

# Why 'Made in China' should increase our carbon footprint

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Nearly a quarter of China's carbon emissions are created by goods manufactured and exported to Western consumers, according to research by University of Sussex climate change analysts Dr Tao Wang and Dr Jim Watson.

The study, carried out for the Tyndall Centre, suggests that counting carbon emissions within national borders, as is currently the case under the Kyoto Protocol, may be inadequate in deciding who is responsible for emissions reduction. Fair, globalised trade might imply that a nation's entire carbon footprint should also include imported goods and services manufactured elsewhere.

Dr Watson says: "In November 2006 the world's largest container ship, the Emma Maersk, sailed into Felixstowe Docks in the UK, laden with 11,000 containers full of Christmas goods. Is the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted from the manufacture and shipping of all those items down to China, or the UK?"

The researchers calculated the carbon emissions of China's net exports in 2004, the most recent year of full data. Their results may be conservative because between 2004 and 2006, China's trade surplus (the value of exports minus imports) increased substantially.

China is now believed to be the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide, having overtaken the United States. Dr Wang said: "Although exports of carbon intensive products such as rolled steel and aluminium are increasing at more than 50% annually, the majority of China's trade

surplus comes from less carbon intensive goods such as textiles and consumer electronics. But the government's efforts to reduce the expansion of exports are so far ineffective due to high international demand"

Their analysis provides evidence that not only are industrialised countries historically responsible for the majority of carbon emissions to date, but they may also have significant responsibility for driving the rapid growth in emissions from countries in the process of industrialisation, such as China.

The United States in particular argues against industrialised countries reducing their emissions unless new economies, such as China and India, follow suit. The US is the top destination for exports of Chinese-made goods.

Dr Watson says: "Our results strengthen the argument that industrialised countries should move first to make real progress in cutting their carbon emissions - and also help nations like China and India to shift to a more low carbon path of development."

Source: University of Sussex

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