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Germany's waste industry does its bit to protect climate

Presenting joint study by BMU, UBA and BDE

Pollution of the climate owing to waste management activities was at a level of some 38 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalents in Germany in 1990. Up until 2006 this burden had lightened to about 18 million tonnes. The overall decline in emissions of climate-damaging gases-- thanks in particular to ending disposal of untreated residential waste-- amounts to about 56 million tonnes, which is a volume roughly that of the annual CO₂ emissions of 7.7 million cars, or about 20 percent of registered vehicles in Germany.

These are the results of a jointly commissioned study titled *Klimaschutzpotenziale der Abfallwirtschaft [Climate protection potential of waste industry]*, which was introduced today by President Peter Kurth of the Bundesverband der Deutschen Entsorgungs-, Wasser- und Rohstoffwirtschaft e.V. (BDE), and President Jochen Flasbarth of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) in Berlin. The study took stock of climate protection efforts made by the waste management industry since 1990 and points out other potential for further measures in Germany and EU 27 until 2020.

By the year 2020 almost ten million additional tonnes of CO₂ equivalents can be saved over 1996 levels, particularly by means of increased materials recovery and improved recycling, as well as greater efficiency in the use of residential waste and used wood to produce energy. The study illustrates that the waste industry can contribute roughly 14 percent to the fulfilment of Germany's CO₂ reduction targets to be reached by 2020 if the detailed measures were implemented. Germany has already made great progress by abolishing the practice of storing untreated waste. In contrast, many EU countries still dump untreated waste in significant volumes to landfills. The methane produced at these landfills pollutes the climate. The potential to reduce greenhouse gases by recycling and through thermal recovery often remains untapped. The study shows the following for the 27 EU states: a ban on dumping untreated waste to landfills, increased rates of recycling, and more efficient energetic use of waste could save production of some 144 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalents throughout Europe by 2020.

In this regard UBA President Jochen Flasbarth pointed out that it is now especially important, in light of the disappointing outcome of the Copenhagen climate, to prove that ambitious

climate goals can be reached with some positive examples, saying, "Germany's waste disposal industry has made progress and can provide both know-how and proven technology. The industry could become an international leader in export of environmental goods and services. High environmental protection standards have propelled and been met with success".

A summary of the study (German) is available at http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennummer&Suchwort=3893.
More information is also here: www.bde-berlin.de

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