



Could the UAE Become the First Net-Zero Major Oil Exporter?

The UAE is considering becoming the first major oil exporter to boast a net-zero carbon profile by 2050, according to sources within the government. The push to commit to such an ambitious objective is being spearheaded by the country's special envoy for climate change, Sultan Ahmed al Jaber, who also doubles as its minister for industry and advanced technology.

Although the announcement is not official as yet, it's expected that the government will make a formal statement ahead of the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, later this year. If the UAE does commit to that impressive target, it will be a source of great satisfaction to other major powers, who have been pressurising Middle Eastern nations (including the UAE) to show greater dedication to their climate obligations.

Most eco-conscious in OPEC

The very concept of one of the world's top oil producing and exporting countries aiming for net-zero emissions seems like a contradiction in terms. However, the emissions which are associated with combusting fossil fuels are not counted in the carbon profile of the country which produced the oil, coal or gas if they export it, explaining how the UAE could feasibly attain such an accolade.

If the Emirati authorities do signal their intention to become carbon neutral by 2050, it will mean that the UAE is the first member of OPEC to do so. That would represent a major coup for environmentalists and climate scientists the world over, who have been lobbying the fossil fuel industry to clean up its act for years.

Satisfying western powers

It wouldn't only be organisations like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace which would rejoice at the news, either. Western powers like the USA and the EU have long been vocal about the need for oil producing nations to take responsibility for the environmental consequences of their primary industries.

In fact, just this year, the White House's special climate envoy John Kerry included the UAE on a select list of countries which he wished to visit and convince to clean up their acts. Another destination on Kerry's tour was nearby Saudi Arabia, about



whom Kerry reported positive feelings on the subject of implementing a carbon-neutral target soon.

A greener tomorrow

Despite the fact that oil and gas revenues still make up just under a third of the UAE's GDP, the country has introduced several initiatives and incentives aimed at boosting its eco performance. As well as targeting a greater share of renewables like solar and wind power in its energy makeup, it has implemented [ammonia monitoring and research programmes](#) aimed at investigating the substance's viability as a power source.

Indeed, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum launched the national Green Economy for Sustainable Development plan in 2012, which hopes to position the country as a regional leader on environmental issues. It is also bidding to host the UN's global climate summit in 2023, but faces stiff competition from South Korea – a nation with a net-zero carbon plan already in place.