Supercritical

How to build a carbon removal procurement strategy

Everything you need to know about buying carbon removal credits

Introduction

You don't need to be Microsoft to get started

Carbon removal procurement isn't just for climate giants with billion-dollar sustainability budgets. It's for any company serious about meeting net-zero goals. The smartest organizations aren't waiting for perfect market conditions. They're starting small, learning quickly, and scaling over time.

There's no single "right" way to enter the carbon removal market. Many buyers begin with spot purchases. Others commit to long-term offtakes from the outset. The key isn't picking the perfect approach—there isn't one. You just need to pick a starting point.

High-quality carbon removal supply is limited, meaning delay comes at a cost. Prices are rising. Competition is increasing. The earlier you engage, the more options you have and the more impact you can deliver.

Procuring carbon removal credits is complex and carries real risk. The process can be daunting; the market is opaque, project quality varies widely, and buyers often face unclear pricing and delivery timelines. For companies without large sustainability teams, finding, vetting, and managing credible removal can drain time and confidence fast.

Whether you're buying your first 500 tonnes or structuring a multi-year deal, this is your playbook for building a strategy that works for your business.

3 things to remember:

01 **There's no "right" entry point**

Spot, forward, or offtake: what matters most is that you start somewhere.

02 **Waiting comes at a cost**

Supply is tightening, and high-quality credits are moving fast. Delaying means fewer options and higher prices.

03 **Even "small" purchases drive impact**

Every procurement decision, big or small, sends a signal to the market and helps scale the carbon removal industry.

The carbon removal buying stack

Not all carbon removal purchases are the same. And choosing the right mix is harder than it sounds. Buyers today face an immature market with limited supply, inconsistent data, and big variations in cost, durability, and delivery certainty. The best strategies cut through that mess with a mix of procurement types matched to your goals, budget, and risk appetite.

Here’s a breakdown of the three main approaches and when to use them.

SPOT PURCHASES

One-time purchases of already-issued credits “on the spot,” delivered immediately and retired shortly after purchase.

When they work best:

- You want to retire credits in-year
- You’re early in your procurement journey
- You’re building internal alignment or testing out different removal methods

Pros:

- ✓ Immediate availability
- ✓ Easy to explain internally
- ✓ Low perceived risk (carbon benefit has already been verified)

Considerations:
There is a limited supply of high-quality credits, and competition is intensifying. These credits are typically more expensive, and prices fluctuate over time, making advance budget planning difficult. Spot purchases are a great entry point, but hard to scale as volume needs grow—especially as credit availability shrinks.

FORWARD PURCHASES

Pre-purchase agreements for credits issued at a specified future date at a price agreed today. Typically lower cost than spot, but with some delivery risk.

When they work best:

- You want price predictability for next year’s emissions
- You’re ready to commit, but not quite ready for a multi-year deal
- You’re buying from suppliers already in operation

Pros:

- ✓ Often lower cost than spot
- ✓ Near-term price and supply stability
- ✓ Access to innovative new projects which don’t allow for spot purchasing

Considerations:
You’ll need to assess delivery confidence: Is the supplier operational? Is the credit issuance timeline realistic? Many buyers underestimate how quickly high-quality capacity is reserved by early movers, leaving late buyers with longer lead times or higher prices.

OFFTAKE AGREEMENTS

Multi-year purchase commitments that buyers make to secure future supply of credits for carbon removal that hasn’t yet taken place. Buyers commit to purchasing a fixed volume of credits for a specified period.

When they work best:

- You want to secure supply and price stability in a tightening market
- You’ve mapped your targets and are ready to commit long-term
- You want to shape the future of the CDR industry

Pros:

- ✓ Locks in price and volume early
- ✓ Supports supplier growth
- ✓ Can deliver reputational benefits

Considerations:
Many buyers assume offtakes are only for the big players, but that’s no longer true. Even small offtakes send a strong demand signal to the market. This approach requires internal alignment and robust contracting, and it comes with delivery risk and price uncertainty if technology costs change. This is a challenge that often overwhelms small teams without specialist support. But a well-structured deal helps manage those risks and locks in the supply you need.

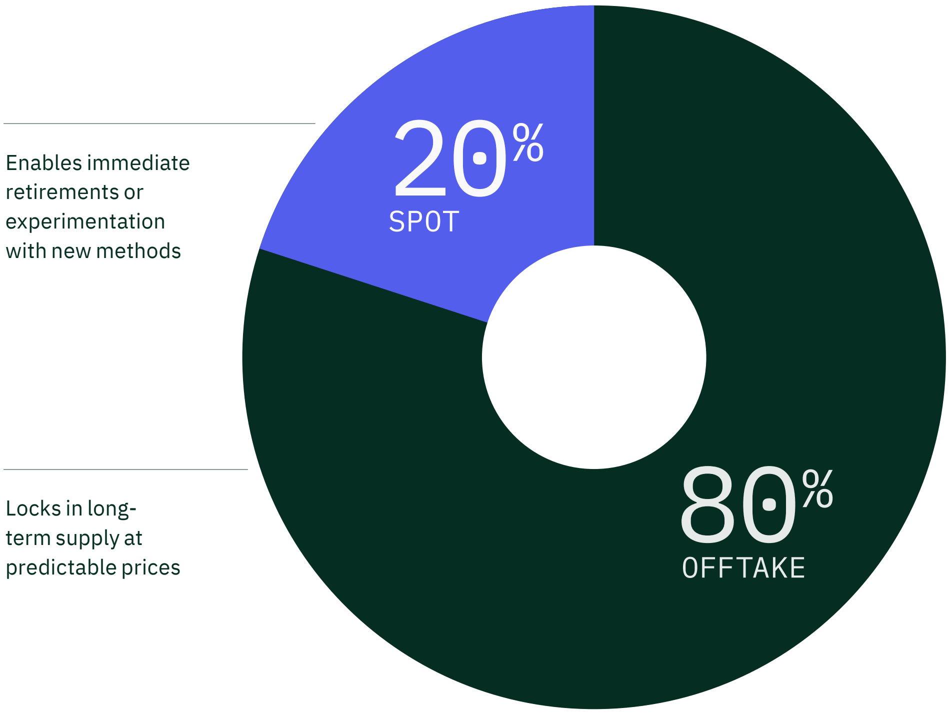
Designing a smart CDR portfolio

The smartest carbon removal strategies aren't all-in on a single approach. They're balanced, flexible, and designed to evolve over time.

A strong portfolio blends purchase types (spot, forward, offtake), methods (engineered and nature-based), and project timelines to reflect your climate goals and business realities.

Choose an allocation model

There is no one-size-fits-all formula. That said, there is a rough benchmark we often see among buyers starting to scale:



That mix can be dialed up or down depending on budget, risk appetite, and internal momentum. The key is not putting all your tonnes in one basket.

Align your methods to your business

Beyond carbon impact, buyers are also seeking strategic fit.

For Zurich Insurance, supporting biochar projects that improve soil health and farming resilience isn't just a carbon play. It's a reputational and operational win, too.

Chris Minter
Global Sustainable Supply Chain Lead, Zurich Insurance Group

"We insure farmers against the risk of crop failure. **With biochar we could see a clear connection to our work.**"

Other buyers take a similar lens:

- A forestry-heavy supply chain might favor agroforestry or afforestation projects
- A tech-forward business may lean toward engineered removal to signal innovation
- A buyer focused on global equity might prioritize community-led projects with strong social co-benefits

Diversify for risk management

No removal method is perfect. Biochar can face feedstock constraints. DAC is energy-intensive and expensive. Mineralization has siting challenges. That's why serious buyers are building portfolios, not looking for silver bullets.

For buyers, the biggest hurdle is that quality and risk are not one-size-fits-all. Even within the same method, projects can vary dramatically in cost, verification rigor, and likelihood of delivery. Sorting through that without clear standards or trusted supplier data is one of the biggest headaches buyers face.

Want to learn more about the removal methods available?

Discover the permanent, high-quality removal methods listed on the Supercritical marketplace

You cannot mitigate all risk. Each type of carbon removal comes with benefits and drawbacks you need to weigh. The job of due diligence is to understand those risks so you can make informed decisions.

Diversifying by method, region, supplier, and contract type is the most practical way to manage delivery risk, price volatility, and reputational exposure. But the best portfolios go beyond generic diversification, knowing it's okay to want something that works uniquely for your business. Some buyers want projects in specific regions. Others prefer engineered methods only, or look for projects with strong community co-benefits. There's no universal formula, and that's exactly the point.

Supercritical's marketplace is built for this. We help buyers compare removal methods, regions, and suppliers to build a portfolio that aligns with climate science and with what makes sense for your brand, risk appetite, and budget.

Tie it all together with robust contracting

Portfolio design is half the equation. The other half is execution—that's where contracts come in. A well-structured contract protects your climate goals and your bottom line. It defines how and when credits will be delivered, what happens if things go off-track, and how supplier obligations are enforced.

Forward-thinking buyers are:

- Tying payments to **project milestones** (e.g. construction complete, credits issued)
- Including **delivery guarantees**, or fallback options
- Being explicit about **MRV requirements**, permanence thresholds, and co-benefit expectations
- Using **volume flexibility clauses** to account for supply changes over multi-year terms

62%	Most high-quality biochar capacity in 2025 is already spoken for.
28%	Through 2026, over 1/4 of supply has been allocated under offtakes.

And importantly, they're moving quickly. In today's market, slow contracting can mean losing access altogether. 62% of high-quality biochar capacity for 2025 is already locked up, and 28% of supply is tied into offtake agreements through 2026.

You don't need to reinvent the wheel, but you do need to go beyond the generic. Every method, project, and supplier has its quirks. Your contract should reflect that.

At Supercritical, we standardize the essentials while allowing for method-specific nuance, enabling buyers to move faster without compromising on quality or risk protection.

How real buyers are building smart strategies

There's no one right way to build a carbon removal procurement strategy. But the most effective buyers all have one thing in common: **they started.**

THE ECONOMIST

Starting small, staying flexible

The Economist has built its procurement strategy around spot purchases: a practical, lower-risk entry point that fits their current scale and internal resourcing.

Emily Jackson
Senior Vice President of Sustainability, The Economist

"Spot purchasing has allowed us to stay flexible and responsive as we learn more. We're building credibility and market understanding while also using spot purchases as a way to bring people along internally. It's easier to start with something tangible and immediate while we build a longer-term view."

By starting with spot, they've been able to trial different removal methods, align stakeholders, and lay the groundwork for longer-term decisions—without overcommitting.

ZURICH INSURANCE

Scaling impact through strategic offtakes

Zurich takes a longer-term view, using milestone-based offtake agreements to support early-stage suppliers while de-risking delivery.

Their investment in biochar reflects not just a carbon strategy, but a deeper alignment with their agricultural insurance business.

Chris Minter
Global Sustainable Supply Chain Lead, Zurich Insurance Group

"This is still a learning process. We're not trying to solve everything in year one, but we do want to build a foundation that scales over time. Projects that support sustainable agriculture, like biochar, naturally align with our values and business model. [...] We use a milestone-based contracting approach to de-risk delivery because these projects are still scaling up.."

Zurich's approach shows how carbon removal can serve as a tool for climate impact while directly tying into business value.

Want to learn more? Hear directly from Zurich and The Economist in our recent webinar, Mastering Carbon Removal Procurement.

Supercritical: Making smart buying simple

You don't have to go it alone. Whether you're starting with a one-time spot purchase or structuring a 10-year offtake, Supercritical helps simplify the entire journey.

Find

pre-vetted projects across leading removal methods

Assess

suppliers with rigorous due diligence covering MRV, permanence, delivery risk, and more

Buy

with confidence, using milestone-based contracts and real-time market data

Ready to get started?

Supercritical takes the guesswork out of carbon removal procurement, helping you find, assess, and secure the highest-quality credits without wasting months navigating an opaque market alone. Get in touch to explore vetted projects, benchmark pricing, and see what's available right now on the Supercritical marketplace.

The carbon removal market can feel complex. But with the right tools—and a bit of guidance—any company can build a credible procurement strategy.

At Supercritical, we give you everything you need to move with confidence:

→ **Pre-vetted projects** across leading removal methods

→ **Live pricing and availability** so you can act quickly in a tightening market

→ **In-depth due diligence**, covering delivery risk, permanence, MRV, co-benefits, and more

→ **Standardized contracts** to streamline legal reviews and reduce delays

→ **Portfolio-building support** to align your purchases with your business goals and climate ambitions

We also offer exclusive access to top-tier suppliers, including our expanded partnership with Exomad Green, one of the most bankable names in biochar. Their track record, permanence profile, and social co-benefits make them a standout choice for buyers looking to secure high-quality removal at scale.

Supercritical

Supercritical: access the carbon removal market with confidence

Supercritical is the gateway to the carbon removal market. One-third of corporate buyers, including The Economist, Virgin Atlantic, and Rothschild & Co use Supercritical's marketplace to navigate the market, build portfolios of high-quality vetted projects, and securely transact across spot purchases and offtake agreements. Supercritical is the marketplace of choice for visionary companies with ambitious climate goals that need to be met today, not decades from now.

Request access to the Supercritical marketplace

Speak with one of our carbon removal experts