

FAQ 13.1 | What roles do national play in climate mitigation, and how can they be effective?

Institutions and governance underpin mitigation. Climate laws provide the legal basis for action, organisations through which policies are developed and implemented, and frameworks through which diverse actors interact. Specific organisations, such as expert committees, can inform emission reduction targets, inform the creation of policies and packages, and strengthen accountability. Institutions enable strategic thinking, building consensus among stakeholders and enhanced coordination.

Climate governance is constrained and enabled by countries' political systems, material endowments and their ideas, values and belief systems, which leads to a variety of country-specific approaches to climate mitigation.

Countries follow diverse approaches. Some countries focus on greenhouse gases emissions by adopting comprehensive climate laws and creating dedicated ministries and institutions focused on climate change. Others consider climate change among broader scope of policy objectives, such as poverty alleviation, energy security, economic development and co-benefits of climate actions, with the involvement of existing agencies and ministries. See also FAQ 13.3 on sub-national climate mitigation.

FAQ 13.2 | What policies and strategies can be applied to combat climate change?

Institutions can enable creation of mitigation and sectoral policy instruments; policy packages for low-carbon system transition, and economy-wide measures for systemic restructuring. Policy instruments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions include economic instruments, regulatory instruments and other approaches.

Economic policy instruments directly influence prices to achieve emission reductions through taxes, permit trading, offset systems, subsidies, and border tax adjustments, and are effective in promoting implementation of low-cost emissions reductions. Regulatory instruments help achieve specific mitigation outcomes particularly in sectoral applications, by establishing technology or performance requirements. Other instruments include information programmes, government provision of goods, services and infrastructure, divestment strategies, and voluntary agreements between governments and private firms.

Climate policy instruments can be sector-specific or economy-wide and could be applied at national, regional, or local levels. Policymakers may directly target GHG emission reduction or seek to achieve multiple objectives, such as urbanisation or energy security, with the effect of reducing emissions. In practice, climate mitigation policy instruments operate in combination with other policy tools, and require attention to the interaction effects between instruments. At all levels of governance, coverage, stringency and design of climate policies define their efficiency in reducing greenhouse gases emissions.

Policy packages, when designed with attention to interactive effects, local governance context, and harnessed to a clear vision for change, are better able to support socio-technical transitions and shifts in development pathways toward low-carbon futures than individual policies. See also Chapter 14 on international climate governance.

FAQ 13.3 | How can actions at the sub-national level contribute to climate mitigation?

Sub-national actors (for example individuals, organisations, jurisdictions and networks at regional, local and city levels) often have a remit over areas salient to climate mitigation, such as land-use planning, waste management, infrastructure, housing, and community development. Despite constraints on legal authority and dependence on national policy priorities in many countries, sub-national climate change policies exist in more than 120 countries. However, they often lack national support, funding, and capacity, and adequate coordination with other scales. Sub-national climate action in support of specific goals is more likely to succeed when linked to local issues such as travel congestion alleviation, air pollution control.

The main drivers of climate actions at sub-national levels include high levels of citizen concern, jurisdictional authority and funding, institutional capacity, national level support and effective linkage to development objectives. Sub-national governments often initiate and implement policy experiments that could be scaled to other levels of governance.