

MORE MOMENTUM AHEAD OF PARIS CLIMATE TALKS

China formalizes pledge ahead of Paris summit; South Korea also finalizes target

In [Insights 93](#) we noted that China and India, the world's first and third highest greenhouse gas emitters respectively, teamed up on climate change with a rare joint statement that [urged rich countries](#) to increase efforts to reduce global carbon dioxide emissions ahead of the United Nations summit being held in Paris from Nov. 30 to Dec. 11 2015.

This week, China [formally committed](#) to curbing its greenhouse gas emissions within the next 15 years as part of the country's strategy to help build a U.N. climate deal in 2015. Laurent Fabius, France's Foreign Minister called China's plan an "excellent sign" for the summit.

Meanwhile, South Korea has finalized its 2030 target of [reducing greenhouse gas emissions](#) by 37 percent from business-as-usual (BAU) levels, higher than its earlier plan for a 15-30 percent cut.

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LACK OF SANITATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON GLOBAL HEALTH

World Health Organization (WHO) says lack of sanitation undermines improvement efforts for billions

Lack of sanitation is threatening to undermine the child survival and health progress that has been made, says the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. There has been progress on issues such as access to [safe drinking water](#) and toilets, but it might be undermined by poor sanitation conditions warned WHO and UNICEF who co-authored a [report](#) tracking access to drinking water and sanitation against the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

While there has been progress in some areas, very little has changed for the poorest developing countries. "What the data really show is the need to focus on inequalities as the only way to achieve sustainable progress," said Sanjay Wijesekera, head of UNICEF's global water, sanitation and hygiene programs. "The global model so far has been that the wealthiest move ahead first, and only when they have access do the poorest start catching up. If we are to reach universal access to sanitation by 2030, we need to ensure the poorest start making progress right away."

THIS WEEK IN NUMBERS

184,000

adults may be killed annually from sugary drinks.

2020

is the planned year of a 'most rigorous' review of the Great Barrier Reef by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee.

2014

was the year that students at Columbia University started their campaign to divest from private prisons.

90

percent reduction in landfill waste is anticipated from the latest waste-to-energy plant in Florida.

60

percent of human diseases come from animals.

10th

year of operation for the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

6

billion Yen (USD 50 million) is the planned investment by Japan's top three car companies on operating hydrogen fueling stations in the country.

1.2

trillion of investors' assets support the Obama's Administration's efforts to regulate methane emissions.

UPDATE: WATER SHORTAGE IN BRAZIL HAS WIDESPREAD EFFECTS

In [Insights 80](#) we wrote Brazil was experiencing a significant drought. The rainy season (December to March) was not living up to its name and water [supply was low](#). Sao Paulo's Cantareira system, which supplies 8 million people, was at only 8% capacity at the time. As of today, the government has been forced to tap into emergency reserves. The water shortage has become a dire situation for residents of Sao Paulo, with some residents

only having two hours of water on tap per day. The shortage is also being felt around the world, especially in [global markets](#). "Financial market investors in Brazil should be aware of the water shortages in the country, given their knock-on impacts on electricity prices, headline inflation, and business confidence" said Katherine Weber, head of Americas Country Risk Analysis at Fitch Group's BMI Research unit.

THE EPA LOSES IN THE SUPREME COURT

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled this week that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must reconsider its [national standards for mercury pollution](#) from coal-fired power plants, finding that the agency failed to take into account the costs the rule would impose on utilities. The EPA is required to rewrite the regulation and a lower court will decide whether to keep the existing regulation in place while it does so.

The coal producers have been hit hard in the last few years, in part because of the abundance of

cheaper natural gas (output is down 12 percent from the previous year). Some argue the EPA standards would have hurt them more. About 30 gigawatts of [coal-fired generation](#) has been retired since 2012 in anticipation of the new mercury standards. "This victory isn't likely to carry over into a fight over the carbon rule because it's predicated on a different section of the Clean Air Act, the vehicle EPA uses to regulate pollution", Brandon Barnes and Rob Barnett, analysts at Bloomberg Intelligence, said this week.

WHAT WE'RE WATCHING...

Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB)

This week SASB issued preliminary sustainability accounting standards for Consumption Industries. Examples of disclosure topics include food safety, labeling & marketing integrity, climate change adaptation, and supply chain management. Over two-thirds of the metrics are quantitative. The deadline [to comment](#) on the Consumption Industries is Tuesday July 7, 2015. More key dates and status [here](#).

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BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Scientists in India are studying heat-tolerant dwarf cows as a possible solution to the premature deaths of the animals, caused by high temperatures and drought in some southern states.

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