COP30’s Carbon Capture Frenzy – Lobbyists Pushing False Solutions Are Distracting From Real Climate Action

December 18, 2025

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The 2025 UN climate talks in Brazil were marked by massive hype around Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and carbon removal geoengineering approaches—technologies that delay real climate action.

At the COP30 climate summit, a record 531 Carbon Capture and Storage lobbyists—from oil giants like Exxon and Shell to CCS trade groups—were registered. If counted as a single national delegation, they would have been the second largest at the entire summit.

For the first time, the geoengineering industry secured a presence in the UN’s official “blue zone” with a US$500,000 Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) pavilion, signaling a major push to frame their dangerous distractions as climate solutions.

The growing number of CCS lobbyists and the substantial marketing spend of the CDR industry demonstrate the significant energy and influence the fossil fuel industry and carbon-capture advocates are investing in promoting CCS and CDR.

Behind this surge in lobbying and marketing is the misleading claim that coal, oil, and gas can be made “clean” through carbon capture and that emissions already released can be removed later. These claims distract governments and industries from the urgent phaseout of fossil fuels and the transformation of carbon-intensive sectors such as cement, plastics, and chemicals.

> **CCS and CDR technologies claim to be a climate solution but studies and real-world experience prove that they fail to significantly reduce emissions, face fundamental economic and technical challenges and are dangerous not just for the climate but for people and ecosystems as well.**

CCS promises to capture carbon dioxide and store it underground or reuse it in industrial processes (Carbon Capture Use and Utilisation or CCUS). In reality, it props up fossil fuel dependence and risks extending the use and production of fossil fuels for decades to come.

Carbon capture technology fails to deliver. The International Energy Agency has halved its forecast for CCS in association with fossil fuel use in just two years due to the technology not being financially competitive, according to the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. In December 2025, biomass power station owner Drax reportedly halved its CCS unit, dramatically retreating from carbon capture plans in the USA as well as the UK.

Previously Drax claimed Bioenergy with CCS was the 'most scalable and affordable' CDR technology. Last year, energy company Equinor admitted to over-reporting capture rates at its Sleipner CCS project: its own data shows it captured about half the carbon it originally advertised. Across the sector, this pattern is common: most projects fall far short of the 90–95% capture rates advertised.

Even if CCS worked as promised, it would still drive up emissions, because it is used to justify continued fossil fuel use. Shell openly markets its CCS technology for Enhanced Oil Recovery, and more than 70% of captured carbon today is used to pump out additional oil. In the UK, CCS is being used to justify new gas power plants—despite the fact that roughly 88% of CCS projects fail and 90% of planned CCS power projects never got built. Banking on CCS to clean up new fossil fuel infrastructure is, ultimately, a fairytale.

Engineered Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) techniques are a type of geoengineering that is highly speculative, extremely risky, and would need to be deployed at a massive scale for any meaningful climate impact. Engineered CDR approaches include technologies like Direct Air Capture, Biomass Sinking, Enhanced Rock Weathering, Biochar and Ocean Alkalinity Enhancement. These approaches are often prohibitively expensive, very energy intensive and technically speculative, as well as being associated with significant risks for land use, water supply, local biodiversity, human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Due to their risks, these technologies are subject to restrictive governance frameworks, including a moratorium under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, although proponents often disregard or downplay these restrictions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that reliance on future CDR risks delaying urgently needed emissions reductions. Pathways that rely on large amounts of CDR are, by and large, "overshoot pathways", which the IPCC makes clear will lead to irreversible impacts. Despite this, proponents still spent US$500,000 alone on a pavilion aimed at 'Centering Carbon Removal in Climate Policy at COP30' and advocating for scaling investment and CDR projects worldwide.

Increased attention on false solutions such as CCS and CDR risks distracting policy-makers from pursuing an urgent fossil fuel phaseout—the only scientifically credible pathway to keeping global warming below 1.5°C. Some countries are now building these unproven technologies into theirParis Agreement climate plans (NDCs), creating the illusion of progress. Nine percent of all NDCsmention Direct Air Capture—a technology that has yet to deliver real emissions cuts. Countries like the UK and Brazil are relying on CCS in their NDCs. The UK alone is putting £22 billion into CCS, despite its long track record of failure. Every dollar spent on CCS is a dollar diverted from real climate solutions.

By blurring the line between real emissions reductions and speculative "carbon management," CCS and CDR make it politically easier to delay the urgently needed phaseout of fossil fuels. The science is clear: nothing can replace the rapid decline of fossil fuels. **It's time for governments to drop CCS and engineered CDR, exclude fossil fuel and false-solutions lobbyists from climate decision-making, and rapidly phase out fossil fuels.**