



F1 and the World (Part 3) – The FIA

Welcome to F1 and the World, the mini-series from Sidepodcast examining the effect that F1 has on the world around it, from environmental to economical issues. Today we're looking at what the FIA are doing to make F1 that little bit more friendly.

The FIA, Formula 1's governing body, have been carbon neutral since 1997. What does this actually mean though? They work closely with universities to calculate the precise amount of carbon produced by the sport. This includes running the cars over test and practice sessions, and covers all race weekends. It also includes the transportation of personnel across the globe to attend races. Once calculated, the FIA work with reforestation projects in Mexico, and are therefore carbon neutral. As of last year, the annual figure to be traded off was 20,000 tonnes of carbon, not a small figure by anyone's standards.

Being carbon neutral isn't everything. Motorsport uses up plenty of fuel. Just recently the structure of qualifying sessions saw the cars topped up with fuel, then emptied over 20 minutes to get the best lap out of the lightest car. The fuel would then be reintroduced to the cars. A complete and utter waste of time and resources. The FIA have taken this on board and the qualifying session has been adjusted accordingly, to remove the element of fuel burning.

Also, motorsports in general are turning towards the idea of biofuels. Formula 1 is testing the water this year, with teams having to run a fuel comprising at least 5.75% biofuel. Presumably there is more to come in this direction in the future.

The FIA's constant desire to save money is also an indirect benefit to the planet. Long life components are being introduced in many areas of the car, and a standard ECU is in place across the grid for 2008. Although the main priority is to stop teams spending so much money, this also means they will not be using up so many resources, there will be less raw materials used up in producing endless components and this essentially saves energy.

However, the most important thing the FIA do is run the FIA Foundation, an organisation that campaigns for road safety all around the world. The Foundation researches issues regarding public safety, the impact of cars on the environment, the future in sustainable transport and of course safety within motorsport as well. They issue grants and fund initiatives across the globe and get involved with activities such as reducing the number of road related deaths in Africa, and raising awareness of crash structures and safety ratings in the UK. Those are just two examples of the many projects the FIA Foundation gets involved with, and it's all working towards reducing the impact on the environment and on society of both road and sports cars.

There you go, advert over with, it may sound like an awful lot of corporate speak but what it does show us is that the FIA aren't burying their heads in the sand. They know what impact Formula 1 and their other motorsport series are having on the world and the environment and they are actively looking at ways to minimise any detrimental effects. There's not much more you could ask from your governing body.

Except maybe for more overtaking.

That's all for this episode of F1 and the World. I hope you're enjoying this series so far, don't forget to get in touch via the website at Sidepodcast.com, via Facebook – just search for Sidepodcast, or via voicemail. The number you need is 0121 28 87225. On the next show we'll be looking at what efforts the teams are making in our quest to save the world.