

# Addressing Sustainable Consumption and Production in the SDGs

## Commons Action for the United Nations

It is widely recognized that humanity is still far from living sustainably on our planet home. Even the Secretary-General's Rio+20 Gap Report recognized that humanity has already exceeded a number of planetary boundaries and is living well beyond the carrying capacity of the earth. We are polluting the natural environment and rapidly depleting our natural resource base. Something like 80% of what we produce is discarded after only one use. Clearly an effort must be made to make a rapid transition to fully sustainable consumption and production practices.

Nature which recycles everything provides a good example for how this can be done. For example, it will likely require companies and businesses to adopt Extended Producer Responsibility for the goods and services they produce; and all stakeholders need to join in an effort to transition to **a circular economy**. This would be one in which there is zero waste; green chemistry is used to produce ecologically friendly products; the energy we use and produce is 100% renewable; our food is sustainably produced; and no toxins or emissions are released into the natural environment.

Japan has played a leading role in moving towards Zero Waste and organized both a Side Event during CSD 19 and an exemplary Intersessional Conference entitled: Building Partnerships for Moving towards Zero Waste. See: [www.uncrd.or.jp/env/spc/participation\\_csd19\\_f\\_SE.htm](http://www.uncrd.or.jp/env/spc/participation_csd19_f_SE.htm) The Zero Waste Alliance has also done outstanding work in this regards and includes businesses, educational institutions, governments, and civil society organizations in its membership. See: [www.zerowaste.org](http://www.zerowaste.org)

Consumers need to be empowered so that they can help to reduce waste along with their levels of consumption. Sustainable consumption and production patterns are practiced in many intentional communities which are run according to a commons approach, including within the Global Ecovillage Network, the Sarvodaya Movement, indigenous villages, and many other small rural communities. This is an important aspect of SCP and should be recognized and supported as such.

The circuit of the 'accumulation economy' inevitably encroaches upon the ability of our economy to provide basic goods and services and meet basic human needs. It usurps its space within capital's own domain. This pattern of over-consumption is not

only unsustainable but also ecologically criminal at its core. If it continues it is likely to lead to the collapse of Western civilization.

In order to change a process we need to study and understand how it works, and in nature that means going far beyond "cause and effect" to discover the cycles of accumulation and all the reinforcements they rely on. This must be done so that we can best determine how to release the "accumulation economy" from its own disease.

However placing taxes on land and natural resources can certainly help to provide the incentives and sources of funding needed to make a complete transition to truly sustainable consumption and production practices, when wisely invested.

We also need to recognize the common and natural heritage of the earth which must be protected and restored for the well being of both the current and future generations, using a commons approach. e.g participation in open and inclusive decision making by and for the benefit of all stakeholders. A High Level Commission could be created that would focus on how on a Commons Based Approach to Sustainable Development could best be implemented. This commission could look into how Governance of the Global Commons could be carried out through a revitalized UN Trusteeship Council.

Finally, the SDGs should include a process for integrating **local and national action plans** on Sustainable Consumption and Production, **along with the 10 Year Framework of Programs**, with the development and implementation of the SDGs, Education for Sustainability, and **Local and National Sustainability Strategies**. This needs to be done so that a comprehensive, coherent, and effective plan of action and implementation is developed which is sufficient to achieve all of the goals and commitments made to date along with the new SDGs, Targets and Indicators.

Indeed the SDGs should include **a stand alone goal, along with a cross cutting approach**, to ensure that the 10 Year Framework of Programmes, along with local and national action plans on Sustainable Consumption and Production, are fully included in the implementation process. This goal should support the inclusion of civil society initiatives as primary programs within the local and national action plans and 10YFPs; include support for and a primary focus on Sustainable Rural Development in the 10YFPs; and call for development of a global program and review process to ensure that all countries develop and implement local and national action plans for SCP.