

The background is a collage of various paper cutouts on a light green surface. It includes several human head silhouettes in different colors (yellow, white, beige, dark green, red) and various types of leaves and flowers in shades of green, black, and red. The IMEX logo is prominently displayed in the upper left quadrant.

IMEX

Sustainable Event Report
IMEX Frankfurt 2024

Prepared by **MeetGreen** 

Our mission



Carina Bauer,
CEO, IMEX Group



2024 was the world's hottest year on record, according to research by scientists from the EU Copernicus Climate Change Service, the UK Met Office, NASA and other climate experts.

As we progress further into 2025, this alarming news brings the need for bold sustainability action into sharp focus.

The question is how? Whether you're after planet-friendly inspiration for your own events or want examples of good practice to share with your contacts, this report is for you.

Our Sustainable Event Report demonstrates the work we do at IMEX Frankfurt both in the run up to and on site at the show. We share these insights with the aim of saving you time, energy and money.

It's taken us over 20 years to learn, iterate and innovate. You may not have that long.

We've designed the report to give you the practical information you need to make changes to your own events and enhance your conversations with colleagues and clients. Having the right knowledge to hand is key to making meaningful progress, according to research—Isla's survey at IMEX America last year showed that 42% believed client education would help improve sustainability outcomes.

You'll notice there are many first-time initiatives in this report. That's because we build on what's gone well and are open to experimenting with new ideas. Equally, we've highlighted the areas we can improve. Producing sustainable events is a gradual, but continuous, process.

This report is just one element of our wider Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)

strategy—we're challenging ourselves and others to deliver as much positive social and economic impact as possible for the high environmental cost of international travel.

Our industry has a crucial role to play.

Business events can support climate protection by bringing together a community in one place, at one time—thereby saving on multiple journeys. One day spent at a trade show can save more than five individual trips, according to recent research by the Association of the German Trade Fair Industry (AUMA).

Change can't be delivered in isolation, however, and collaborating with our partners, colleagues and friends across the industry is paramount.

I'd like to end, therefore, by thanking all of our partners. Working with them has helped us elevate the sustainable impact of our show and embody our company values, especially "achieve together."



ABOUT US

2024
stats



Attendance:



IMEX Frankfurt is the largest trade show of its kind in Europe for the global meetings, events and incentive travel industry. It's where international event planners connect with suppliers from across the world, building powerful working relationships—in turn creating impactful events, meetings and experiences.

ABOUT US



IMEX FRANKFURT SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Measure our event footprint

Share what we learn and
amplify best practices

Make sustainability education
accessible to all

Give back to our
local communities

Champion the positive
impacts of meetings and events



OUR GOALS



HIGHLIGHTS



2024 HIGHLIGHTS

→ **100%**
beef-free menu
 at IMEX Frankfurt outlets
 and our Gala Dinner

→ Gala Dinner menu
 emissions estimates
 shared with attendees

→ **Carbon credit
 program**
 with Cloverly enabling
 attendees to balance
 their travel to IMEX
 Frankfurt

→ **Pilot program
 of Better Stands**
 assessment framework
 for space-only booths

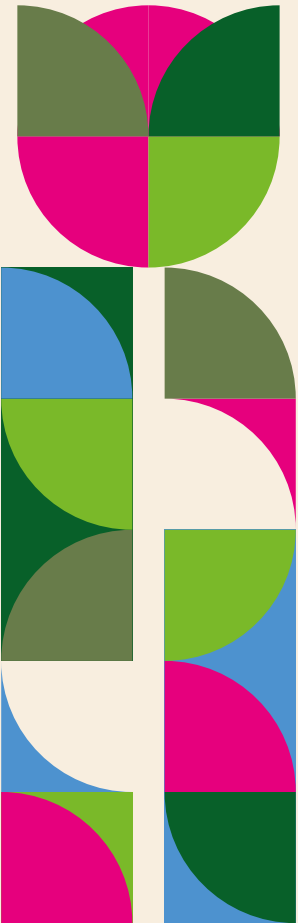
→ **Paper-based
 column and stair
 decals**
 replaced traditional PVC
 adhesive graphics

→ **87%**
**of IMEX Frankfurt
 waste was recovered
 into recycling,
 organics and donation
 channels**

→ **34.3**
**square meters
 of paperboard**
 used in Hall 8 and galleria
 entry windows replacing
 standard petroleum-
 based substrates

→ Printing on carpet in
 selected show zones,
 eliminated
55.5
**square meters
 of floor decals**

A word from our host destination and venue



In our view, there is no goal more important than preserving our planet for future generations.

With this in mind, we're stepping up efforts to reach our environmental target—greenhouse gas neutrality by 2040 at the latest. Determining our corporate carbon footprint is another milestone for us on the way to a sustainable future for events.

We are very fortunate to pursue these essential goals together with responsible organizers such as the IMEX team, who implement ecological, social and economic sustainability with incredible dedication and admirable creativity.

Wolfgang Marzin,
President and CEO,
Messe Frankfurt



Frankfurt continues to lead the way in sustainability, offering reliable transportation options including a low-carbon rail network that connects the airport with the main train station and Messe Frankfurt, allowing IMEX visitors to travel in an environmentally friendly way. The city's commitment also extends to renewable energy, public green spaces, efficient waste management and eco-conscious hospitality practices, all of which contribute to its goal of carbon neutrality by 2035. These sustainability initiatives seamlessly align with IMEX's mission, making Frankfurt not only the perfect host city, but also a natural choice to showcase and promote sustainable event practices.

Jutta Heinrich
Director Frankfurt
Convention Bureau

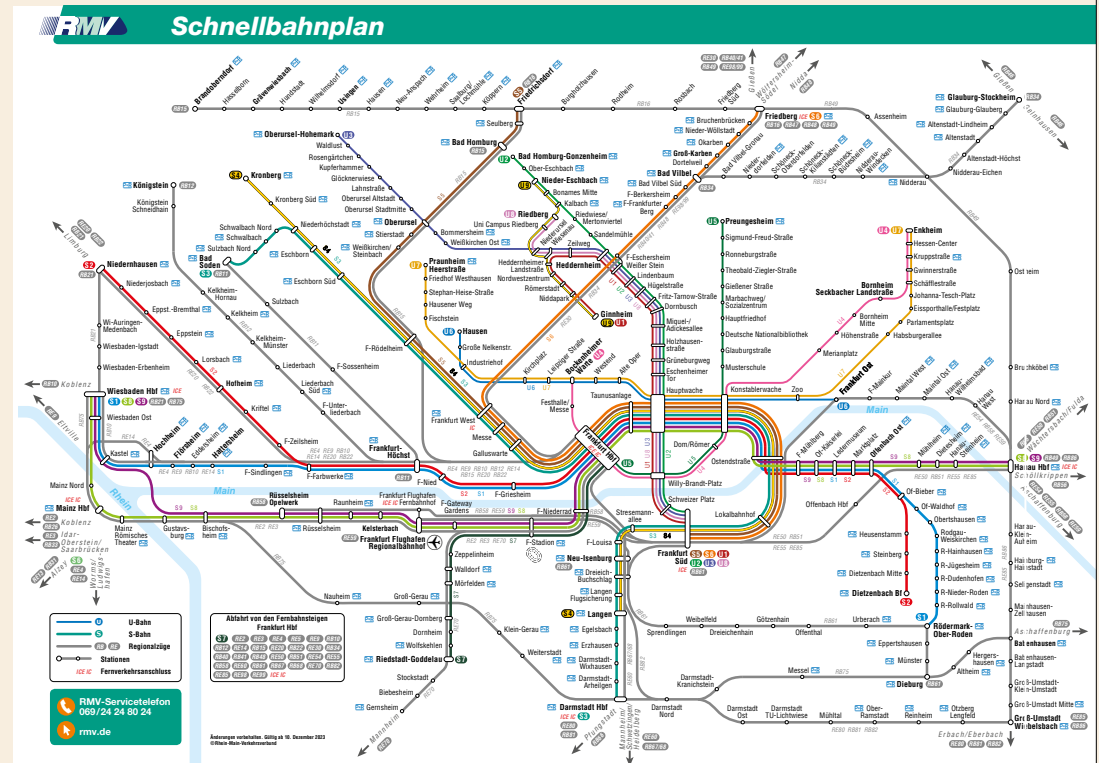
DESTINATION



Central location: With IMEX Frankfurt welcoming attendees from all over the world, its location in the heart of Europe offers a centralized meeting point that could lower travel distances for some participants.¹

Renewable energy: Frankfurt is a destination rich in access to renewable energy. In Spring 2023, Frankfurt Flughafen (airport) entered into a green wind energy power purchasing agreement, providing wind energy volumes of around 63 gigawatt hours annually to the airport.³

Renewable energy accounts for **52% of German power** according to 2023 data.⁴ Significant further expansion of renewables is anticipated in the next six years, with targets of 80% renewable power nationwide by 2030.⁵



Transportation infrastructure: In addition to centralized inbound/outbound travel, Frankfurt's transportation infrastructure includes a network of low carbon rail options connecting Frankfurt Flughafen (airport) with Messe Frankfurt and also Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof (railway station), which at 25 platforms is one of Europe's largest rail transit hubs.²

DESTINATION

VENUE



Our core event venue, **Messe Frankfurt, is powered by 100% renewable electricity.** This includes Hall 8 (our exhibition space) and Hall 9 (our learning zone) as well as the galleria.

In addition, Messe Frankfurt continues to invest in its sustainability and ESG journey. In late 2023 Messe Frankfurt received a certificate of validation from its EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) environmental management system, which also meets the requirements of ISO 14001, the internationally recognized standard for

environmental management systems. Messe Frankfurt is the first company in the German trade show sector to introduce this system.⁶

Messe Frankfurt also participates in the United Nations Global Compact, the Charter of Diversity and German Fairpflichtet sustainability code.

Lastly Messe Frankfurt has elevated its climate action efforts through a partnership with First Climate to report on its Corporate Carbon Footprint (CCF) target for comprehensive venue greenhouse gas neutrality by 2040.⁷





OTHER VENUES



The Scandic Frankfurt Museumsufer hotel is an example of a high-performing sustainable lodging option with a robust array of ESG initiatives:

- ⊕ **Verkehrsgesellschaft Frankfurt (VGF)** city rail passes offered to guests attending IMEX
- ⊕ **100%** of the hotel's electricity **renewably sourced**
- ⊕ **50%** of the breakfast buffet was **certified organic**
- ⊕ Partnership with **Too Good To Go** to repurpose any unserved food
- ⊕ Property-wide focus on **Reisen für Alle** (Travel for All) with 11 barrier-free rooms



Scandic Frankfurt Museumsufer in action:

- ⊕ Signage updated daily disclosing food waste for the previous day. An audit totaled this at only 0.9 grams per guest
- ⊕ Organic waste recovered and converted to energy
- ⊕ Three-stream waste bins in guest rooms. This is the first of its kind seen in IMEX Frankfurt hotel sustainability audits
- ⊕ Hotel herb garden for use in the hotel kitchen



Environmental design

After reducing carpeting by 909 square meters for the 2023 show, our team's sustainable design focus for 2024 shifted to exploring more environmentally friendly substrate and material options in the galleria, pre-function area and Hall 8 entry spaces.

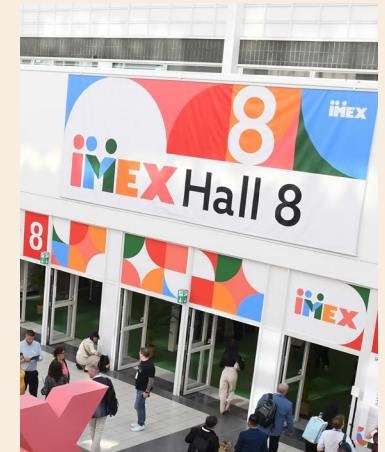


169.6 square meters of column, stair and window decals were swapped to **paper-based substrates** instead of traditional PVC decals

34.3 square meters of glass window treatments near the Hall 8 entrance (pictured below) were moved to **high-density paper board** instead of petroleum-based substrates

Given safety concerns, Hall 8 and 9 need to be carpeted. However, to further reduce material use, the team experimented with **printing directly onto the carpet** rather than sticking a separate decal to the carpet. It's estimated that this action saved **55.5 square meters** of adhesive decals

All of the above represented first-time initiatives for IMEX Frankfurt. These areas had high footfall, where branding and aesthetics could be highly scrutinized, so we were particularly excited that the move to more sustainable substrates was both feasible and successful.



EXHIBITOR ENGAGEMENT

Recent years have seen a marked increase in exhibitors sharing their sustainability goals, commitments, initiatives and interests. Here are some examples:

- ④ Hilton Hotels used interactive touch screen stations to engage attendees with its Travel With Purpose 2030 ESG Targets (photo right)
- ④ Radisson Hotel Group shared its goal to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions (Scope 1 and 2) by 46%, portfolio-wide, by 2030⁸
- ④ The Frankfurt Convention Bureau shared its Certificate of Carbon Neutrality provided by their booth constructor

- ④ The Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions offered seaweed snacks to help raise awareness of the environmental and decarbonization benefits?
- ④ The IMEX Wellbeing Challenge, designed by Maritz and powered by Heka Health, featured well-being activities across the show.

In total, Challenge participants walked over **2 million** steps in two days!



Better Stands

While we cannot directly control the sustainable design and material choices of our exhibitors, we strive to advocate, educate, and influence to the highest degree possible through both our sustainable exhibitor resources and People and Planet Pledge.

At IMEX Frankfurt 2024, our team piloted the Better Stands 10-point assessment framework. This involved comprehensive exhibitor data collection pre and post event as well as extensive in-person visual auditing during show build-up and break down.

The aim of Better Stands is to help the industry reduce waste and carbon emissions by replacing single-use with reusable construction and to create safer and healthier build environments.



WASTE MANAGEMENT

WASTE MANAGEMENT

We were able to recover 87% of IMEX Frankfurt waste into recycling, organics and donations channels. We did this by working to extend the material life of every item we procure for IMEX Frankfurt in areas under our direct control, and educating and advocating in areas we don't control.

Thermal recycling:

In Germany, it's common for waste items that cannot be recycled or donated to be thermally recycled into energy. Given this, we report IMEX Frankfurt waste metrics in two ways:

87% pre-incineration recovery rate

99.5% total diversion rate, including waste thermally recycled into energy



IMEX Frankfurt 2024 Waste stream distribution

109,575 kg
Recycling

163 kg
Donations

2,890 kg
Organics

17,430 kg
Incineration

Did you know?

According to the European Environment Agency, Germany has the highest recycling rate of any country.¹⁰



87%

of IMEX Frankfurt waste was recovered into recycling, organics and donation channels



WASTE MANAGEMENT

The pre-incineration recovery of IMEX Frankfurt's waste remained similar to both the 2023 and 2022 shows, even while factoring a 295 attendee increase in 2024. Both total waste per attendee and waste incinerated per attendee registered their lowest levels to date.¹¹

- ➔ 8,250 kg of carpet recovered and recycled post event
- ➔ 195 kg of event name badge and lanyards recycled via TerraCycle Europe
- ➔ 2,898 kg of organics recovered, representing the highest collection to date
- ➔ 54,660 kg of event wood recycled

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Waste Metric

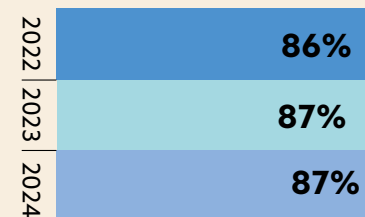
Total waste per attendee



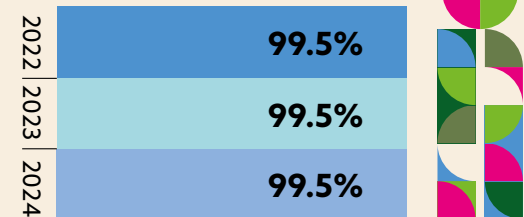
Waste incinerated per attendee



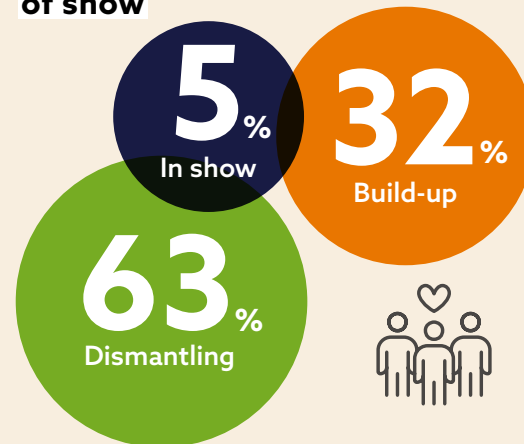
Recovery rate pre-incineration



Diversion rate w/thermal recycling



Waste by phase of show



FOOD AND BEVERAGE

FOOD AND BEVERAGE



Menus are designed to achieve four key sustainability goals:

- 1 Reduce single use plastic
- 2 Reduce carbon emissions through menu choices
- 3 Support the regional economy through locally-sourced items
- 4 Offer delicious and nourishing food!



Our food and beverage offering impacts a variety of considerations central to our overall sustainability goals, such as community benefit, waste management and carbon emissions.

TO IMPROVE
Reducing waste—we're looking into using ceramic coffee cups in the Hosted Buyer Lounge.



Regional sourcing: Here's a representative sample of some of the regional products sourced within 160 km of Messe Frankfurt:

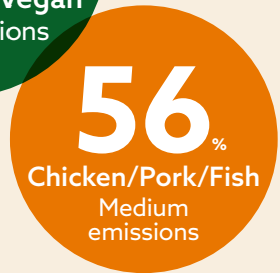
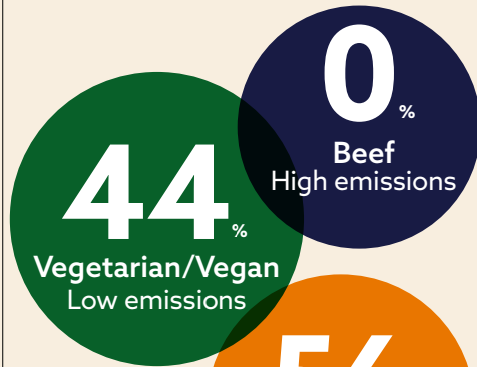
- ⌚ **Sausages:** Karl Eidmann GmbH & Co. – Bruchköbel
- ⌚ **Poultry:** Bergmann und Röder – Frankfurt
- ⌚ **Dairy products:** Schwälbchen Frischdienst GmbH – Mainz-Hechtsheim and Bad Sulzbach
- ⌚ **Cheese:** Hochelheimer – Vogelsberg
- ⌚ **Bread and pastry 1:** Bäcker's Backstube AG – Offenbach
- ⌚ **Bread and pastry 2:** Harheim Achenbach – Sulzbach
- ⌚ **Mineral water:** Hassia – Bad Vilbel
- ⌚ **Wine:** Allendorf – Rheingau

Menu coding: additional menu symbols were included indicating regionally sourced, low carbon and low water choices.

Food and Beverage highlights



NEW: For the first year ever, the menu in IMEX-operated areas was **100% beef-free**

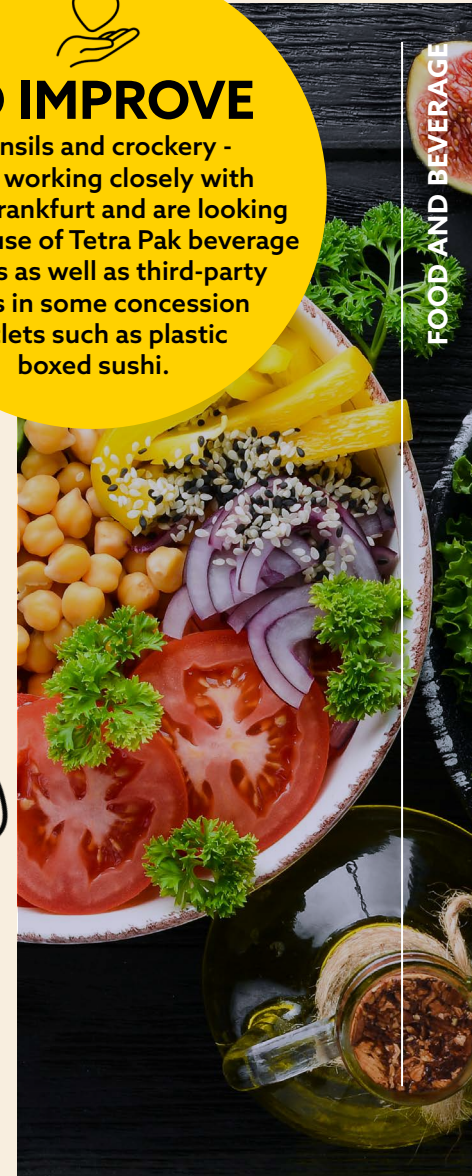


100% of main course meals were categorized as medium or low emissions. This includes all restaurants, food trucks, boxed lunches and bowls



According to venue sales and consumption records, **4,747 glass bottle beverages** were sold at Centro Restaurant and Hall 9 food carts. Of these, nearly 100% were recovered, re-racked, and returned for cleaning and reuse

TO IMPROVE
Utensils and crockery - we're working closely with Messe Frankfurt and are looking into the use of Tetra Pak beverage vessels as well as third-party items in some concession outlets such as plastic boxed sushi.



FOOD AND BEVERAGE



Water stations: For the second consecutive year, we implemented plumbed water stations in partnership with Join The Pipe. This helped to reduce the use of standard PET plastic bottles.

ENERGY AND WATER

ENERGY AND WATER



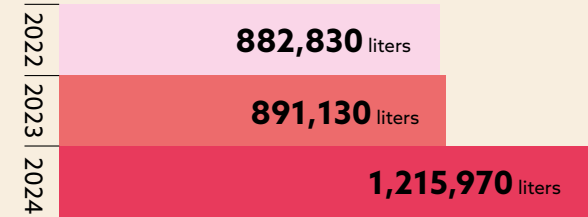
Messe Frankfurt's Halls 1-12, along with Kap Europa, are currently equipped with three photovoltaic systems which harvest an estimated **2.4 GWh of solar energy annually**. This allows the venue to avoid around **1,200 tons of CO2 every year**. Messe Frankfurt uses all the power it generates for its exhibition grounds.¹²

IMEX Frankfurt energy consumption rose slightly, by **15,322 kWh** when compared with 2023 data. This equates to an average of **1.28 kWh per person**. It's possible that higher than usual temperatures during the start of IMEX Frankfurt along with the 2.5% increase in attendance may account for the increased water use.

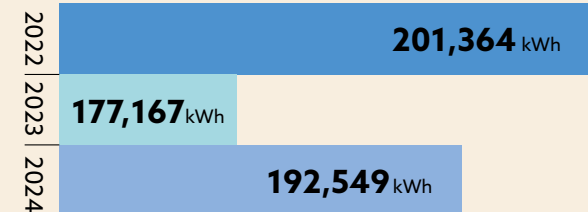
Our goals are to measure, report and monitor areas where water consumption can be further reduced. One example is the venue's use of rainwater to flush the toilet facilities, saving around seven liters of fresh water with each flush.



IMEX Frankfurt 2024 Water Consumption (liters)



IMEX Frankfurt Electricity Consumption (kWh)



TO IMPROVE
As part of our long-term decarbonization strategy we'll gather further information and insights related to renewable goals in Frankfurt and Germany

TRANSPORT

NEW: We worked with Cloverly to enable attendees to balance their travel by purchasing carbon credits from a choice of impactful sustainability projects

100% of the IMEX team's travel to Frankfurt was balanced with Cloverly carbon credits



Adding transport-focused questions into event registration will help us further expand the robustness of our carbon reporting data



Did you know?

Catering deliveries at IMEX from Accente central kitchens mostly used electric transportation. Another way Messe Frankfurt is reducing carbon emissions!



Ground transportation provider Hanse Mondial:

- ➔ Expanded its fleet of electric e-buses to 15, making continuous daily circuits to the Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof
- ➔ Electric on site shuttles traveled a total of 600 km – 71% of all km traveled were in van shuttles, selected for lower volume airport trips, which reduced unoccupied vehicle space as well as fossil fuel burn

Did you know?



GALA DINNER

GALA DINNER

The IMEX Frankfurt Gala Dinner was held at the Sheraton Frankfurt Airport Hotel & Conference Center:

486

attendee meals served on **100% reusable crockery**

100%

beef-free menu

The estimated carbon footprint for each meal option was shared with attendees beforehand

Vegan menu estimated at **1.30** kg CO₂e per meal

Chicken/fish menu estimated at **4.38** kg CO₂e per meal

The Sheraton Frankfurt Airport Hotel & Conference Center:

Recovers its organic items and kitchen waste for conversion to energy

Is directly connected to the Frankfurt Flughafen (airport) and participates in the same green wind energy power purchasing agreement (see page 7)

The result?

64%
of attendees chose the chicken/fish option

36%
of attendees chose the vegan option

This represents a 4% increase in vegan uptake compared to 2023

EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- ➔ **40** young professionals took part in mentorship and enrichment activities at the **IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leaders Forum**
- ➔ **59** attendees and **30** exhibitors signed up to the **People and Planet Pledge**
- ➔ **185** attendees took time to boost their health and wellbeing in the **Be Well Lounge**



- ➔ **Over 250** attendees joined the **IMEXrun**
- ➔ **Over 200** attendees explored diversity, gender equality and female empowerment at the **She Means Business** education sessions, by IMEX and tw magazine, and supported by MPI
- ➔ One winner and two shortlisted entrants all celebrated through the **IMEX-EIC Innovation in Sustainability Award**

Professional accreditation

We're approved as a **Preferred Provider** by the **Events Industry Council (EIC)**. The majority of our education sessions qualify for CMP continuing education credits. We also offer ICCA Skills-accredited and ILEA CSEP-approved education.



Material donations

- ➔ **136 kg** of exhibitor florals recovered for donation to **Stiftung Waisenhaus Orphanage**



Donations to Frankfurt charities

€1,000 each
to three charities

Stiftung Waisenhaus Orphanage

ShoutOutLoud

Caritasverband Frankfurt



EVENT SCORING

Alongside on-site auditing and verification, the show was also quantitatively assessed by the **MeetGreen® Calculator 2.0**.

For the third consecutive event cycle, IMEX Frankfurt scored at the **highest tier** of its rating system:

SUSTAINABLE EVENT VISIONARY



Key categories for assessment

- ⌚ Destination
- ⌚ Accommodations
- ⌚ Venue
- ⌚ Catering
- ⌚ Transportation
- ⌚ Exhibits
- ⌚ AV
- ⌚ Marketing and communications
- ⌚ On site



A SUSTAINABLE EVENT VISIONARY:

“ leads within their own industry, prioritizes measurement and works to move the sustainability dial. They research and develop new initiatives to improve environmental performance and use the organization’s buying power to drive change with venues and vendors.”





Thank you



We'd like to thank all of our valued, long-standing partners who helped to make our sustainability impacts possible:

- **Accente**
- **Eventence**
- **Events Industry Council (EIC)**
- **Fairconstruction**
- **Fairservices.net**
- **Frankfurt Convention Bureau**
- **Hanse Mondial**
- **MeetGreen**
- **Messe Frankfurt**

Prepared by:

MeetGreen★

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