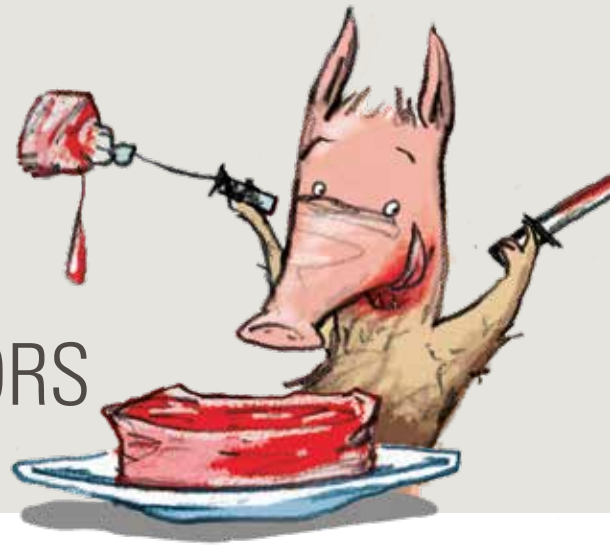


MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS



Dear reader,

By the end of the year, Germany will have emitted only 35 per cent less CO₂ compared to the baseline of 1990 instead of 40 per cent as targeted – and this despite greatly reduced mobility and the shutdown of the economy as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, the climate protection strategies of many large companies, such as of those which have joined Amazon's »Climate Pledge« (zero carbon by 2040) or which, like Bosch and Siemens, have set themselves even more ambitious targets, ultimately amount to mathematical climate neutrality: Companies compensate elsewhere for what they are unable to save, for instance by supporting carbon offset projects in the Global South. Such initiatives do not really help us to progress much further in the direction of climate neutrality; they can rather be ascribed to marketing and image building. Nevertheless, they are a first step.

When preparing this magazine on the climate crisis, we thought about how we »ordinary citizens« could also already take a first step. If the catastrophic impacts of climate change are to be mitigated, humanity must make concessions at all levels: Global, national and local. However, every company, every business, every institution must also strive to become carbon neutral – as well as every individual citizen. Accordingly, we collected together our heating and electricity bills, added up the kilometres we had travelled by car or train and calculated our families' carbon footprints with the help of online calculators from the German Environment Agency: Per family, it was 9 to 12 metric tons more CO₂ than the maximum of one metric ton per person we would have to achieve in order to


reach the climate change goals of the Paris Agreement. We have therefore compensated for this and paid climate protection agencies to support, among others, the purchase of energy-saving stoves in Africa and the rewetting of peatlands in Germany. This is, however, just a first step. We must also change our behaviour so that we do not produce so much CO₂ in the first place: By cycling more, flying less, consuming less. That is already more difficult.

In science, human-induced climate change is undisputed. The facts are on the table: The climate crisis will – and already does – have far-reaching consequences for people, societies and ecosystems, as researchers from Goethe University explain in their articles. Other articles in this issue illustrate how we can slow down climate change and adapt to the changing circumstances in our lives. Yet why do we find it so difficult to change our way of thinking? Psychologist Dr Jeannette Schmid and sociologist Professor Birgit Blättel-Mink comment on this in our magazine. Will we achieve the 1.5 °C goal set in Paris or not? There are differing opinions on this, even in the scientific community – as is revealed by the »Standpoints« of our two experts, Professor Volker Mosbrugger and Professor Joachim Curtius, at the end of this magazine. In any case, research at Goethe University will make its contribution because, as Professor Birgitta Wolff, the university's President, also says in an interview, this is ultimately its brand essence.

We therefore wish you an unsettling read with a glimmer of hope!

Anke Sauter and Markus Bernards
Forschung Frankfurt Editorial Team

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