

Manure, Buses Seen Helping Curb Global Warming

August 08, 2006 — By Alister Doyle, Reuters

OSLO — Manure and buses are among promising areas for investment under a U.N. project in the Third World aimed at combating global warming, a senior U.N. official said on Monday.

The scheme, part of the U.N.'s Kyoto Protocol curbing use of fossil fuels, now totals 256 approved ventures ranging from a windmill farm in Morocco to a power plant in Brazil burning waste from sugar cane. The first scheme was approved in 2004.

Governments "still talk about thousands of projects ... in the next one, two years", Kai-Uwe Barani Schmidt, manager of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) programme at the U.N. Climate Secretariat in Bonn, told Reuters.

Under the CDM, rich nations can invest in Third World clean energy projects and earn credits to meet Kyoto goals for cutting emissions of greenhouse gases at home.

Barani Schmidt said popular areas for CDM investments were those that could be easily copied once complex rules for each sector were set up.

"This is, interestingly enough, in manure ... in farms to recover methane," he said. "It's relatively easy technology that can be easily replicated."

Vast amounts of methane, the second most significant greenhouse gas behind carbon dioxide, are generated in the digestive tracts of the world's cows, pigs and sheep. Methane in manure can be burnt, for instance, to generate electricity.

BOGOTA BUSES

Among other promising projects was a bus system for Bogota, Colombia, to promote public transport and reduce pollution with more efficient buses, he said.

"There could be replication of that maybe 12-20 times in ... cities in developing countries," he said. Other schemes under the CDM focus on everything from a solar heating plant in South Africa to a tidal power plant in South Korea.

Kyoto obliges 35 industrial nations to cut emissions of greenhouse gases by 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2012 in a step to avert what many scientists say could be catastrophic climate changes ranging from heatwaves to rising sea levels.

So far, he said that CDM projects approved or being processed would represent savings of 1.1 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide by 2012 -- roughly equivalent of the annual emissions of Spain and Britain combined.

He said longer-term growth for the CDM hinged on how serious governments were in pledges to extend Kyoto beyond 2012.

The biggest CDM projects are in China, Brazil, South Korea and India. Governments are trying to work out ways to promote a wider spread, especially for Africa.

Uncertainties about the CDM include whether governments will accept projects to capture carbon dioxide emitted by a power plant or a factory and then pump it into porous rocks below ground. "That's the next hot potato," he said.

And some projects, especially in China, cover destruction of the powerful greenhouse gas HFC23, a by-product in making the refrigerant HCFC22. Some critics say the CDM encourages production of HCFC22, which damages the ozone layer.

Barani Schmidt said the CDM executive board would not change its practice in approving HFC23 destruction unless it got new guidance from governments.

Source: Reuters