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Carbon emissions to 'peak by 2030'

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Survey finds system of quota trading still some years off

A survey by the China Carbon Forum, an independent Beijing-based nonprofit organization, found that 82 percent of the respondents believe China's carbon emissions will peak by 2030 or earlier.

The survey released on Tuesday, which contains 304 responses from professionals at academic and research institutes, in industry and at carbon trading companies, also shows that the price for carbon in China will rise over time, increasingly affecting investment decisions.

Respondents from industrial sectors, which include power generation, metallurgy, and chemicals and petrochemicals, accounted for 22 percent of the total surveyed.

China announced a goal in 2009 of reducing emissions intensity by 40 percent to 45 percent by 2020, compared with 2005. Intensity measures are generally calculated in reference to GDP.

China began pilot carbon trading in 2011 and has approved seven trading programs in cities such as Beijing and Shanghai and the provinces of Guangdong and Hubei.

Under these programs, companies that produce more than their share of emissions are allowed to buy unused quotas on the market from those that produce less.

China, the world's leading carbon trading market, will also complete the creation of a national carbon emissions trading system in 2017, according to media reports in June.

"Compared with a few years ago, the Chinese government and the populace are now very concerned with environmental issues. This rising awareness will help facilitate the climate agenda," Dimitri de Boer, vice chairman of the China Carbon Forum and a coauthor of the study, told the Global Times Tuesday.

Yet over 70 percent of the respondents said they expected a nationwide system of emissions trading would not become operational before 2020.

There is some disagreement over when China's carbon emissions will peak, with 39 percent of those surveyed saying the peak will arrive by 2025 or earlier. More optimistic estimates say somewhere before 2020, as China's economic growth slows.

Zou Ji, deputy director of the National Center for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation, a government-affiliated think tank, urged that more attention be given to consumption-related sectors under the "new normal" of slower but higher-quality economic growth.

"If China's per capita GDP continues to rise in the context of faster and wider urbanization, sectors such as construction and transport will become a major source of carbon emissions," Zou told the Global Times Tuesday, urging effective ways to be worked out to control these emissions.