

China to cap carbon emissions by 2016

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By John Parnell

China will apply a cap on its greenhouse gas emissions by 2016, according to local media.

The National Development and Reform Council (NDRC) has sent a proposal to the State Council for approval that would place a limit on the world's biggest emitter. It is expected to be supportive of the plan.

The new regime in Beijing has backed climate and environmental action in the country calling for the development of an "ecological civilisation", offering hope for the new UN climate deal.

Tomas Wyns is director of the Center for Clean Air Policy-Europe (CCAP) and has recently consulted on the development of carbon markets in China.

"The NDRC is growing a little impatient with how the regional schemes are progressing so they have started designing components of the national scheme such as emissions registries, measuring, reporting and verification," he told RTCC.



Shanghai is one of seven areas that will develop a local cap and trade system ahead of a national roll out in 2020 (Source: Flickr/Arend Vermazeren)

"Designing legislation at the national level takes time so it makes perfect sense that they are starting work on those things so that things are ready during the next Five-year plan.

“These are the first ideas that will eventually form part of the 13th Five-year plan and that will contain the set-up of the national cap and trade system. That could start earlier than 2020. I would guess around 2017 and 2018,” he added.

The first of a series of seven regional cap and trade schemes are already under way and a national carbon trading platform was expected to commence no sooner than 2020.

China and the USA have long pointed at each other’s lack of climate action as justification for their own slow progress.

The USA refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol deal on emission reductions citing the treaty’s failure to include big emitters in the developing world such as China and India.

The announcement will provide further encouragement for the hopes of a new universal deal on emission reductions through the UN, scheduled to be agreed by 2015 and enforced in 2020.

According to negotiators at the talks that have spoken to RTCC, the USA has been more constructive during closed door meetings since President Obama’s re-election but its main policy positions have not changed.

The US is pushing for the countries to set their own emission reduction targets for the 2015 deal, critics say this will lead to low levels of ambition.