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Atmospheric sulphur: Natural and man-made sources

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Abstract

The principal processes by which sulphur compounds are emitted into the atmosphere are reviewed in the light of the most recent data. The main natural source of the atmospheric sulphur is biogenic activity, although considerable uncertainty still exists regarding both the nature and the amounts of the principal reduced sulphur compounds generated in this way.

The combustion of coal and petroleum accounts for *ca* 90% of the total sulphur emitted by man, the only other large source being the smelting of copper ores. Comparisons are made between the man-made emissions calculated on a per unit area and a per capita basis for the whole Earth and for some industrialized countries.

Estimates for 1976, made with the aid of emission factors, indicate that man's activities generate a total of 104 Tg S a^{-1} . This already represents over 40% of all atmospheric sulphur emissions and, if it continues to increase at the present rate, will exceed

Nature's contribution well before the end of the present century.



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