

China says no to 'foreign garbage'



By the end of 2017, the country will forbid imports of solid waste that cause great environmental damage and raise strong public concerns. [File Photo]

China's cabinet said Thursday "foreign garbage" will be entirely banned from entering the country as authorities plan stricter management on solid waste imports.

By the end of 2017, the country will forbid imports of solid waste that cause great environmental damage and raise strong public concerns, according to a reform plan on solid waste import management released by the State Council.

By the end of 2019, the country will phase out imports of solid waste that can be replaced by domestic resources, the plan said.

The release of the plan came after China notified the World Trade Organization last week that it will ban imports of 24 types of solid waste, including waste plastics, unsorted scrap paper, discarded textiles and vanadium slag by the end of 2017.

China started to import solid waste as raw materials to make up for the domestic shortage of resources in the 1980s, but some companies have illegally smuggled "foreign garbage" into the country for profit, damaging the environment and public health.

China will gradually reduce the categories and amount of solid waste imports and raise the import threshold, according to the plan.

Border control on “foreign garbage” will be intensified, and severe punishment will be imposed on the reselling and illegal processing of imported waste.

A long-term mechanism will be established to keep “foreign garbage” out, while international cooperation on returning the garbage will be enhanced, the plan said.

The Chinese government is stepping up the fight against pollution and environmental degradation as decades of fast growth have left the country saddled with smog and contaminated soil.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) launched a month-long campaign on July 1 to crack down on pollution in imported waste processing, with 420 inspectors selected from 27 provincial regions forming 60 teams to conduct full-scale investigations.

China’s medium-sized and large cities imported 46.98 million tonnes of solid waste in 2015, down 5.3 percent year on year, according to MEP figures.

In 2014, the whole country imported 49.6 million tonnes of solid waste, with scrap paper, plastics and metal taking up large shares, according to the MEP.