

*"The change required is mainly in the lifestyle. It can't happen in two years."*  
— HAMDAN AL SHAER

## Green Building Rules will be Ready by January

Zoe Sinclair

DUBAI - The city's green building regulations are nearly complete but the plethora of potential systems will require years of training of the property industry, according to green building experts.

Dubai Municipality Planning Department Senior Environmental Planner Adi Zuhair Afaneh said the green building regulations, being drawn up by the municipality and the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, would be prescriptive in their initial stages to counter a lack of awareness of green building requirements.

"We feel there is a need for a transitional period. There will be continuous improvements and we will be increasing the scope as we go," he said.

The regulations, due to be completed by January 1, 2009, will then go before the Dubai Executive Council for approval and legislation.

Afaneh said the regulations would then be phased in "to shock the market" and serve as the minimum requirements with future phases requiring higher performance.

However, a range of green building systems can also be applied for which offer a performance rating.

The Emirates Green Building Council has adapted the US system LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for the UAE environment by requiring features such as stricter water efficiency. The UAE LEED model is expected to be approved by the US council this year.

The British green building scheme, BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment

Method), launched its Gulf model system at the MEED Green Buildings 2008 event last night.

The Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council has also introduced its own "Estidama" regulations while Masdar has drawn up Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for sustainable development.

Design consultants WS Atkins CEO Keith Clarke said the systems should ultimately include reduction of carbon emissions as one of the main components of design.

However, he said, the current green building systems needed to adapt better to reduce carbon emissions.

"It's (LEED) tolerances and parameters for carbon is akin to Stone Age accounting. No KPI system is perfect, BREEAM, I think, is even further off."

Clarke pointed out that the learning cycles of implementing green building systems, measuring the buildings' performance and further adapting the systems took several years.

Design firm Perkins and Will principal Peter Busby said the systems needed to be flexible to each environment and countered criticism that LEED was not an effective model for Dubai.

"It has to be modified for the environment," he said.

"However, these standards get power and strength in numbers. Educating a market on one system is a challenge but issues will crop up with different systems."

Busby said his organisation had been involved in the training of 7,000 LEED accredited practitioners in Canada which took four years. He estimated there were 10,000 designers, engineers and consultants who potentially needed green building training in Dubai.

"There is little or no green building awareness here to date. When the regulations come in by January 1, it will be a mad scramble."

However, Martin Townsend, director of BREEAM, said multiple systems encouraged green building development.

"If we are going to make change happen, it is good to have more than one code for market transformation. We need competition to make us constantly learn and improve. The number is irrelevant as long as we start to measure carbon in the same way across them all." — zoe@khaleejtimes.com

# Target-driven Strategy Vital to Shrink UAE's Footprint

## Global environment report card finds country takes world's heaviest ecological toll

Zoe Sinclair

DUBAI — The United Arab Emirates needs target-driven policies to reduce its ecological footprint after it ranked the highest per capita in a global environment report card issued on Wednesday, according to officials and environmentalists.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Living Planet Report 2008, which evaluates a country's impact on the planet by accounting for factors such as carbon emissions and resource consumption, found the average UAE resident needs 9.5 global hectares to support the lifestyle, or about 4.5 planet earths.

This is the highest per capita ecological footprint worldwide and comes after the country's top ranking two years ago.

However, Minister of Environment and Water Dr Rashid bin Fahad said the country was taking initiatives to curb its toll on the environment.

"The UAE is taking the right steps to reduce its carbon footprint through initiatives like Masdar, development of green building codes, public transport, hybrid vehicles and Metro by Dubai RTA, development of a zero gas flaring policy by ADNOC and carbon capture and storage initiatives by ADNOC and

Masdar. Public awareness campaigns and education programmes will also need to be developed," Bin Fahad said.

"Furthermore, reduction in demand of natural resources and improvement of efficiency across all sectors - recycling, reusing, energy efficiency etc. - and diversification of energy supply by using more low-carbon technologies are some of the areas that we believe will influence our carbon footprint," he suggested.

Dubai Municipality's Director of Environment Hamdan Al Shaer pointed out that the country only demanded

0.32 per cent of global resources.

However, he said any significant reduction in the per capita ranking in time for the 2010 Living Planet Report could only be reduced through policies which set targets.

"The change required is mainly in the lifestyle. It can't happen in two years. It takes steady negotiation with stakeholders to reduce the footprint," Hamdan said.

"We need to make a Metro - but we need to make people use the Metro, too."

Razan Al Mubarak, Managing Director of Emirates Wildlife Society-WWF, cautioned that the ranking had to be considered in the context of UAE's rapid development which had provided economic growth and a high-end lifestyle for its residents.

"The options for residents to live more sustainably have not come on line yet," Al Mubarak said.

"You've got Masdar and the Metro and green buildings... but we need additional initiatives that individuals, the private sector and government can take up."

Al Basama Al Beeiya, partner of EWS-WWF, was established after the 2006 report to verify the data and collate statistics to better inform policy in future.

Mubarak said the organisation, at the end of the first phase, recommended the establishment of a federal statistics database and a carbon emissions inventory.

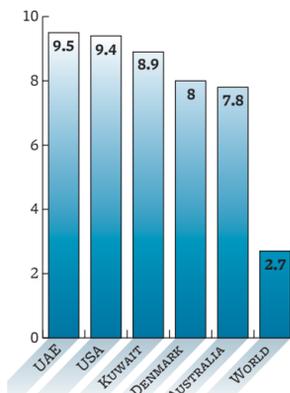
The project would now concentrate on the country's carbon emis-

sions - 80 per cent of its ecological footprint, to provide policy and objectives for reducing emissions in different sectors.

— zoe@khaleejtimes.com

## Largest Footprints

Global hectares



KT Graphic: Rashid Hussain

There is little or no green building awareness here to date. When the regulations come in by January 1, it will be a mad scramble

## Solar Plant Just Latest Initiative

DUBAI — The UAE has introduced a range of sustainable development measures in the recent years to combat the toll its rapid development is taking on the environment. Only this week, it announced that the Middle East's largest solar panel manufacturing plant would be set up in Dubai.

The plant, due to start production in 2010, is expected to accelerate the adoption of solar energy by rapidly expanding manufacturing capacity and reducing the cost of production, according to Dilip Rahulan, chairman and CEO of Solar Technologies FZE, the company responsible for the initiative.

However, the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority Managing Director and CEO Saeed Al Tayer told Khaleej Times in an interview this month that although renewable energy was being considered, its adoption was more likely to be encouraged by the consumer end rather than at the source of energy production. He further stated solar power required substantial space to generate any significant energy amount.

But in Abu Dhabi, Masdar - an initiative which incorporates a research and development facility for renewable energy, investment fund and carbon neutral city - is going full steam, according

to Masdar property development director Khaled Awad.

Awad, speaking at the Middle East Green Building event, said the development's use of renewable energy would ensure it not only supported the incorporated buildings, but produced a surplus of clean energy.

In Dubai, where buildings and their construction are the largest contributor of carbon emissions, green building legislation has been introduced by His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. — zoe@khaleejtimes.com

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