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EU 2020 energy cuts may raise import share: Lomborg

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By [Alistair Doyle](#), Environment Correspondent

OSLO (Reuters) - EU plans to cut energy use by 2020 risk raising the proportion imported from outside the bloc, partly due to domestic nuclear power curbs, Danish academic and environmental writer Bjorn Lomborg said on Wednesday.

The European Union, which imports half its energy, set a goal in 2009 of reducing consumption by 20 percent below projected levels by 2020 as part of a package to fight climate change that is also intended to boost security of supplies.

But Lomborg, a Danish statistician, said the targets would slightly increase imports as a share of the 27 nations' dwindling energy use. Imports, mainly of fossil fuels, would fall less than domestic energy output by 2020.

"The numbers seem to indicate we will be importing more rather than less" as a percentage, Lomborg told Reuters of findings in a study of EU energy security he commissioned by experts at the University of Oldenburg in Germany.

The study projected that the EU's climate and energy package would raise energy imports to 52.4 percent of total EU consumption in 2020, from 50.0 percent in 2004, he said.

Without the package, imports would make up just 50.9 percent in 2020. Among shifts, the Oldenburg study projected that domestic nuclear power would roughly halve, rating it especially vulnerable to taxes on primary energy use.

"That should be a great cause of concern when the EU has said... 'We are going to make Europe more energy secure'," he said. Lomborg, head of the Copenhagen Consensus Center, won fame as author of 1998 book "The Skeptical Environmentalist."

"The overall point is that (the EU goals) won't really matter," he said, of EU targets for cutting energy use, reducing greenhouse gases and shifting to renewable energies such as solar, wind or geothermal sources by 2020.

AMBITIOUS

The EU says that its policies are among the most ambitious by developed nations for combating global warming that the U.N. panel of climate scientists says will cause more floods, droughts, heatwaves and rising sea levels.

The Oldenburg study projected a "very modest" overall improvement in EU energy security by 2020 under the EU goals, largely because a smaller percentage of EU gross domestic product would be spent on energy. That would give more flexibility, for instance in case of a surge in oil prices.

"The implementation of the efficiency target surprising leads to increased energy imports as well as increased price risks of the energy mix due to the phase-out of domestic nuclear power generation," it said.

Some EU nations are also reviewing nuclear power plans after Japan's atomic disaster in March.

The Oldenburg scientists also criticized the EU package as a jumble of targets and said it "violates basic principles of cost-effectiveness."

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(Editing by [Louise Ireland](#))

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