

Press Release No. 5/2010

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Stepping up for environmental protection

Federal Environment Agency publishes annual *Schwerpunkte 2010*

Efforts in environmental protection may not let up despite the tangible presence of the international economic and financial crisis. The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) believes that far-reaching climate protection measures are urgent. UBA President Jochen Flasbarth expressed support for the goal set by the Federal government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 to 40 percent lower than 1990 levels, and to achieve emissions reductions of 80-95 percent by mid-century, saying, "We must now lay the groundwork for necessary ecological restructuring of the economy, for economic development that disregards ecologic principles is impossible. The area of climate protection in particular cannot afford to set its sights on short-term success alone. The necessity of a low-carbon economy requires long-term vision in environmental, energy, and economic policy". Flasbarth underscored the key role played by emissions trading in achieving declared climate protection targets.

Emissions trading currently accounts for about half of the CO₂ emissions in Germany as it gradually reduces them and has the potential to develop into a global, economically efficient and politically sound instrument to protect the climate. An additional step in that direction is rigorous harmonisation of emissions trading in Europe. The European Union (EU) plans for the third trading period are to introduce a Community emissions budget in lieu of the current national budgets and to adopt auctioning as the sole allocation method as well as a uniform set of rules governing allocation of free emissions certificates.

"The European Union seeks to standardise and thereby make emissions trading more efficient. This goes hand in hand with an appropriate emissions reduction target for Europe. The 20-percent goal proclaimed so far and to be achieved by 2020 falls short of the imperatives of climate protection. A reduction goal of 30 percent by 2020 would be more pertinent and bring Europeans closer to assuming responsibility in climate protection", said Jochen Flasbarth upon issue of the *Schwerpunkte 2010* annual publication. Should the EU not see reason in this regard this would have an impact on how reduction in Germany continues, continued Flasbarth. Additional efforts to achieve the 40-percent reduction would have to occur outside the emissions trading sector.

Emissions trading is currently being expanded as the driving force behind climate policy. As of the third trading period starting in 2013, trading will also include perfluorinated hydrocarbons and dinitrogen oxide (laughing gas) as well as CO₂. This will affect the chemicals and

aluminium industries. Starting in 2012, international aviation must submit emissions certificates for the CO₂ emissions it produces.

The transport sector as a whole must make more efforts in climate protection. Roughly one fifth of the CO₂ emissions and nearly half the nitrogen dioxide emissions and particle emissions harmful to health can currently be traced to transport. According to estimates by UBA, the transport sector must produce about 40 million tons less CO₂ in 2020 as compared to 2005 in order to achieve the Federal government's declared climate protection goal. Some of the fundamental principles of progressive mobility include improved technology and greater efficiency in vehicles as well as new traffic planning schemes that minimise traffic and steer towards more ecological modes of transport. Freight transport in particular, which may grow by nearly 50 additional percent over 2008 volumes up until 2025 makes it most necessary to shift away from roads and to the railways. This in turn requires greater investment in railway infrastructure.

Agriculture is another area of focus in the UBA publication, for it is also in part responsible for global warming. According to the National Inventory Report, this sector accounts for 5.4 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions in Germany. Add to that emissions from tractors, machinery, ploughing of grassland and drained marshland, as well as mineral fertiliser production, and the proportion of greenhouse gas emissions stemming from agriculture is closer to 13 percent. Not least of all in its own interest should the agricultural sector make appropriate efforts to contain global warming, for farmers are coming under rising pressure to find methods that are more adapted to climate change. At the same time, the strain of use on soils is also increasing, and foods and regenerative resources are becoming key considerations. Soil protection efforts, once something of a 'poor cousin' in environmental politics, require more attention, in part because land take for settlements and transport in Germany along with its interference with nature and the landscape has not declined significantly. Land consumption also leads to loss of fertile soil.

**The annual *Schwerpunkte 2010* publication is available in print form free of charge from:
Gemeinnützige Werkstätten Bonn, In den Wiesen 1-3, 53227 Bonn, phone: 030/18 305
33 55 (local call), email: uba@broschuerenversand.de.**

The download version of the report is here: http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennummer&Suchwort=3772

The English language version is due to be published soon.

Dessau-Roßlau, 10 February 2010