

Dutch government presents measures to cut carbon emissions

June 28 2019, by Mike Corder



In this Dec. 4, 2018 file photo, a cyclist passes heavy industries in IJmuiden, Netherlands. In a statement Friday, June 28, 2019, the Dutch government presented a comprehensive raft of measures aimed at slashing the Netherlands' emission of carbon blamed for warming the Earth's atmosphere by 50% by 2030. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong, file)

The Dutch government presented Friday a wide-ranging raft of measures—from a carbon tax for business to more bicycle parking at railway stations—that aim to slash by a half by 2030 the Netherlands' emission of carbon.

Minister of Economic Affairs Eric Wiebes called the climate package "achievable and affordable for everybody," and said it puts the Netherlands at the forefront of nations adapting to meet the challenge of climate change.

Environmental groups welcomed some measures, but criticized the package as insufficient in the battle to halt the warming of the Earth's atmosphere.

Greenpeace said in a statement that it papers over climate issues "with short-term solutions like storing carbon in the seabed and the use of biomass."

The climate crisis, it added, "requires measures that will provide real solutions for generations to come."

The government said the proposed carbon tax for industry will act as a push for companies to "take steps toward sustainability."

The carbon tax will likely start at 30 euros (\$34) per ton of carbon emissions in 2021 and rise to as much as 150 euros (\$170) per ton in 2030, according to the government.

The package aims to put the Netherlands on track to meet its commitments under the 2015 Paris climate accord. Under the accord, countries have to submit fresh targets by 2020 for reducing greenhouse gases.

The Dutch package was presented in a 237-page document that outlined a long list of measures including subsidies for people who make their homes more sustainable by installing solar panels and improving insulation. It also laid out the country's intention to phase out petrol and diesel cars and to introduce a new way of taxing drivers—although legislation on that will have to be tackled by the next Dutch government.

"A new system of car taxation is unavoidable," Wiebes said.

Joris Thijsen, director of the Dutch arm of Greenpeace, said big business would not contribute enough.

"There are a lot of good points," he said, but added that "industry will still pay too little for its pollution."

The Dutch government said last year it aims to make electricity production in the Netherlands 100 percent carbon neutral in 2050 and generate 70 percent of energy using from wind and solar by 2030.

In a typically Dutch approach, sectors of society that will have to implement changes sat down together for months to thrash out details of the deal.

The leader of the process, Ed Nijpels, said the same spirit of cooperation is now necessary to make it a success.

"It is an unprecedented achievement that a broadly supported package of measures has been agreed upon by so many groups," he said.

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