
*Achieving a Balance Between Economic Development and
Responses to Environmental Problems in Jilin Province
(Summary)*

Liyan Dong

Visiting Researcher, Research Division, ERINA

In October 2003, the Chinese government announced that it would pursue a policy oriented towards “across-the-board cooperative and sustainable human-based development, with the aim of encouraging the comprehensive development of the economy, society and the people as a whole.” The announcement continues, we will emphasize the integrated planning of regional

development, socio-economic development, development that maintains a balance between people and nature, and the need for internal development and external liberalization, promoting reforms and development. This will provide us with significant indicators regarding the future. We must act according to observation and obey not only the rules of the market economy, but also those of social development

and nature. We need to create a development model that integrates economic effects, social effects and ecological effects in order to change our traditional mode of economic growth, thereby setting out along the path towards the creation of a more affluent, civilized, developed society.

Jilin Province is one of the country's most important industrial hubs and, due to the industrial structure based on the need for resources and extensive forms of economic growth, resources have been consumed rapidly and ecological problems are becoming more apparent by the day. The functions of the forest ecosystems in the east have been weakened by excessive logging; there are serious problems in the mid-east hills, as a result of floods and landslides due to excessive development; the content of organic matter in the soil of the central plains has declined due to overuse in agriculture; and the western grasslands have a serious problem with the "three -ations": alkalization of the soil, desertification and the degradation of grassy pastures, as a result of excessive livestock grazing. All these have a major impact on socio-economic development and the lifestyles of the population. As a result of economic development, the development and use of resources has speeded up and the problem of combining economic development with environmental protection is escalating by the day. So far, a fundamental solution has yet to be reached regarding the deterioration of the environment and ecosystems in Jilin Province. Profound problems remain with regard to industrial pollution, pollution in agriculture, and pollution arising from urban lifestyles; illegal activities that are harmful to human health are continuing to take place and there is still a huge gap between the state of the environment and human needs. These severe environmental problems have demonstrated to us that, in addition to pursuing economic development, we should speed up the recovery and reconstruction of ecosystems and ensure that we achieve a balance between the development of the economy, society and the environment.

In implementing the plan for developing former industrial areas, creating an environment ministry and achieving a "well-off society", it will only be possible to achieve sustainable development that balances economic, social and environmental needs if the people of Jilin Province as a whole protect their own living environment. Accordingly, environmental development projects must be adapted to the new developmental situation. The first priority is to achieve a fundamental transformation in the traditional extensive economic approach of consuming resources to excess in order to pursue GDP growth, implementing a sustainable development strategy that achieves a balance between the protection of ecosystems and economic development, and considering the population, resources, the environment and development as a single entity. Secondly, we must build up a broad-based economic control theory concerning pollution, shifting from the method used hitherto of conducting development in a single area by means of environmental policy to

relying on the state's macro-industrial policy and linking pollution control policy with macro-industrial policy. Thirdly, in order to solve Jilin Province's environmental problems, we must improve international cooperation and exchange.

It has been proven that simply pursuing economic development through practical action will not only destroy the environment and resources, but also has a major impact on the stability of economic development. Accordingly, we should first of all construct a comprehensive policy formulation mechanism integrating the environment and development. In addition to establishing scientific views of development and accurate views of political accomplishments, and implementing economic development, governments at all levels should solve environmental problems through development. A system of governmental responsibility for meeting environmental protection targets should be implemented steadily, policy formulation that integrates the environment and development should be actively promoted, and laws and regulations governing environmental protection should be strictly adhered to.

Secondly, we should transform our method of economic growth, linking the development of a cyclical economy with the rebuilding and redevelopment of former industrial hubs and speeding up the development of hi-tech industries and the reconstruction of traditional industries and technologies; the development of industries and companies that require large volumes of input, but generate high levels of pollution and low profits should be strictly circumscribed, with clean industries being strongly promoted and the path towards new forms of industrialization being followed.

Thirdly, the creation of an environment ministry should be speeded up, with initiatives being implemented that emphasize the development of the Changbai-shan region in the east and the ecosystems of the west; in addition, ecosystems should be improved using the comparative superiority of regional resources as outlined in the maxim "food should be in places suitable for food, water in places suitable for water, grass in places suitable for grass". An overall improvement should be achieved in the functions "balance, circulation, recycling", with significant development taking place of an economy based on the protection of the environment and ecosystems.

Fourthly, environmental cooperation and exchange with Japan should be deepened. Initially, based on the protection of the environment and sustainable development of Northeast Asia, broader policies should be implemented that emphasize and promote environmental cooperation between China and Japan. Then, the historical opportunity afforded by the Chinese government's strategy for developing former industrial hubs in Northeastern China should be used in order to contribute to the sustainable development of Jilin Province. Finally, it is hoped that a long-term, multi-sectoral environmental cooperation framework can be built.