



Climate Profiles : Climate China

China Climate Change Profile No Hope for Global Climate without China

China Watch, a joint initiative of the Worldwatch Institute and Beijing-based Global Environmental Institute, has become a key web resource on China. We talked with Worldwatch Director Chris Flavin about the impact of Chinese growth.



Chris Flavin

Director of the Worldwatch Institute (Photo: Worldwatch Institute)

China is bound to become the world's most important industrial power. What will this mean for the global climate?

China is already the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide, and its decisions in the next few years will have an enormous impact on the world's ability to prevent dangerous climate change. If China does not shift in the near future to a new generation of environmentally friendly technology, there will be no hope for the world's climate.

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China rejects criticism for its reluctance to accept mandatory caps to its greenhouse gas emissions saying that it is the duty of the developed world. How do you see this position?

China's position on emissions limits has begun to shift in recent months, and I expect that China will in the future accept caps, so long as they are consistent with the fact that China is still a developing economy.

In Spring 2007, China announced a new plan for cutting emissions and protecting the environment. What is changing the Chinese approach to climate change, and how effective will these first steps be?

China's leaders recognize the urgency of the climate problem and the

huge risks it poses for China. In addition, as the leading seller of carbon credits, China is already learning the benefits of the international carbon market. The Spring 2007 policy paper was largely a restatement of existing policies, but many of these are quite significant. For example, China already has one of the world's strongest renewable energy laws, and its fuel economy standards are among the most stringent.

Elsewhere you've mentioned that China's richest man is a solar entrepreneur. What are the chances for environmentally friendly technologies in China?

China's impressive entrepreneurial skills are now being turned toward the challenge of clean energy, with a host of new and established companies investing in wind power, biofuels, solar energy, and many other alternatives. The founding CEO of the Suntech company became, virtually overnight, one of the richest men in China when his company went public on the New York stock exchange. A new generation of Chinese business leaders may soon lead the world in cleantech. Worldwatch is working with these new leaders to create a new vision of China's future.

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