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Pricing Carbon to Clean the Air

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A new report projects big declines in Pennsylvania's agricultural production if climate change continues. (Brenna Fitzpatrick/flickr.com)

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PHILADELPHIA - A business group has released a report highlighting ways carbon pricing can be used to help meet the goals of the Clean Power Plan.

The report, called "Carbon Pricing Works," was commissioned by Pennsylvania Businesses for a Healthy Climate and said that a market-based system can not only help reduce pollution but create jobs and spur economic development.

Jamie Gauthier, executive director of the Sustainable Business Network in Philadelphia, said carbon pricing means including health and environmental costs in the price of coal, oil and gas.

"In many states," she said, "the fees from carbon pricing have been used towards research and development for clean-energy technologies and towards helping people to lower their energy cost."

The report said adopting a carbon pricing plan now would help the state reach the Clean Power Plan's requirement of a 30 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030.

Gauthier pointed to Philadelphia's plans to meet Clean Water Act requirements by changing the way it handles stormwater runoff as an example of how cleaning up the environment makes good business sense.

"That set up a market where the existing businesses that interface with the green storm water infrastructure industry are thriving and new business are sprouting up. We think the same thing can happen in the area of clean energy."

Nationally, the growth of wind power created 23,000 new jobs last year, and solar-power production now employs more people than does the mining industry.

Gauthier said global climate change is a direct result of the impact of business on the environment, and business must be part of the solution as well.

"It's reasonable to assume that if some of this came from the way that we were acting economically," she said, "that it can also be improved by acting in a different way economically."

In Pennsylvania, there already are more than 4,200 clean-energy businesses employing some 57,000 people.

The report is online at biz4climate.org.

Andrea Sears, Public News Service - PA