses' views on climate change.

The continued opportunity for digital technology to support climate action is well recognised amongst enterprise businesses, with 92% of 600 business leaders in the US interviewed by the Environmental Defense Fund Survey in 2019 believing emerging technologies can both boost return on investments (ROI) and sustainability.<sup>50</sup> A similar opportunity exists for both established and emerging technologies to support SMBs.



## Proving and boosting the value case

Climate action typically requires upfront investment, but the returns are often long-term and uncertain. This can be a difficult business case for many SMBs to make, even for simple actions, such as changing to greener packaging, which may not be feasible if an SMB is forced to commit large upfront order sizes. There is also a challenge in demonstrating the future benefit from investment. Although 66% of SMBs surveyed by Ipsos recognise taking steps on climate action would positively affect their customer satisfaction,<sup>51</sup> it is often difficult to attribute quantifiable returns.

Funding channels are continuing to emerge to support corporate climate action (e.g., EU Planning<sup>52</sup>); however many of these are difficult for SMBs to access. Having the capabilities to quantify their eligibility for these initiatives, including predicting and measuring impact, is often difficult for SMBs. In fact, less than 3% of total financial support for green initiatives across more than 90 countries is SMB-related.<sup>53</sup>

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### **Opportunity #1: Use digital technology to guide investment and forecast returns**

The investment case for climate action needs to be strong. To do this, SMBs need data to forecast the impact from climate action, such as impacts to emissions, revenue, customer acquisitions or cost. Digital technology can capture and share this data, as well as help SMBs understand and forecast the business impact from climate actions, creating a clearer value case.

Technology companies that power SMB operations have access to data that can be aggregated to help SMBs create a business case for climate action. This could range from a digital advertising platform, like Meta providing SMBs with insights to tailor their climate content for better engagement, to an enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform highlighting the correlation between climate commitment and employee attrition. There might also be situations where this data and insight can be hard to source. In these circumstances, digital technology can be used to rapidly test the impact of potential actions with customers, such as marketing campaigns to test the potential of climate-related products.

Meta conducts regular global surveys on the Facebook app on challenges and experiences of SMBs to provide an up-to-date view of how SMBs are navigating the challenges of climate change. For instance, recent research from Meta on sustainable advertising showed 4.2 times more engagement on business posts containing sustainability-related hashtags and 7.7 times more interaction on sustainability-related posts than other content posted by ecommerce brands.<sup>54</sup> Equipping SMBs with rich insights such as this as they make their investment cases may go a long way in helping them get to action.

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### **Opportunity #2: Provide targeted incentives**

There is also an opportunity for governments, large enterprises and other influential actors to support SMBs by providing funding and structural incentives. For these to be effective, they need to consider the diverse challenges that SMBs face regarding climate action. For large enterprises, such incentives could take the form of supplier training and support,

or preferential contractual terms for suppliers who meet sustainability standards or commit to climate actions. There is mutual benefit to such action, given the increasing scrutiny that large enterprises face relating to their scope 3 emissions (indirect emissions from a company's value chain). Indeed, 38% of companies are working on reducing carbon emissions in their supply chain or planning to do so, according to a survey conducted by Deloitte with 1,234 CFOs in 2021.<sup>55</sup> There is a clear opportunity for enterprises to do this in a way that is considerate not only of their own situation but also of how their actions could benefit SMBs.

## Identifying what matters most

The climate change landscape continues to rapidly evolve, with an overload of information via publicly available sources. However, these sources are typically designed to target an intentionally broad audience, making it difficult for SMBs to digest what this information means for them. While SMBs would normally use data to define their actions, 63% of CEOs across all businesses report difficulties in measuring environmental, social and governance (ESG) data across their value chain, according to Accenture.<sup>56</sup> This limits SMBs' understanding of their total carbon emissions. In fact, 87% of UK SMBs are unaware of their total carbon emissions.<sup>57</sup> Without understanding the root cause, SMBs find it difficult to appropriately define and target their climate action.

The overload of information creates a deluge of recommended actions from multiple sources, and sifting through the noise can be daunting. 75% of entrepreneurs feel overwhelmed about how their organisation can tackle climate change, as reported by Business Leader from

a survey of 500 UK SMBs.<sup>58</sup> As the number of sustainability policies grow, it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate organisation-specific implications, with companies often requiring expert advice and measuring tools. It's, therefore, no surprise that 42% of SMB owners report struggling to be sustainable due to a lack of guidance, according to Business Leader.<sup>59</sup>

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### **Opportunity #3: Provide clarity and consistency through central guidance**

Governments and international institutions have the opportunity to provide clarity and ensure a level playing field by setting industry standards and policies, as well as provisioning resources to enable the achievement of these goals. Central guidance will be able to provide confidence and authority in climate action to SMBs. For example, the 5p minimum charge for plastic bag usage introduced to supermarkets in 2015 caused usage of such bags at main retailers to drop by a massive 97%.<sup>60</sup> However, as SMBs come in vastly different shapes and sizes, it is difficult to define a universal policy or regulation.

Digital channels specifically can be used to make this guidance available in relevant, accessible formats to SMBs across their various language, platform and accessibility requirements. In response to this challenge, science-based information centres, such as our Climate Science Centre, are already starting to form to help consolidate information from various sources and provide confidence in the available guidance. Digital technology also can be used to share success stories of how different SMBs are applying central guidance, which will ultimately help in building confidence in the path forward.

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#### **Opportunity #4: Tap into digital channels for tailored information**

Digital technology also provides the ability to build communities centred around climate action to share information and advice. For SMBs, these communities are starting to take different shapes, as businesses look for much more tailored content. Due to the scale of SMBs, there is often a blurred line between the personal and business life of the owner. Based on SMB interviews conducted to inform this report, some SMBs are also using informal channels, typically targeted to consumers to obtain information on climate action. There is clearly an opportunity for digital technology both to connect SMBs to tailored content and to champion climate action across the SMB community.

**“The Boost Leaders Facebook page is full of how small businesses are working in different ways to act on climate change, which is great!”**

— Nate Sparrow, Owner, Hippersons Boatyard  
UK-based boatyard with private mooring for rent, day boats for hire and other aquatic activities  
Available at: [hippersons.co.uk](https://hippersons.co.uk)

**“I am already using Facebook, Instagram, etc., to look at what other companies are doing. I follow these organisations to get information on what actions I can take and am able to see what other businesses are doing.**

**I take inspiration from larger companies I see in Europe. I look at what these larger companies are doing [on sustainability] and break down their plans to understand what I can do in my business.**

**For example, I have consolidated my delivery times to specific windows in different areas to reduce carbon emissions. We tell customers to come to a location at a specific time to pick up their orders.”**

— Grace Moreka, Founder, Amore  
Kenya-based fashion retail and online store selling sustainable fashion items  
Available at: [amore.co.ke/about-us](https://amore.co.ke/about-us)



“I actually joined a Facebook Live session another SMB set up on the Boost Leader network. It was really interesting to talk about sustainability issues for our businesses. Although our businesses are completely different, it was useful to hear a different perspective.”

— Hilary Hall, Owner, Jiggery Pokery  
UK-based online creator and distributor of embroidery kits  
Available at: [jiggery-pokery.biz](https://jiggery-pokery.biz)



## Making it easier to deliver changes

The COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions and the recent cost-of-living crisis in Europe have contributed to an increasingly tough operational environment for SMBs. 55-70% of SMBs report lower sales for the period between 2019 and 2020.<sup>61</sup> As SMBs are typically more resource-constrained, they are forced to focus on crisis management at the expense of prioritising climate action. For instance, 78% of SMBs see the cost-of-living crisis as the biggest threat to their survival in the coming year, according to a survey of 1,000 UK SMBs conducted by PayPal in 2022.<sup>62</sup> This issue intensifies when considering the time commitment required for actions to be taken on climate change. A Eurobarometer study found the most common difficulty small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) encountered when setting up resource efficiency actions is the complexity of administrative or legal procedures involved.<sup>63</sup>

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### **Opportunity #5: Streamline green processes to create capacity**

Digital technology has already transformed many industries, helping businesses both large and small do things faster and cheaper. In many instances, digital technology has also opened new avenues for SMBs to help them grow their business, such as the rise of digital marketing channels helping SMBs target niche customer segments with just a click of a few buttons.

There is a clear opportunity for digital technology to enable SMB climate action. This can include the digitisation of processes to reduce waste as well as digital tooling to

help track emissions and make changes easier to implement. Similar initiatives have risen targeting larger businesses. For example, the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) partnered with Accenture and SAP to provide large enterprises directional support on measuring and managing sustainability performance through business technology systems and enterprise software solutions.<sup>64</sup> There remains an opportunity for similar efforts to be extended and targeted toward the SMB community.

**“I was looking into changing my packaging for a particular product. When you go to make a change to be more sustainable like that, you’re letting yourself in for hours of research. Then when I found one I thought would work, they would only accept a minimum order of 5,000, which I can’t afford or store.”**

— Hilary Hall, Owner, Jiggery Pokery  
UK-based online creator and distributor of embroidery kits  
Available at: [jiggery-pokery.biz](https://jiggery-pokery.biz)



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### **Opportunity #6: Provide capacity and expertise to promote action**

With limited technical expertise on climate action and limited ability to hire these skills, SMBs need support to act on climate action guidance. From our interviews, SMBs frequently mentioned that they lacked confidence in implementing climate initiatives. Focused training that breaks down potential actions into clear and simple steps is one lever, but to be beneficial, such training must be concise and highly relevant. There is an opportunity for large enterprises to fill this gap with online training, such as the Meta Boost Guide to Green programme.

A significant opportunity also exists for governments and large enterprises to provide coaching and advisory services to SMBs around climate action. Such initiatives can be positioned as mutually beneficial to both SMBs and large enterprises, helping the latter to meet their own scope 3 emissions targets. An example of this in action is the Unilever Climate Programme through which Unilever is exploring new ways to support their suppliers through guidance, tools and resources to cut their greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions.<sup>65</sup>

**“There are always new developments on this topic as it is always changing, and it is good to have a place where you can find new tools and materials [the Guide to Green training hub]. If I had to look for them myself, it would take me a long**

**time; as the downloadable materials and information are all in one place, it saves you a lot of time.”**

— Elena Rodriguez Perez, Owner,  
**Huerto los Tulipanes**  
Spanish organic farming SMB  
Available at:  
[huertolostulipanes.wordpress.com](https://huertolostulipanes.wordpress.com)

**“The training on sharing your sustainable story is very useful to learn how to best share your story and your journey through Meta technologies, in particular, thanks to concrete examples and the introduction to other tools such as Canva and Mojo.**

**My business has been on Facebook for a long time, but it’s sometimes difficult to optimise your online activities, and this training gave me a practical and easy-to-follow guide.”**

— Nadine Lecomte, Founder,  
**Nos Saveurs de France**  
Available at: [nos-saveurs-de-france.fr](https://nos-saveurs-de-france.fr)



“Achieving net zero is in our future plans and the Guide to Green programme would certainly be useful, because these resources formalise a method. I would like to use the Climate Action Plan precisely to start my journey. Once you set a goal, the challenge is actually achieving it. You measure yourself against a promise you make to yourself.”

— Rosaria Di Benedetto, Owner,  
Agriturismo Carbon  
Available at: [agriturismocarbona.it](https://agriturismocarbona.it)

# Amplifying the actions SMBs take can create broader ripple effects.

SMBs' position at the heart of the economy and society means their climate action has the potential to create a ripple effect across the ecosystem. There is an opportunity for digital technology to accelerate and amplify this by helping SMBs connect and engage with each other, business partners and customers.

## Facilitating SMBs to collaborate and take collective action

Connecting SMBs together can be a powerful tool. SMBs value each other's opinions, with 80% of SMBs looking to peers for advice on business decisions,<sup>66</sup> meaning online communities can be valuable in

driving collaborative action against climate change. These communities provide a space for SMBs to engage with others who are taking climate action by sharing best practices, encouragement and lessons learned. They can be subscribed to at nearly zero cost and allow for near real-time collaboration and knowledge sharing as new guidance or challenges emerge.

Moreover, connected SMBs can have a stronger, collective voice. This collective voice can drive change in standard supplier terms within a supply chain, while also influencing regulators and industry bodies that define climate policy and regulation. Further, online communities can provide a transparent forum for this dialogue between critical stakeholders in climate action.







## **Jardin Living is driving transparency in their supply chain to ensure they are making the most sustainable choices possible.**

Jardin Living has designed a sustainable guide tool that helps them track the various industry standards for ethical and climate-conscious businesses in countries where their suppliers operate. As a result, they have been able to curate a supply chain of manufacturers in offshore locations that adhere to ethical and climate-first business practices.

Jardin Living is also demonstrating this commitment by helping other small enterprises drive similar transparency within their own supply chains through a consulting arm of their business. Further, as a member of various relevant industry forums like the UK Fashion and Textile Association (UKFTA), British Franchise Association (BFA) and the Vegan Society, they can use their networks to keep up with the latest information and share their work with industry peers.

Lastly, being committed to driving ethical and responsible behaviours within the fashion industry, Jardin Living is an active participant in university communities, helping shape the next generation of talent to become more conscious as employees through educational sessions and internship programmes.

**“I wanted to embed a clear purpose in my work to make a real difference in the fashion industry.**

**We have pillared our company and brand from the UN Sustainable Development Goals. If you go on our Instagram, you’ll see regular posts around our sustainability action in line with these goals.”**

**— Kavita Basi, Founder and CEO, Jardin Living**

UK-based, sustainability-led footwear and women’s activewear operating 2 brands, ReflexOne and Ration  
Available at: [linktr.ee/Ration.L](https://linktr.ee/Ration.L)  
and [linktr.ee/Reflexone](https://linktr.ee/Reflexone)





## Enabling SMBs to meaningfully engage consumers

Digital technology has transformed the way companies communicate with customers. 70% of customer interactions are now digital,<sup>67</sup> and it is now the norm for SMBs to directly engage with customers in real time, regardless of where they are situated.

The rise of hashtag trends and online challenges has also created the space for global conversations on topics that matter. Digital technology companies are continually investing in measures to ensure the legitimacy of data across these platforms, for example, our fact-checker for COP26. This builds confidence in the story being told on the platforms and calls for action to be taken. Additionally, the rise of the creator economy enables SMBs to connect with targeted customer segments to drive grassroots conversations on climate issues. As more and more customers connect with creators on a daily basis, both creators and SMBs have the opportunity to steer these interactions toward the topic of climate change. This could both raise awareness for climate change and inspire action.

**“We’re looking to grow as a company and expand to the next stage, so we’ve started to share stories online. You often forget when you do something on a daily basis, customers don’t automatically know what you’re doing. I’ve started to do ‘pack an order with me’ videos, for example, to show customers how the business is operating. I like using Instagram to show stories of everyday things and bring pieces to life.”**

— Ruby Blaken, Owner, Second Snuggle  
UK-based platform helping parents resell maternity and children’s clothing  
Available at: [secondsnuggle.co.uk](https://secondsnuggle.co.uk)





## Farm Next Door is educating and inspiring their customers to shop sustainably.

Farm Next Door, a Belfast-based local produce delivery service, is encouraging customers to switch to ethically grown produce from local farmers by educating them on the benefits of doing so.

They host events such as 'Pick Your Own Produce' that helps customers understand the various steps involved in growing produce and the benefits associated with doing so locally. The company has found this to be a great tool to engage with their customer base and to encourage them to buy from Farm Next Door.

Moreover, they are now starting to partner with other local business owners such as farmers markets, mom-and-pop shops and independent cafes to help improve their carbon footprint.

— Marcin Piotrowski and Emilia Klak,  
Co-Owners, Farm Next Door  
Belfast-based delivery service  
specialising in fresh produce  
Available at: [farmnextdoor.uk/shop](https://farmnextdoor.uk/shop)



# Conclusion

Time is running out to mitigate the effects from climate change. While consumer and media attention has typically focused on action from larger companies, this risks missing out on a group that could make a huge difference.

SMBs are at the heart of our economy and communities. Individually, SMBs' climate actions have a small impact, but when brought together, their collective power is great. SMBs' actions do not just influence their own emissions, but can also influence the actions of the businesses and communities around them. Digital technology will be key to unlocking the opportunities from this collective action.

There is a clear desire from SMBs to act, but to fulfill their full potential, they need support. Inherent constraints on finances, knowledge and time leave SMBs looking to governments and large enterprises for support and guidance.

Meta recognises this position and is committed to supporting SMBs on their climate journey. This research will help shape the future of our SMB support programmes and provide confidence in the positive impact of our existing initiatives, such as [Guide to Green](#).



# Appendix

## Note on data sources

- Primary sources include Meta's Global State of Small Business Survey of more than 35,000 SMBs across 30 countries and territories conducted in July 2021, as well as a Global SMB Survey from Ipsos that was conducted for Meta in July 2022 and included 37,800 SMBs across 43 markets.
- 15 in-depth interviews with SMBs from France, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria and the UK were conducted to understand SMB motivations and stories around climate action. These interviews were sourced from Meta's existing Boost network and participation was voluntary based on an open call broadcasted to these SMBs via existing Facebook Groups.

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