

# China says it wants green growth within five years

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Polluted haze sits atop the Chinese city of Zengzhou in central Henan province. China, the world's biggest polluter, plans to "go green" in the next five years, emphasising energy efficiency and the battle on its choking pollution in its plans to revamp the economy, experts say.

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The so-called 12th five-year plan -- already approved by Communist Party leaders -- is expected to be reviewed and rubber-stamped by delegates to the National People's Congress, which opens its annual session Saturday in Beijing.

"We must not any longer sacrifice the environment for the sake of rapid

growth and reckless roll-outs," Premier Wen Jiabao said Sunday, warning that doing so would result in unsustainable growth and the depletion of resources.

China's total [carbon dioxide emissions](#), which it finally admitted last year are the largest in the world, increased by 32.5 percent between 2006 and 2009, according to the US [Energy](#) Information Administration, a government agency.

Beijing has already launched an ambitious programme to develop [clean energy](#) and shut down factories that fail to meet emissions targets.

It also wants to reduce its [energy consumption](#) per unit of GDP, or carbon intensity, by 40 to 45 percent by 2020 based on 2005 levels -- essentially a vow of greater [energy efficiency](#), but not an absolute cap on emissions.

According to consultants APCO Worldwide, which specialise in government policy, the government's new economic blueprint could include new carbon emission goals to push the process forward.



A woman wears a mask as she makes her way along a smog-blighted street in

Beijing. Air pollution in the Chinese capital has been consistently listed as among the worst in the world by international organisations such as the United Nations.

"I think this plan is greener than the last," Roger Somerville, a Beijing-based APCO expert, told AFP.

"It's not so much that the Chinese government has become a Greenpeace supporter, but... they are trying to change what they can do to generate economic growth," he added.

"They are looking at things like a low-carbon economy and they are seeing... the creation of high-value jobs and economic growth in the future," he said, pointing to strong Chinese investment in the solar and [wind power](#) sectors.

Yolanda Fernandez Lommen, chief economist at the Asian Development Bank in Beijing, also highlighted plans to restructure the economy, focusing more on services "whose carbon footprint is much smaller" and job growth is strong.

A carbon tax, however, is not expected to be included in the new five-year plan. Officials have recently hinted that such a tax would only be launched around 2013, according to APCO.

Jiang Kejun, a researcher at China's Energy Research Institute -- which is linked to the country's top economic planning agency, the National Development and Reform Commission -- said the tax was being discussed.

"It will still take some time. It's a concrete measure that can only be

implemented after an in-depth debate," Jiang told AFP. The government -- at risk.

"In China's thousands of years of civilisation, the conflict between humankind and nature has never been as serious as it is today," Zhou said in an essay on the ministry's website.



An environmental activist takes water samples from a polluted waterway next to a factory in Xinxiang in central China's Henan province. Since 2009, 30 major poisoning incidents have occurred in China, sparking widespread concern.

The [China](#) Daily newspaper reported that the government has set a target of reducing emissions of lead, mercury, chromium, cadmium and arsenic by 15 percent from 2007 levels over the next five years.

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"At the most, the plan will announce there will be economic and fiscal measures to promote energy savings and reduce emissions. But it will not elaborate on what sort of taxes there will be."

The government also wants to step up its fight against pollution, which is

threatening the health of China's 1.34 billion people on a daily basis after 30 years of rapid industrialisation.

On Monday, the country's minister of environmental protection, Zhou Shengxian, warned that pollution-related public health scares had put social stability -- a key concern of th China, sparking widespread concern.

The nation's environmental protection ministry has also added nitrogen oxide to a list of major pollutants that it wants reduced by 1.5 percent this year.

Experts say the five-year plan could also put in place a limit on the production of coal, which provides China with more than two-thirds of its energy and is highly polluting.

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