How does this affect you and your community?

Changes to the environment (caused by climate change) begin to have negative (adverse) effects on you and your community.

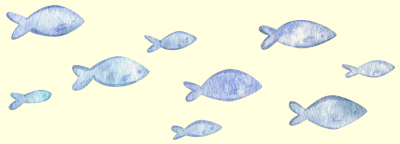
For example, a drought in your area means you are unable to gather water, which in turn means that you are unable to water your food garden and your vegetables may die. You have less or no vegetables to eat or sell.

What does it mean to take Climate Action?

Climate action means that you and your community take steps to respond to climate change, either to reduce the risks you face or to address the damage already being done.

- Use the law to protect your rights to land, the ocean and other resources,
- Participate in decision-making, like public consultations on new developments or policies,
- Organise your community to raise awareness, build resilience and demand action,
- Share knowledge and support others who are also working for climate justice.

STANDING TOGETHER



Climate change is not just an abstract concept or something that will happen in the future. The impacts and consequences are happening now and affecting individuals and communities around the world.

When communities understand the impacts of climate change, and the laws that protect the environment and their rights, they can take climate action - and they can protect the environment too.

We are inviting you and your community to be part of a growing movement of people who are taking climate action and contributing to a just, equal and healthy society.

For more information visit: www.naturaljustice.org

NATURAL JUSTICE

Understanding climate change

and taking action

Why is the climate changing? How does it affect you and your community?

What is important and what action can you take to reduce negative impacts and secure a healthy climate for future generations?

Produced by by Natural Justice in July 2025

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What is climate change?

Climate change is the significant long-term change to normal weather patterns as a result of changes in the atmosphere. It means that the weather that we expect, like rain, wind, heat, and cold, is changing over a long period of time.

Changes in weather from year-to-year are normal, but scientists tell us that the changes that we are seeing in our weather patterns are not part of the usual "natural cycle". These changes are becoming more frequent, severe and extreme.

Example: If you normally get a lot of rain in winter, but now it rains much less or not at all for many winters in a row, your area could face a drought. This can harm crops, animals, and water sources.

Climate change is affecting the whole world, and many communities are already feeling its impacts.

Why is the climate changing?

The climate is changing because of greenhouse gases (GHGs) released by human activities. The gases include carbon dioxide (CO2) and methane. They build up in the atmosphere faster than earth can naturally cope with.

2

Carbon dioxide is part of a natural cycle. Humans and animals release it, and plants absorb it. But, now we are releasing too much CO2 into the atmosphere through burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas.

Too many GHGs mean that heat from the sun gets trapped in our atmosphere. This causes the earth's surface to warm more than it should.

We do not want the earth's surface to heat too much as this disrupts natural cycles and causes changes to the climate.

Scientists are telling us that the earth's natural system is heating up too quickly. Our earth has been warming rapidly since industrialisation in the 1800s when we started using fossil fuels extensively.

We are told* that we must keep global temperature increases to below 1.5°C (compared to preindustrial levels) if we are to avoid catastrophe. A 2°C increase would have severe repercussions for the planet.

We must act now.

**The International Panel on Climate Change*

3

What contributes to greenhouse gas emissions?

Any industries or actions that burn fossil fuels to create energy emit GHGs. The use of any energy source, such as using electricity and burning coal, wood, oil or gas causes emissions of carbon dioxide.

CO_2

Despite international pressure, countries and companies are not doing enough to reduce emissions.

Examples of industries and sectors that contribute to carbon emissions:

Energy

Using coal, diesel, gas or other fossil fuels to produce electricity releases GHGs. In South Africa the majority of our electricity is produced from coal-fired power stations that releases large amounts of CO2. Some say that it is better to generate electricity from natural gas, but natural gas emits methane which over a 20-year period, traps 80 times more heat than the same amount of CO2.

Transport

Using petrol and diesel to power vehicles, ships, buses and planes releases CO2 (petrol is made from crude oil).

Agriculture

Livestock, animal feed and fertilisers emit methane and other GHGs.