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## Climate Change? Just Suck It Up!

 Gregory Unruh, Contributor

I just got off the phone with the journalist Marc Gunther, talking about his new e-book *Suck It Up*, which is a must-read for sustainability professionals. Marc's reporting over the years has chronicled a parade of sustainable business initiatives – GE's ecomagination, Walmart, and so on – that have all been positive developments in green business. But despite these advances a number of sustainability problems continue to worsen, none more concerning than inexorably rising carbon dioxide emissions and their effect on the climate. Is there a market answer for climate change? Maybe so.

Marc's reporting identifies a nascent industry that can only be called "atmospheric carbon mining." Companies like [Global Thermostat](#) and [Kilimanjaro Energy](#) are racing to develop technologies that can suck carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and concentrate it into an industrial grade product that can be sold for a profit.

Who will buy their CO<sub>2</sub>? You may be surprised how many companies use carbon dioxide for production. Ever wondered how the fizz gets into your soda? It's CO<sub>2</sub> gas forced in under industrial pressure. But Coke is probably not going to be the first customer for carbon miners. In fact, the early adopters will probably be oil producers. The most likely roll-out would have CO<sub>2</sub> miners extracting carbon dioxide near depleted oil fields where the gas can be injected into the reservoir to force out "stranded oil" left behind when pumping becomes uneconomical.

Once the technology progresses and becomes more cost effective, new uses emerge. The end game may be using these technologies to industrially close the carbon cycle by feeding the concentrated CO<sub>2</sub> to algae that then become feedstock for carbon-neutral biofuels.

While providing hope that progress can be made on climate change, these

technologies bring important ethical and political implications. In effect, they create a weather machine by giving humanity control over atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels. As Gunther puts it, “We’re going to have to decide what kind of climate we want.”

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**This article is available online at:**

**<http://www.forbes.com/sites/csr/2012/03/05/climate-change-just-suck-it-up/>**