

Carbon dioxide emissions associated with UK consumption increase

July 4 2008

Researchers have discovered that carbon dioxide emissions associated with UK consumption increased by 115 million tonnes (18 per cent), between 1992 and 2004.

The results are an outcome of a research project undertaken by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) part of the Department of Biology at the University of York, and the Centre for Integrated Sustainability Analysis (ISA) at the University of Sydney on behalf of Defra.

A ground-breaking new modelling approach, called multi-region input-output analysis, was developed specifically for the UK and thoroughly tested for its robustness.

This study provides an insight into the impacts of all the goods and services consumed by British households, including those emissions that occur in countries exporting to the UK, which are usually excluded from standard emissions analysis.

Measuring emissions on a consumption basis will produce different numbers for all economies than those reported on under the Kyoto Protocol. For the UK, for example, our consumption emissions in 2004 were 37 per cent higher than the UK Greenhouse Gas Inventory which is based on territorial emissions under UN rules.

Carbon dioxide emissions embedded in imports went up from 35 per

cent of UK emissions in 1992 to 67 per cent in 2004, while those embedded in exports increased from 31 per cent to 45 per cent of emissions over the same period. This suggests that while the UK has made progress in reducing its own carbon dioxide emissions, these reductions have been offset by increased emissions in other countries through the consumption of imported goods and services. Trade data also indicates an increasing dominance of emissions embedded in UK imports from newly emerging economies such as China, India and Russia.

Dr Tommy Wiedmann from SEI, who led the study, said: "Accounting for emissions from a consumption perspective provides insight into the global impacts of local consumption. It gives support for the view that in an increasingly globalised market all economies need to play their part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

Source: University of York

Citation: Carbon dioxide emissions associated with UK consumption increase (2008, July 4)
retrieved 18 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2008-07-carbon-dioxide-emissions-uk-consumption.html>

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