

LIFESTYLES

living for today and for tomorrow

Recent demographic studies predict that the world's population could grow by 50% between now and 2050, meaning 9 billion people will be living on our planet. The earth's resources cannot keep pace. The gap between wealthy countries and the most needy therefore looks set to widen. More and more people today are caught in an endless cycle of buying and throwing away, seeing consumption as a means of self-fulfilment. Society tends to judge a people's success by their possessions, creating a context in which the notions of sharing and equality are increasingly dismissed. The urge to spend motivates many people in North and South alike. The spread of this lifestyle encourages companies to develop increasingly competitive means of production that take more out of the earth's natural resources and the environment: shrinking biodiversity, air, water and ground, pollution, etc. At the same time, a new breed of eco-citizen is emerging, with the growing awareness that individuals can help shape the planet's future by adapting their lifestyle, eating habits, or means of transport. What we choose to buy is also a means to express ourselves and support projects that show solidarity with others. An attitude that non-governmental organizations strongly encourage.

IMPACTS

Greenhouse gases

In today's global economy, companies are delocating production, importing raw materials and exporting finished goods. Basic consumer goods cross national borders, sail the oceans and are carried thousands of kilometres before ending up on supermarket shelves. Whether by boat, plane or truck, transporting these goods consumes a lot of energy and adds to the problem of greenhouse gases that are responsible for climate change.
www.science.gmu.edu/~zli/ghe.html
www.physicalgeography.net/fundamentals/7h.html

Mountains of waste

As consumption of disposable products, individual portions and overwrapped goods grows, so does the amount of waste they produce. In developed countries, the average individual throws away 1 kg of rubbish a day. Each year the United States bins 39 billion knives and forks and 29 billion plates, half of them plastic. India produces 4.5 million tonnes of plastic waste each year.

20% OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION CONSUMES 75% OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

A disaster, given that polyethylene, a component of plastic bags, takes over 100 years to decompose.
www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/waste/index.htm>
http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/waste/packaging_index.htm

Recycle-resistant appliances

Stereos, VCRs, kitchen appliances... our homes are filled with electronic goods, designed to be replaced every few years in keeping with new trends, tastes and technologies. They generate huge amounts of polluting waste in various forms. The diversity of materials and the presence of heavy metals make them hard to recycle. Manufacturing these increasingly sophisticated appliances also demands quantities of raw materials, energy and water (30,000 litres of water to make a computer screen) The solution : choose sturdy, quality models that will adapt to new uses and can be repaired.
www.europarl.eu.int/workingpapers/envi/pdf/brief3en_en.pdf

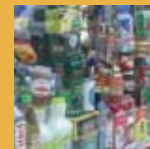
→ 1.2

billion people do not have access to drinking water



→ 4

other planets would be needed if everyone consumed like Americans

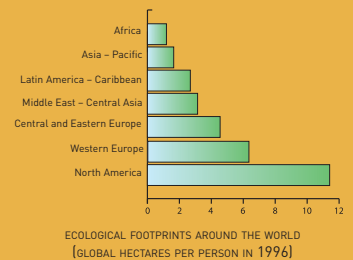


→ 10%

more waste is produced in Europe each year

ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT: MEASURE YOUR IMPACT ON THE EARTH'S RESOURCES

The planet does not have infinitely renewable resources. The ecological footprint is one of the new indicators to evaluate the impact our lifestyle has on these resources. It converts the products and services we use into global hectares and measures the pressure we exert on nature to satisfy our demand for production, consumption, shelter, waste disposal, etc. Calculate your ecological footprint at: www.earthday.net/footprint/index.asp



↓ Overproduction on the one hand, poverty and overpopulation on the other cause the destruction of natural resources. 30 hectares of forest disappear in the world every minute through industrial activity in the North, and the gathering of wood and food in the South: the equivalent of 42 football pitches.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

→ Green purchasing

Around the world, more and more businesses, universities and public authorities are instating responsible procurement policies. Growing ranks of organizations now routinely opt for energy-saving light bulbs, solar power, wind energy and organic products to replace more conventional supplies that consume vast amounts of water, energy and transport resources. In western countries, networks are springing up to encourage this change in mentality. Some fifty local authorities have joined the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives' Buy It Green Network, which coordinates sustainable procurement initiatives at the local level. Over 275 universities have signed the Talloires Declaration whose ten-point action plan encourages them to establish environmentally sound policies and practices.

www.icsc.ca
www.unchs.org/programmes/sustainablecities
www.iclei.org
www.ulsf.org/programs_talloires.html
www.worldwatch.org/press/news/2003/07/25/



→ Finansol : investing for others

Other recent years, demand has emerged for socially responsible investment products. Finansol (finance and solidarity), a non-profit structure under the aegis of the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for the Progress of Humankind, was created by financial institutions in response to this demand. It offers an alternative to traditional savings products. Finansol works within pro-solidarity finance circuits by collecting funds, which are then invested in sustainable development projects, fair trade initiatives, community development schemes, etc. www.finansol.org/International/anglais.asp

→ Supply chain management

Companies implement tools and methods to provide their customers with the right products in the right quantities, in the right place and at the right time. This process, known as "supply chain management", is involved at every stage of production and distribution to help reduce stocks and delivery times, and so avoid unnecessary energy consumption and waste.

www.supply-chain.org



AT UNEP

→ YOUTHXCHANGE

Training tomorrow's eco-citizens

UNEP and UNESCO have devised a training kit to empower young people in adopting sustainable choices in their daily lives. Through practical information and a dynamic and informative approach, the kit highlights the interrelation between lifestyle choices and quality of life, utilization of resources, production of waste, working conditions, etc. It also shows how responsible consumption can positively influence companies' production methods.

www.youthxchange.org

PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

(see the other sheets too)

Some ways to reduce your ecological footprint:

→ BEFORE BUYING, ALWAYS ASK YOURSELF DO I NEED THIS? WHERE AND HOW WAS IT MADE? ETC. → PREFER SOLID, EASY-MAINTENANCE, NON-DISPOSABLE PRODUCTS THAT CAN BE REPAIRED, AND PRODUCTS MADE FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS → IN CITIES, WALK OR TAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORT → DON'T WASTE WATER → DON'T USE ENERGY POINTLESSLY: LIGHTS LEFT ON, APPLIANCES ON STANDBY, ETC. → CHOOSE GREEN PRODUCTS AND COMPANIES WITH ACCEPTABLE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES → CHOOSE ECO-DESIGNED PRODUCTS THAT CONSUME LESS ENERGY.

FIND OUT MORE

UNDP human development reports:
www.undp.org/dpa/publications/hdro/98.htm

Ethical Investment Research Service:
www.eiris.org

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION:

VOTE WITH YOUR PURSE

In the majority of affluent countries, responsible consumption is often synonymous with consuming less. In poor countries meanwhile, it means consuming more and better quality products. The aim is to live a better life and to strike a balance between our desires as consumers and our responsibility as citizens. This means choosing a lifestyle that is the least detrimental to the environment and respects a person's right to live and work in good conditions.

Environmental business practices:
www.greenbiz.com

UNEP Sustainable Consumption:
www.uneptie.org/sustain

Ideas for an ecological lifestyle:
www.worldwatch.org
www.ec.gc.ca/eco/main_e.htm
www.eartheasy.com
www.ergo-living.com
www.envirolink.org

Environmental education network:
www.eelink.net

International Institute for Sustainable Development
www.iisd.ca

Pollution prevention measures:
www.greenprofit.net

Sustainable development for local authorities:
www.sustainable-cities.org

European Parliament critical analysis of the ecological footprint:
www.europarl.eu.int/stoa/publi/pdf/summaries/00-09-03sum_en.pdf

Resources to help organizations reduce their ecological footprint:
www.bestfootforward.com

Global Footprint network:
www.footprintnetwork.org



→ Recycling plastics, made mainly from oil by-products, saves 70% to 80% of their weight in crude oil.