

France moves to bring in carbon tax by 2011

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Greenpeace activists burn a symbol of carbon dioxide in November 2008. The French government on Wednesday kickstarted plans for a so-called carbon tax on energy-hungry products, to be rolled out by 2011 as part of France's efforts to slash global warming emissions.

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Environment Minister Jean-Louis Borloo unveiled a white paper on the new Climate-Energy Contribution, to be posted online for public comment before an experts' panel gathers on July 2-3 to hammer out the details.

Initially announced after a nationwide environment conference in late 2007, the new tax aims to steer French consumers and manufacturers towards environmentally-friendly goods and services.

Experts are to decide how much the levy should be, which products should be covered, and what taxes can be cut to offset it in line with a government pledge not to increase the overall tax burden.

President Nicolas Sarkozy's government has said

it hopes to shift part of French taxes from labour towards polluting goods, but consumer groups have warned against penalising families already feeling the pinch of recession.

Environmental issues have been thrust back into the spotlight following the surprise showing by greens Europe-Ecologie, who picked up 16 percent in last weekend's European elections, just behind France's main opposition Socialists.

The [carbon tax](#) is now expected to be rolled out in 2011, a year later than initially envisaged, Borloo said.

Eventually the government would hope to extend the new tax to all goods and services, as and when an international standard emerges for measuring carbon footprint.

The French climate contribution is separate from a proposal floated by Sarkozy in March for a carbon tax on imports from countries which have lower environmental standards than France.

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