

When penguins explain the carbon footprint

A FORMAT ON THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF EVERYDAY DECISIONS

Did you know,

... that travelling from London to New York by airplane melts 3m² of ice floes at the North Pole? Per person! That's 3m² of floating ice sheets: GONE!

... that a cloth bag is only better in its CO₂ footprint than a plastic bag or a paper bag after it has been used at least 20 times?

... that eating beef has around 44 times more CO₂ equivalents than having a delicious vegetarian dinner?

Making responsible decisions based on a sound understanding of climate change requires knowledge on many levels.

Shopping, eating, travelling to a holiday destination or consumer behaviour can leave very different CO₂ footprints. Researching the relevant data to make climate-friendly decisions is usually not possible for children and young people. This is exactly where format 2 *Did You Know?* of the "For Us – No Planet B!" initiative comes in, offering concrete comparative data in an entertaining format.

The starting point is a currency that makes the ecological costs of consumption decisions tangible. The Melting Ice Flow Currency (MIF), developed by Dr. Katharina Blaurock, converts CO₂ equivalents into ice floes that would be melted (see also Blaurock in this issue).

A family with a common surname – Müller in Germany, Miller in North America and Rodriguez in Latin America – is faced with a decision. The family wants to have a good time, but not put too much strain on the planet. What should they do? A "super animal" comes to their aid, flying and wearing an appropriate cloak. Using the ice floe currency, it shows how high the carbon footprint of each decision would be.

A penguin called "Frio"

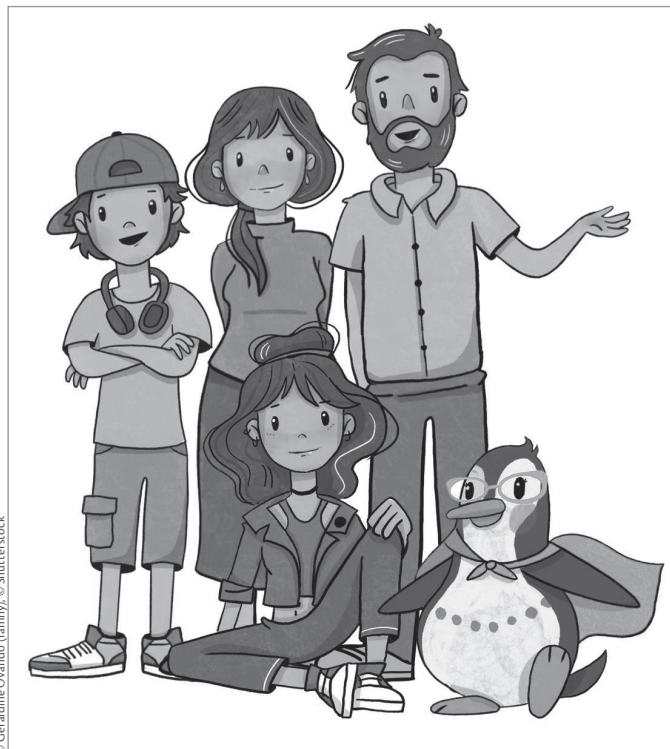
In the pilot episode of *Did You Know?*, produced in Bolivia, penguin Frio takes

on this role. He helps the Rodriguez family make decisions about buying food, travelling to their holiday destination (Ill. 1), and buying a mobile phone or chewing gum, because he knows which decision causes the smallest ecological footprint. When the Rodriguez family plan their trip to a beach resort 1,100 kilometres away, they use the ice floe currency to show that it would cost 663 MIFs to get there by car and 400 MIFs by bus, the main form of public transport in Bolivia. If all 4 family members were to fly, it would cost 2,844 MIFs.

In the pilot episode, the family decides in favour of the bus, but in other

episodes they will sometimes opt for a solution with a higher MIF. The aim of the series is not to "impose" a decision with the lowest CO₂ equivalents, but to emphasise the process of reflecting and decision-making as such. Sometimes the Rodriguez family decides in favour of the lowest MIF, sometimes in parts or the family has good reasons to occasionally choose the less climate-friendly option.

Because Penguin Frio knows: "The more we know, the better we choose, and every little change to less CO₂ in the atmosphere helps!" ■



Ill. 1: Penguin Frio helps the Rodriguez family to make climate-friendly everyday decisions