



## New Carbon Offset Program for Airlines Gathers Momentum as Industry is Targeted as Major Contributor of Greenhouse Gasses February 18, 2008

Hot on the heels of several recent announcements in Europe and the United States targeting the airline industry as a big contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, Paris-based Airsavings, a global supplier of back-end technology to low-cost airlines, continues its agenda to “clean up the skies” with a carbon neutralising program designed specifically for small to mid-sized carriers. While the airline industry is a ripe target for environmental maligning, with its expensive development processes making fuel efficiency upgrades and the implementation of new technology prohibitively difficult, global public demands and international pressures are mounting, to which Airsavings has duly responded.

Airsavings’ recognises that its carbon offset program does not provide a complete solution to the impending emissions and GHG crisis, but sees it as being part of a broader global strategy to reduce emissions and contribute positively to climate change by allowing passengers to minimize the impact of their air travel. The carbon offset contributions generated via Airsavings’ program go directly to ActionCarbone, a European-sponsored nonprofit organization that funds carbon-offsetting projects like tree planting and alternative energy implementation across the world. ActionCarbone ([www.actioncarbone.org](http://www.actioncarbone.org)) is backed by ADEME, France’s government agency for environment and energy issues, and is operated by GoodPlanet, an NGO that promotes sustainability and ecological preservation.

As climate change awareness dominates academic discussion and consumer consciousness everywhere, the pressure is on airlines - large and small - to considerably ramp up their green initiatives. On a large scale, this means an industry-wide investment in new fuel efficiency technologies, assessment of alternative fuel sources, and regulatory repositioning as witnessed by the new billion Euro “Clean Sky” initiative, that will develop technologies for the next generation of aircraft.

For individual airlines, it means a reevaluation of the supply chain, close scrutiny (and modification) of in-cabin and airport products and services, more carbon-offset initiatives made available to consumers, and goodwill efforts acknowledging the issues of global warming and climate change. And this is where Airsavings sees itself playing a pivotal roll in many airlines’ green initiatives; its program calculates real-time flight emissions based on distance traveled, fuel consumed, load factor, capacity and radiation effect. Contributions are based on the actual distance determined by GPS coordinates, representing the full carbon footprint of every passenger, on every flight.

In January 2008, Airsavings announced the launch carrier of its carbon offset program, Moroccan low-cost airline Atlas-Blue, as the first airline in the region to react to public sentiment and governmental action by making internal changes immediately. Atlas-Blue is Africa’s first airline to offer carbon offsets during the booking process to its passengers, following EasyJet and some American legacy carriers into the market.

While Airsavings’ currently only provides airlines with a carbon offsetting program, the company’s CEO, Raphael Bejar recognizes that airlines need to do a lot more than simply offset their pollution. “We think it is vital for airlines to alert consumers as to the carbon emissions created by their air travel. To think that people will stop flying as a result is absurd. I think this information provided by the airlines will urge passengers to become more responsible about their actions, resulting in more contributions and the overall improvement of better, sustainable air travel practices”.

“In addition to emission trading, airlines, and especially those with older fleets, should have goals in place to reduce their fuel burn, and cutting down their taxiing times. They will find that these green initiatives will also save them money,” says Bejar. Bejar also sees many smaller, but equally important initiatives springing up like the LSG SkyChefs partnership with Perfect Day coffee and sandwich specialists to open a coffee bar at Frankfurt airport that offers only sustainable, eco-friendly coffee and snacks.

Clearly, sustainability initiatives are just getting underway. When industry oversight agencies like the FAA begin to implement their own eco-driven plans, change is bound to come quickly for airlines the world over. And those currently positioned as environmental vanguards, like Airsavings’ clients, will without doubt be positioned for even more success in the future.

