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Greenhouse Gases: The UAE Experience

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Greenhouse gases present a threat to the environment all over the globe, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Especially because of the dependency of its economy on fossil fuel. Additionally, the economic boost of the region has caused a surge in fuel consumption for vehicles. Traffic congestion in Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital, for instance has caused nitrogen dioxides levels to exceed air quality in the outskirts and center of the city and surrounding the industrial areas. Furthermore, and in other parts of the UAE, pollution levels is either close to or exceed the air pollution guidelines where SO₂ levels are of a particular concern. The main pollution sources are the region's oil and gas and related heavy industries both on and offshore.

Substantial effort is being supported by the UAE government to reduce such pollutants. From 1995 to 2004, for instance, the UAE successfully reduced flaring of hydrocarbon gas that comes out from burning of waste gas or oil during testing or production processes from 7.5 down to 2.5 million cubic meters per day. Moreover, in 2003 the UAE introduced unleaded petrol on the local market as part of its program which involved 500 filling stations. Also the government introduced compressed natural gas vehicles into the transportation fleet, which will convert 20% of the most polluting fleet in Abu Dhabi to CNG by 2012. Additionally the government is switching to diesel fuel supply to only ultra low sulphur diesel by 2015.

In short, the UAE government is trying to minimize the negative impacts of its environmental challenges, while continuing its economic development.