

How Georgia Businesses Can Reduce Scope 3 Emissions and Build More Resilient Supply Chains

Summary

How does a craft brewery tackle its hardest-to-measure emissions? In this conversation, Jacob Yarbrough, Senior Sustainability Manager at Creature Comforts Brewing Co. in Athens, Georgia, joins host Eriqah Vincent to talk about how the brewery is reducing waste and emissions, why sustainability has always been core to its business, and how membership in the Drawdown Georgia Business Compact helped the company take on the hardest part of its carbon footprint: Scope 3 emissions across its supply chain.

Key Takeaways

- Sustainability is both a values-driven and a business decision for Creature Comforts. The company depends on dependable growing seasons for its raw materials, and cutting waste has also become a major cost saver.
- The Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions framework helps businesses track carbon emissions without double-counting them: Scope 1 is direct emissions, Scope 2 is energy purchases, and Scope 3 covers a company's full value chain.
- For a craft brewery like Creature Comforts, roughly 70 percent of emissions fall into Scope 3, making supplier relationships one of the biggest levers for reducing overall impact.
- Creature Comforts partnered with Georgia Tech and Professor Michael Oxman on a capstone project to estimate its Scope 3 emissions using a spend-based approach, then validated those estimates directly with suppliers.
- Jacob's advice for other businesses: start with what you can control, connect with your community, keep learning, and don't be afraid to try.

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Eriqah Vincent: Hello, everyone. Thank you so much once again for joining us for this Drawdown Georgia interview series. I'm really happy to have our guest with us today — this is Jacob Yarbrough with Creature Comforts Brewing Co. Thank you so much for joining us today, Jacob. It's good to see you.

Jacob Yarbrough: Thanks for having me, Eriqah. I'm really excited for the opportunity to talk to you today.

Eriqah Vincent: Wonderful. Please introduce yourself to our audience and tell us about the work you all do at Creature Comforts Brewing Co.

Jacob Yarbrough: As you said, my name's Jacob Yarbrough. I'm the Senior Sustainability Manager at Creature Comforts Brewing Co. We're a craft beer company based in Athens, Georgia, and as of 2025, we're one of the top 50 largest craft breweries in the United States, which is kind of wild. My entire job is looking at and asking questions about what our environmental impact on the world around us is, and how we can make that a bit better.

Eriqah Vincent: Awesome, fantastic. Sustainability and climate are important issues for you all at the brewery. We've talked quite a bit on this series about businesses and sustainability, and how businesses are thinking about it, so it's great to have you here to talk more about that. Can you give us an overview of some of your efforts to reduce waste and emissions at the brewery?

Jacob Yarbrough: Yeah, absolutely. Something I always try to center is the product itself. We're making a physical good — in this case, beer — for consumers to enjoy. There are raw materials that go into our brewing process, and so there's a tangible impact from things like our energy sources — natural gas, electricity — and the waste materials we generate. So I'm always acting as a bit of an investigator, asking questions like: are we operating efficiently? Do we have to do things this way? Is there some other material or process we can substitute in that would lessen the impact of those negative externalities from our processes?

Eriqah Vincent: That's really great to hear about the success you all have had with this. I think we've seen an uptick in businesses taking sustainability and their climate impact into consideration. Why is sustainability a core element of what you all do at Creature Comforts? Was that something that was there from the beginning, or something you developed over time?

Jacob Yarbrough: Yeah, this is such a great question — there's so much to unpack here. The first thing I'd point out is that, as a brewer, I depend on crops. I depend on barley grain, I depend on wheat, I depend on hops in order to make beer and make my own living. So taking sustainability seriously is a business interest for us — we need our suppliers to have dependable growing seasons, dependable rainfall, and so on. Mitigating climate change makes a ton of sense for us just on a business case.

Then there are the operational impacts of running a strong sustainability program. Something I really focus on is eliminating waste — both solid waste, physical trash, and waste in our processes and utilities. My work tends to pay for itself and then some. Depending on your industry and what services you offer, pursuing a sustainability program can vary, but for us it's a major cost savings.

So you have those two things going on: it's in our business interest to make sure our suppliers have dependable growing seasons, and it's also a cost-saving center. Then there's company values. One of our company's mission statements is to foster human connection. Creature Comforts wants to be there when you're celebrating with your friends on a Friday after work — we want to be a company worth celebrating. That means standing up and trying to do the best things we can, all of the time. And to your point, Eriqah, a lot of people are paying close attention to where their dollars go these days. Times are getting tougher, and people need to spend their dollars with companies that uphold their values too. So it's a big, complex question, but every direction I look at it, there are multiple reasons to stand up for sustainability in the private sector.

Eriqah Vincent: Absolutely. My next question is about the Drawdown Georgia Business Compact, which Creature Comforts is a member of. We had someone on here talking about the

Business Compact a couple of months ago, and as someone who comes from the nonprofit sector, it's not always my first thought — but it's something we're seeing more of: the connection between advocacy and businesses in how we're thinking about climate and sustainability. As a member of the Business Compact, how has your business benefited from being part of that entity? Why should other sustainability-focused Georgia businesses consider joining?

Jacob Yarbrough: Absolutely. Something that's really handy about Project Drawdown, and Drawdown Georgia specifically, is that it connects point A to point B. What I mean is: we know we need to do something about climate change, and what Project Drawdown has done is say, "Here are the emissions happening in these sectors, and here are solutions we think we can work on to actually move us forward." I think that's hugely valuable to potential members, because you're not, as an individual company, responsible for developing and implementing every solution on your own. You get to join a group of really smart people who work really hard and have thought a lot about these issues.

So that's one benefit — the road-mapping piece. There's also the collaboration piece: when you get people from a lot of different organizations together, you have conversations that lead to solutions and ideas you might not have thought of on your own. I also think Georgia is specifically a leader here. I was googling around to see — is there a Drawdown Alabama? No. Is there a Drawdown Florida? No. So this is really a way we're stepping forward as a state, providing infrastructure, a roadmap, and a place for people to come talk about these issues and bring them into the daylight.

Eriqah Vincent: We've talked at Drawdown Georgia about the fact that there isn't another entity quite like this. I don't want to misspeak, but I don't think there are similar things in other states, and we've talked a lot about how we become an example for other states that might want to implement or lift up something like this. It's nuanced, because this is led by a lot of foundations and funders who feel that putting resources behind something like this is important — so where does that live? Does it live in academia? In philanthropy? We've talked a lot about that. So it's interesting that you say that, thinking about the benefits for businesses to be part of something like this — to your point about getting from point A to point B, how are we getting the work done, and how are we sharing information with other businesses that want to do this too? I think Georgia is unique in having that space for the conversation, and having all these sectors together, with that interconnectedness, is really important and unique.

Jacob Yarbrough: Yeah, it's super valuable. On one side you have the academics doing great research, finding out more about how climate change works and what the potential solutions are. Then you have excellent folks like yourself doing the communication side, connecting people to one another. And then businesses in so many different areas are responsible for so many emissions —

Eriqah Vincent: Exactly.

Jacob Yarbrough: They need to be part of the solution. For a solution to be viable and take hold, we have to participate.

Eriqah Vincent: So let's talk a little more about what it looks like for a business like Creature Comforts to reduce emissions. Can you start by explaining the different categories of emissions that businesses focus on — specifically, the Scope 1, 2, 3 framework?

Jacob Yarbrough: When it comes to tabulating carbon emissions and trying to do something about them, it's really important to contextualize where an emission comes from and how it functions within a larger system. That's why we talk about different scopes of carbon emissions. You mentioned one, two, and three — let me explain those quickly for the audience.

Eriqah Vincent: Yes.

Jacob Yarbrough: Scope 1 emissions are ones you're directly responsible for yourself. If I get into a gas-powered car and burn gas to get from point A to point B, that burning of gas is a Scope 1 emission for me.

Eriqah Vincent: Okay, yes.

Jacob Yarbrough: A Scope 2 emission, in my understanding, is typically an energy-related purchase — most commonly electricity. When you turn on a light switch in your house, the electrons come from the power plant to your lamp and light it up. That power plant might be a coal-fired plant, a solar farm, or a natural gas turbine, and there may be emissions associated with what it's doing. I don't control the power plant, so it's not a Scope 1 emission for me — but I did turn the light switch on. So it's a bit different from Scope 1.

Eriqah Vincent: A little more —

Jacob Yarbrough: Removed. A little more removed, exactly. There's an aspect of removal there. And as we move into Scope 3, there's additional removal happening. A Scope 3 emission is associated with your value chain.

Eriqah Vincent: Okay.

Jacob Yarbrough: What I mean by a value chain emission is this: speaking as Creature Comforts for a moment, when we're going to brew a beer, we need a few things — water, grain, hops. The emissions associated with a farmer growing that grain, running his tractor, spreading fertilizer — that's a Scope 1 emission for the farmer, but it's a Scope 3 emission for me.

Eriqah Vincent: I got it.

Jacob Yarbrough: And the reason we split things up this way is to make sure we're not double- or triple-counting carbon emissions. Those carbon molecules go up into the atmosphere — we've already got too many of them up there — and that's why we use the Scope 1, 2, 3 framework.

Eriqah Vincent: That's super helpful. I think folks, especially as consumers, don't often think about how far that chain of emissions can go, and how much energy — human energy, not just literal energy — it takes to think about our chain of emissions. So thanks for explaining it that way. I think that's important.

Jacob Yarbrough: It's very complicated, especially when it comes to measuring something like carbon emissions — it's invisible, it's odorless, and really hard to track and wrap your mind around. In my career, I've found it helpful to think: all right, I have the most influence over what I'm doing directly, so that deserves the most focus right now.

Eriqah Vincent: Creature Comforts recently began focusing on lowering your Scope 3 emissions, which you were just talking about. Can you tell us about the steps you've taken in

that area? How did you identify priorities? What changes have you already made, or do you plan to make?

Jacob Yarbrough: Focusing on Scope 3 is really hard — it's hard enough to understand your Scope 1 and Scope 2, and those are the ones you have direct control over for the most part. When it comes to Scope 3, the first question is: how am I going to determine what these are? There are several different approaches you can take. We specifically follow the Greenhouse Gas Protocol for corporate reporting standards — it's a foundational text for how to do greenhouse gas emissions reporting.

When it came to Scope 3, we tapped into Drawdown Georgia and our organizational connections there, and I was connected with Professor Michael Oxman at Georgia Tech. We did a capstone project with a team of his students, and it was super helpful. Another benefit of working with Drawdown Georgia is that, in my day-to-day, I would probably never have the time to dedicate research and a whole project to something like this — but getting a team dedicated to it made everything so much better.

When it comes to Scope 3 emissions reporting, you often have to balance completeness and accuracy against what information you can actually get.

Eriqah Vincent: Yeah.

Jacob Yarbrough: One of the ways we started was by asking: how much money are we spending with each of these suppliers? That's a spend-based approach. We got all of our suppliers into a file together — transaction histories and the specific economic categories they operated in, whether that was a grain farmer, a cardboard manufacturer, or an aluminum can manufacturer. Different dollar amounts spent lead to different CO₂ emissions, so it's important to tie that economic activity in.

The approach was pretty innovative, I thought. We used BEA data — the latest available report on the EPA's website was from 2012, so a little out of date, but since we were establishing a baseline with this project, a first pass was fine. From there, we did an inflation adjustment, since dollars weren't worth the same in 2024, when we engaged in this project, as they were in 2012. Then we ran through the economic analysis — saying X dollars leads to Y grams of CO₂ — and paired that information together. So we had what I'd consider a first draft of our Scope 3 emissions. It's a really good beginning place, but not a final version, because we were working with information that was a little out of date, and I hadn't yet talked to any of my suppliers about the project. I imagined there were probably some efficiency gains between 2012 and 2024.

Eriqah Vincent: Yeah.

Jacob Yarbrough: That teed us up for the second stage of the project, where I took the emissions values we'd estimated and went directly to my primary suppliers and said, "Here's something we're working on, something we care about, and here's the information we've established — what do you think? Does it look right? Is there more accurate information available from your own research?" Because what are my Scope 3 emissions are their Scope 1 — they have direct control and know a lot more about it. It was also really helpful to have that rough draft in place, because all of a sudden I wasn't asking them to solve all of my problems — I was saying, "Here's something I've already got. Does this look right to you, or are you better off than that?"

That process led to some good findings. Some of the information was, as expected, not exactly the most accurate, but we were able to get updated emissions reporting. To give you a sense of how things break down for a craft brewery like us: only about 30 percent of our emissions are Scope 1 and Scope 2 — in our direct control. The other 70 percent is Scope 3, happening outside of our building. To the second part of your question — what can you do about that — the most impactful thing is to work with suppliers who share your values and are trying to improve their own emissions.

We're pretty fortunate in the brewing industry that most of our inputs, our raw materials, are agricultural products, so our supply chain tends to be pretty renewable to start with. Our packaging is another example — you either get our beer in kegs, which get shipped out from our facility to a bar or restaurant, people enjoy it, and it gets sent back to us. That's a circular package, which is really cool. The other packaging format is an aluminum can, which is the most recycled commodity in America.

Eriqah Vincent: Right.

Jacob Yarbrough: So I feel pretty good about the materials we're working with, and that there's a pathway to net zero in my industry. We've made a couple of supplier changes that were influenced — not completely influenced, the business case needed to be there too — by a more sustainable supplier winning our business.

Eriqah Vincent: You're making such a good point here, because Georgia is an agricultural state as well, so thinking about how far our agricultural materials are coming — finding a Georgia supplier, then finding one that shares our values and has its own sustainability practices, and making sure the way you're delivering to restaurants is as sustainable as possible — plus the circular packaging piece — there's so much to think about, and it's so important for this work. We've also talked to folks on here who work in agriculture, about how they're thinking about climate — one of the most important parts of agriculture is dealing with things you can't personally control, like climate. So that whole conversation about how we're helping each other, and how we're contributing to the solution, is so important — especially in the business sense, but also from an advocacy standpoint, thinking about how we're supporting smaller farmers in their own agricultural practices, and how that connects to the businesses that support them.

Jacob Yarbrough: I think that's a really good point, Eriqah. Something I come across often in conversations about sustainability is that the relationship I want to have with suppliers goes beyond transactions — we need to be ideally aligned in our values, in the kind of world and future we want to create. One of our values at Creature Comforts is to leave a legacy — we think about what kind of legacy we're leaving, and how we're improving the future for other people. I think that if we can be part of developing a more sustainable framework, a more sustainable supply chain, a more sustainable network — something like what Drawdown Georgia does — that's one of the best things we can do as a company, after we've paid all the bills and taken care of our employees.

Eriqah Vincent: I also want to touch on something you mentioned about the EPA report you all were working from, from 2012. There are so many businesses right now, especially given where we are in this moment with policy, working with past information because we're not getting current data to help us move forward in alignment with our values. You talked about making that inflation adjustment because the value of a dollar in 2012 isn't the same as in 2024, 2025, or 2026. I wanted to note that we're all working with the information we have and doing the best

we can — and that's another great thing about Drawdown Georgia, that research at institutions of higher ed and in academia can help fill in some of the gaps we're not getting from federal policy right now. The work that folks are doing at schools like Georgia Tech, with Mike Oxman and other great professors, filling in those gaps we're not getting from federal agencies, is so important. We're all doing the best we can with what we have.

Jacob Yarbrough: Right, and I think that's another strength of Drawdown Georgia. Just because federal priorities may change doesn't mean that reality changes.

Eriqah Vincent: Exactly.

Jacob Yarbrough: It's worth pointing out the value of building relationships that go beyond being merely transactional. We're members of a community, members of a state, members of a society. I personally think I should try to make things better wherever I can, and spend time with people who share those values.

Eriqah Vincent: Yeah.

Jacob Yarbrough: That's how we make real, positive changes — through force multiplication, by joining together.

Eriqah Vincent: What advice do you have for other Georgia businesses that want to reduce these types of emissions? It's hard work, like you said — reducing your Scope 3 emissions is the hardest of the three, of course. What advice do you have for businesses that are trying to figure out how to do this work, and how to connect what they're producing, whether that's a physical product like yours or something else, to their values?

Jacob Yarbrough: First and foremost, for business operations, my first piece of advice is: don't be afraid to try. Oftentimes, caution can prevent people from even attempting something. Just showing up and giving it a shot puts you ahead of people who aren't even trying.

Eriqah Vincent: Absolutely.

Jacob Yarbrough: The second piece of advice is to really understand your business operations — get into the nitty-gritty, because you might be surprised where you can find opportunities and waste. Taking the time to really evaluate and understand your operations will probably surface opportunities, because most systems aren't designed from the get-go to be as sustainable as possible — they're designed to get up and running, which means there's a lot of opportunity if you spend time looking for it.

Those are my first two pieces of advice. You don't have to dive into your supply chain immediately — you can focus on sweeping around your own back door first. You've got way more control over those things, and the impact will be more tangibly felt by your organization if you focus there first. Once you get a few wins under your belt and some support, that's when you can start reaching out to see what else you can do.

That's advice on the business side. For folks who don't have as many resources, number one is connecting in your community — we're all members of communities, and there could be somebody who's already got something set up who needs volunteers, time, or people-hours to get work done. So check in with your community, or try to find one if you don't have one. A third piece of advice is educating yourself, learning about these issues. Your local library is a

fantastic place — tons of resources, tons of information, and the books are free. That's a really good place to start if you want to make a difference.

It's also totally fine to narrow your scope — you don't need to fix the whole world yourself. You can find an area you care about and make a difference there. Thinking about my own work and career, I care about people connecting, getting together, celebrating over a delicious beer, whether it's a Creature Comforts beer or a competitor's — doesn't matter to me. I've been able to cut our water use by 500,000 gallons a month. You'll find major impacts wherever you apply yourself, just by finding something you care about and working at it relentlessly.

Eriqah Vincent: I love that, that's really great. I think some of the things you said are good for us as individuals and also good for business. Finding our community as individuals is just as important as business owners finding theirs. The Drawdown Georgia Business Compact is a community of folks, and the education piece — we love libraries, libraries are fantastic — is also available through the Business Compact. I know you all have a lot of ways of connecting, educating, and meeting to talk about the work and how you're doing it. I think that's so important, for business owners but also for folks doing work in community. A lot of what you just said is interchangeable for all of us, and really important.

Jacob Yarbrough: There are folks out there who maybe don't want other people pursuing climate solutions. One of the strategies to engender hopelessness and inaction is a divide-and-conquer strategy.

Eriqah Vincent: Yeah.

Jacob Yarbrough: If you say, "No, I will not be divided — I'm going to stand with other people in my community who care," you have way more resilience.

Eriqah Vincent: The individualism is the part that's really going to get us, so we have to band together. Absolutely, I say that all the time — you're preaching to the choir for me. Thank you so much for this conversation, this was really educational for me, and I know it was for our audience too. I'm really thankful to you and the other folks who come talk to us about stuff like this.

We're at our last question, my favorite one — I can't wait to hear your answer. What's giving you hope around climate in Georgia?

Jacob Yarbrough: There's a phrase I'm a fan of: reality has a way of asserting itself. I feel like we're in a moment where reality is starting to assert itself, if it hasn't already. And when reality asserts itself, people who may not have been paying attention to something — whether through disinterest, comfort, or whatever the reason — start to pay attention.

With that framing in mind, something that really gives me hope right now — I'm going to introduce a bit of a wonky acronym — is something known as the levelized cost of electricity. The levelized cost of electricity is a metric that measures how much it costs to build and operate a power plant over its lifetime, factored against how much power you get out of it, giving you a price per kilowatt-hour or per year. It's really important because, for solar plus storage, it's now the lowest of all forms of electricity.

Eriqah Vincent: Mm, yeah, okay.

Jacob Yarbrough: Which means that if you're building a power plant, the one with the best value is also the most sustainable one. That's another way reality is asserting itself — when it comes to our grid, the greenest option is now the most prudent one to invest in.

There's not much point in keeping coal plants open, for example. So that's one thing, on a macro level, that really gives me hope — some of the big trends I see just make sense.

Eriqah Vincent: Just makes sense.

Jacob Yarbrough: It just makes sense on more local levels too. We're seeing things like — at the time of recording, in March of 2026, about half of the United States is going through record heat waves. Summertime is hot; should every summer be hotter than the one before it?

Eriqah Vincent: Right.

Jacob Yarbrough: As more people experience the direct impacts of climate change locally in their lives, reality begins to assert itself, and more people want to get on board with doing something about this problem. I do think there are some difficult days ahead, but there's a light through that tunnel, and I think that will galvanize more people to act and demand better. That's the other piece that gives me hope — these problems, these solutions, connecting people together — we can demand better than what we have now. So it's kind of an unorthodox answer to what gives me hope, but right now, in this moment, that's really what I'm seeing, and it's given me hope: reality is beginning to assert itself, and we should do something about that.

Eriqah Vincent: No, I don't think that's unorthodox at all, and I really like your approach to it. That's really important for us to think about — the ways we're connecting with each other,

Jacob Yarbrough: Absolutely.

Eriqah Vincent: so that we can do the work that needs to be done across all industries.

Jacob Yarbrough: I encourage people to talk about the problems they see, because as we vocalize problems, they become more salient and more important. People want to start thinking, "Well, that's a problem — how can we solve it?" That's the page I want to try to get people to turn: from "oh man, this is a problem" to "here's how we begin to work on solutions."

Eriqah Vincent: Thank you so much, Jacob, for being with us and talking to us about Creature Comforts Brewing Co. Congratulations to you all on the success you've had, both in your business and in aligning your values with the work you're doing — I think that's really great. I'm not really a beer drinker myself, but there are other ways I can support y'all. I'm eager to learn more about the work you're doing.

Jacob Yarbrough: Something I'd like to say, Eriqah, is that we recognize not everybody is a beer drinker, which is why we're moving into other product lines — spirits, seltzers, things of that nature. We're thinking about the future as less of a brewery and more of a beverage company, because everybody needs something to drink.

Eriqah Vincent: Everybody needs something.

Jacob Yarbrough: I also want to thank you for having me, and for hosting this interview series, connecting and communicating with people. In this moment in America, a lot of folks want us to

be isolated, and the work you're doing is an active resistance to that. I think it's really, really important, and I appreciate everything you've done.

Eriqah Vincent: Thank you so much, Jacob, that's nice to hear. I think you're absolutely right. In a world post-COVID — and not really post-COVID, COVID is still with us, but kind of past the height of it, when we were all locked in the house — things have gotten so much more digital. We're having more Zoom calls, more shows hosted online, and we're getting less time to be in community physically with each other. So I appreciate you saying that, first of all, because this has been a joy of mine over the past year or so. But I also appreciate it because it underscores the necessity for human connection — the necessity for us to connect on the work we're doing and on our values. Finding ways in the digital space to still be together is really important to me.

Jacob Yarbrough: Absolutely. These digital tools can help enhance community, but they can also help break it apart.

Eriqah Vincent: Exactly.

Jacob Yarbrough: The digital tools aren't going away, so it's important for people to use them for good — for connection and problem solving.

Eriqah Vincent: Thanks, Jacob. Congratulations again to Creature Comforts, and thank you all for joining us for this Drawdown Georgia interview series. We hope to see you next time for our next Georgia climate leader doing fantastic work in our wonderful state. Thanks again — bye!