



Factsheet 1

26 August 2009

Amendments to the CO₂ Act before 2012

By the end of 2012, it is planned to introduce further measures on climate change through amendments to the current CO₂ Act. These should come into force before 2013 and will appear unchanged in the totally revised CO₂ Act from 2013. These measures are important elements in the climate policy presented in the dispatch on the revision of the CO₂ Act.

Amendment in relation to vehicles

On 25 August 2008, the Young Greens submitted the federal popular initiative “For more people-friendly vehicles”. The initiative demands that the Confederation introduce regulations to reduce the negative effects of motor vehicles and in particular the consequences of accidents and the pollution caused by cars. In response to a motion from the environment committee of the National Council, the Federal Council plans to submit an indirect counter-proposal to the initiative and, like the EU, introduce CO₂ emissions regulations for newly registered cars from 1 January 2012.

These binding emissions regulations are intended to replace the voluntary target agreement with autoschweiz. They should be codified in an amendment to the CO₂ Act and will continue to apply from 2013–2020 in the totally revised CO₂ Act. A hearing was held on the bill between 25 May and 29 June 2009.

National programme on buildings

With a view to the urgent need for action in relation to climate change, Parliament has recognised the significant potential for the reduction of emissions from buildings. It wants to encourage the carrying out of CO₂-effective measures on existing buildings from as early as 2010. The Federal Assembly approved an amendment to the CO₂ Act in 12 June 2009 and plans to allocate a maximum CHF 200 million from the CO₂ tax on fuels over 10 years for the funding of climate-effective measures in relation to buildings.

Of the partly earmarked funds, the lion's share will be allocated to a national programme on buildings for the renovation of the outer shell of buildings (heat insulation in roofs, walls, floors and ceilings as well as the replacement of windows). The funding will be regulated in a

programme agreement with the cantons. This should guarantee the harmonised implementation of the measures in the cantons.

A maximum of one third of the earmarked funds will be used to promote renewable energy sources, waste heat recovery and building services engineering.

Fossil fuel thermal power plants

Switzerland's electricity needs have risen steadily over recent years. Despite improved energy efficiency, society's increasing demand for electric power (for appliances, traffic, etc.) means that it will be 2035 before even a stabilisation in electricity consumption is possible. In order to be able to guarantee energy supplies in the longer term, in February 2007 the Federal Council adopted a strategy based on four pillars.

One of these four pillars is large-scale power plants. Here it is planned to make the expansion of fossil fuel thermal power stations possible. These have the advantage that they can be brought into operation quickly. At the same time, however, these power stations have the serious disadvantage of being a substantial burden on the Swiss CO₂ balance. A combined gas power plant with of an output of 400 MW and an annual 5000 service hours emits over 0.7 million tonnes of CO₂ a year.

The Federal Assembly therefore decided on 23 March 2007 to make the authorisation of certain planned combined gas power plants conditional on CO₂ emissions being compensated for in full.

In response to a motion from the environment committee of the Council of States, the Federal Council submitted a dispatch on the amendment to the CO₂ Act on 29 October 2008. In terms of this bill, an agreement on full compensation for CO₂ emissions will be a basic requirement for the authorisation of a fossil fuel thermal power plant. The Federal Council has proposed allowing a maximum of 50 per cent of the emissions to be compensated for by purchasing foreign emission certificates.

For further information

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- Swiss climate policy: <http://www.environment-switzerland.ch/climate>