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11/03/2008 China launches carbon sequestration project in Hubei province

Text of report in English by official Chinese news agency Xinhua (New China News Agency)

["China Launches Carbon Sequestration Project in Hubei Province" - Xinhua headline]

WUHAN, March 11 (Xinhua) - A forestation project was launched in the central province of Hubei on Tuesday, part of an effort to capture carbon dioxide blamed for global warming.

Under the carbon sequestration programme, some 667 hectares of black locust, *Liquidambar formosana* and four other broadleaf trees will be planted in the province to help absorb carbon emissions and improve the local ecological system.

With a total investment of 6 million yuan (over 845,000 US dollars) from the local government and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), 400 ha of forest will be planted over 20 years in the eastern suburbs of Wuhan, the provincial capital, during the first phase of the project. "China will continue to work actively to tackle climate change," Zhang Jianlong, deputy director of the State Forestry Administration (SFA), told the launching ceremony. The programme will seek more funds for the second stage. The location of the remaining forest is yet to be decided.

The initiative is expected to gather experience for forestation and further carbon sequestration efforts in the region and encourage more participants in carbon emission reduction and environmental protection, said Zhu Jinshui, director with the provincial forestry administration. It is the first among a group of projects planned for seven regions including Beijing, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang and Guangdong, which would jointly absorb up to 10 million tons of carbon dioxide over 10 years, according to the SFA.

The project sponsor is the Green Carbon Fund, which was established last year to mobilize international enterprises, organizations and individuals to join tree planting, forest management and carbon sequestration projects.

CNPC, the first donor, offered 30 million yuan to the fund. Carbon sequestration, the capture and long-term storage of carbon in forests and soils or below water, is intended to reduce or slow the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Carbon sequestration in vegetation and soils is currently the easiest and most immediate option. The Kyoto Protocol allows for the offset of emissions by investing in activities that increase so-called carbon sinks. This would generally involve an investor or buyer winning "carbon credits" according to the amount of carbon sequestered. The credits could then be used to offset part of the buyer's net greenhouse gas emissions.

Research has found that every new cubic meter of forest absorbed 1.83 tons of carbon dioxide and emitted 1.62 tons of oxygen on average.

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