

Greenwashing [UPSC Notes]

Nations are taking an alternative route of greenwashing thus thwarting the green climate transition. Greenwashing is a term heard often in the news nowadays. What is greenwashing? Why do governments and corporations resort to greenwashing? Know more about this concept in this article. This topic assumes significance for the [UPSC exam](#) environment section.

What is Greenwashing?

Greenwashing is an act by a **country or a company projecting its efforts or its products as climate-friendly** without any verifiable and justifiable data to support its claim.

- These efforts help the companies to boost their image in the market and thus accrue profits in the long run. But, these efforts do not guarantee any climate benefits.
- **Example:** The Volkswagen scandal, where the German car company was found to have been cheating in the emissions testing of its supposedly green diesel vehicles, was a case of greenwashing. In other words, the green diesel did not lead to reduced emissions as was promised.
- Greenwashing depicts a false picture of companies and rewards them for the initiative. In reality, these efforts are pushing the countries to the brink of climate disaster.

Why is greenwashing easily practised?

There is a plethora of products and processes that have huge potential to cut down emissions, thus monitoring mechanisms become very tough and cumbersome.

- The regulatory framework is very complex and cumbersome. At the same time, there is a lack of standardisation of most of these products.
- The processes, methodologies and institutions to measure, report, create standards, verify claims and grant certifications are still being set up.
- There is a flood of enterprises in this field offering their service of transitioning to green energy, but most of these enterprises lack integrity and ethics, but their services are still availed by corporations because it makes them look good.
- Additionally, there is less number of companies that are accredited by credible institutions and have robust business ethics.
- The regime of carbon trade and carbon offsetting is often seen as an instrument to promote the incidence of greenwashing.
- There is a lot of overlapping and double counting in the process of ascertaining carbon offsetting, resulting in whitewashing.

Effect of Greenwashing

Greenwashing has a lot of adverse effects and some of the important ones are mentioned below.

- It will create a **huge impediment in the process of transitioning to net zero emissions**. Most of the developed countries have promised to become net zero by 2050. China has a net zero target for 2060 while India has pledged to become net zero by 2070.
- It will further **lead to a sharp rise in the temperature** and thus fail us in achieving the target of the [Paris Climate Agreement](#).
- Many **coastal and island nations would stand in a more disadvantageous position** resulting in submergence and climate-induced migration.
- **Incidences of climate refugees** would rise in the long term which would result in a shortage of food and conflagration over limited resources.

Conclusion: Greenwashing disrupts the process of transitioning to a green climate and thereby pushes human civilisation on the brink of climate disaster. So, it is in the long-term interest of humanity to dissuade from any such unethical practices. There is a need to create regulatory structures and standards for discouraging incidences of greenwashing.