

'End Subsidies to Curb Energy Consumption'

08 February 2009

DUBAI - While government agencies have pushed environmentally friendly policies recently, the most effective move in the direction would be to remove subsidies on oil and utilities, according to George Berbari, CEO of DC PRO Engineering, a district cooling company.

Doing away with subsidies and cost restrictions and allowing oil and utilities to go at market rates would help control demand, while motivating businesses and consumers to find ways to cut down energy consumption, said Berbari. While education about the environmental impact of certain activities is helpful, Berbari said it does not go far enough.

"The value of power and the government's laws are the most effective tools for conservation," he said. "I believe in regulation and government. Taking education is important, but not effective. We need to enhance and encourage conservation and even make people of existing buildings look at means of reducing [power] wastage."

One of the biggest opportunities in energy conservation lies in changing the way buildings use resources. The US Green Building Council (USGBC) has a certification system called LEED that measures the sustainability of buildings.

Locally, the Emirates Green Building Council is adapting regulations to meet the climatic demands in the Gulf.

Sarfraz H Dairkee, the chairman of water efficiency subcommittee said the changes to the USGBC code revolve around water.

"What's been recommended are two prerequisites. At least a 50% reduction of potable water for irrigation," he said. "You use drip irrigation, renewed water, or you use special kinds of plants. That's how you reduce water consumption." The second requirement is for appliances that reduce water consumption such as low-flow toilets and showerheads.

"When we talk of water in this part of the world, the entire water is obtained through desalination process. Every activity involving the use of water carries a carbon footprint due to this," he said.

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