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] WASHINGTON - The government will start keeping track of all the “ greenhouse ” gases that farmers and foresters voluntarily reduce to help combat global warming. Officials in the Energy and Agriculture departments issued guidelines Wednesday for counting those efforts. They said the action indicates how seriously the Bush administration views the problem of gases that trap heat in the atmosphere like a greenhouse. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said farm and forest landowners now have “ a unique opportunity to be part of the solution to greenhouse gas emissions ” such as carbon dioxide , methane , nitrous oxides , refrigerants and other compounds. The Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service also have prepared an online method for farmers and ranchers to estimate soil carbon sequestration the natural process by which carbon dioxide in the air is turned into carbon stored in soil and plants. David Hawkins , director of Natural Resources Defense Councils climate center , called the reporting registry a “ charade that is intended to allow the government and the participants to portray that they are doing something about global warming , when they are not. ” In another case , Hawkins said , one coal-fired power plant in Maryland claims reductions for selling some of its carbon dioxide to the food and beverage industry , even though the carbon dioxide is

eventually released anyway once a drink is opened and consumed.
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