

France

One of the most pressing issues facing the world today is the problem of climate change. The people and the government of France recognize that climate change is an alarming issue, necessitating immediate attention and action on behalf of all nations. Although some argue that climate change is a concern for the future, or that global warming is not a cause for alarm, the current state of the climate system suggests otherwise. In France specifically, extreme heat waves, drought, and climate changes threatening our farming and wine industries serve as evidence that global warming is already producing negative effects.<sup>1</sup> The heat wave of 2003, for example, led to nearly 15,000 deaths in our country alone. Heat waves like this are only expected to increase in the coming years.<sup>2</sup> To combat these problems and address the issue of climate change, the French government, with the full support of the people, is increasing regulations on practices that produce greenhouse gases, and implementing cleaner practices that do not contribute to greenhouse gas concentrations. Underlying these policies is a belief in the need for change, both nationally and internationally; France is working to reform environmental policy in both arenas.

In terms of worldwide energy consumption, France ranks tenth in electricity consumption, twelfth in oil consumption, and seventeenth in natural gas consumption.<sup>3</sup> However, most of the country's energy comes from nuclear power, a source that produces no

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<sup>1</sup> "French Farmers Confronted by Climate Change and Dwindling EU Aid." Herald Tribune, 2007. <<http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/09/27/business/farm.php>>

<sup>2</sup> "France Heat Wave Death Toll Set at 14,802." USAToday, 2003. <[http://www.usatoday.com/weather/news/2003-09-25-france-heat\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/weather/news/2003-09-25-france-heat_x.htm)>

<sup>3</sup> "France." The CIA World Fact Book, 2006. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fr.html>>

greenhouse gases. With the closure of its last coal mine in 2004, the country shifted to relying almost entirely on nuclear power for energy - nuclear power provides 80% of the country's energy (other sources include renewable sources like wind power). Because of this, France now has the cleanest air of any industrialized country, and the cheapest electricity bills in Europe.<sup>4</sup> Regardless, the country, recognizing that more can be done, is implementing policy changes in other areas in addition to energy production.

As a signatory to, and major proponent of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, France is committed to implementing mechanisms to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions. To achieve this goal, France has launched a national program against climate change; authorized Parliament to implement policies to achieve the goals of the Protocol; created a Ministry of Research on Climate Change; and worked to define emissions ceilings for around 1,300 industrial sites.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, a commission of French farmers, fisherman, trade unionists, industry and environmental leaders, scientists, and politicians has agreed on a new "blueprint" for environmental policy in France. Some of their key proposals include creating homes that produce more energy than they consume; increasing renewable energy usage; increasing organic farming acreage; providing tax incentives favoring clean cars; and giving ecological groups stakeholder positions in government negotiations.<sup>6</sup> In addition to taking action to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions, France is working with other countries to help them do the same.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "France: Vive Les Nukes." CBS News, 2007. < [http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/04/06/60minutes/main2655782\\_page3.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/04/06/60minutes/main2655782_page3.shtml)>

<sup>5</sup> "France's Commitment to Fight Against Climate Change: First Annual Report." Embassy of France, 2001. < <http://www.ambafrance-us.org/news/statmnts/2001/kyoto2.asp>>

<sup>6</sup> "France Lays Plans for a Green Future." Nature News, 2007. < <http://www.nature.com/news/2007/071003/full/449518a.html>>

<sup>7</sup> "Mission Economics." Intergovernmental Task-Force for Climate Change, 2005. < <http://www.missioneco.org/documents/1202/113630.pdf>>

France is taking control of the rotating EU presidency next year, and will be responsible for coordinating the EU's efforts on climate change and negotiations.<sup>8</sup> The French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, is determined to take advantage of the opportunity and make 2008 a year of major strides in the Post-Kyoto era. Sarkozy believes that "industrial nations have a special responsibility to combat climate change and commit to financing adaptation to countries that need support."<sup>9</sup> Following this policy, France has committed to giving \$40.8 million dollars in aid every year to countries that need help preventing and adapting to climate change.<sup>10</sup> "France is working with its partners, on every continent, to tackle climate change through projects that aim not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also to adapt to climate change, in line with the principle of solidarity and its undertakings as a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Chang."<sup>11</sup>

As science brings to light new information about the negative impacts that climate change is having and will continue to have on our world, we cannot, in good conscience, continue practices that contribute to this problem and negatively interfere with the climate system. The position of the people of France, a position championed by the government and the newly elected Sarkozy, is that climate change is a problem requiring both national action, and a global framework focused on reaching shared targets. Solidarity among nations, which includes aiding countries that cannot combat climate change on their own, is imperative.

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<sup>8</sup> "France Says to Push for Climate Change Deal in 2008." Planet Ark, 2007. <  
<http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/42897/story.htm>>

<sup>9</sup> "Financing the Response to Climate Change: An Investment for the Future." UN Chronicle, 2007. <  
[http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2007/webArticles/100507\\_financing\\_the\\_response.html](http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2007/webArticles/100507_financing_the_response.html)>

<sup>10</sup> "Mission Economics." Intergovernmental Task-Force for Climate Change, 2005. <  
<http://www.missioneco.org/documents/1202/113630.pdf>>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

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