

The Shift to Sustainable Consumption and Production

Immediate challenges:

- climate change - radical reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases is necessary; and
- biodiversity - nature is being destroyed to fuel our demand for land and resources - since 1970 some 25% of biodiversity on the planet has been lost
- global economic expansion leads to growing scarcity of natural resources

Underlying causes - consumption patterns beyond the carrying capacity of the planet. Unsustainable.

- in Europe we are consuming as if we had two and a half Earths
- world's population is set to double by 2050
- China and India aspire to copy our lifestyles.

More consumption will mean: ever scarcer natural resources - more waste - higher greenhouse gas emissions - further environmental degradation.

If we are serious about a development that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable then these trends cannot continue. We must learn to live with the finite resources of only one Earth.

Growing awareness of these problems - demand for action exists - but opposition to any compromise of our quality of life - especially true for developing countries

Do more, but in different ways:

Smarter consumption and leaner production - effective and efficient use of natural resources. Europe as an example for the rest of the world – as for climate change where cutting emissions does not mean giving up on economic growth.

Doing "more with less" is good for the environment and for business. Clean production is lean production - keeps a competitive edge - green technologies are business opportunities

The EU's Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan

We need to convince rather than impose choices on consumers. But fundamental changes of attitude are possible. Ten years ago the idea that smoking would be banned in bars and restaurants would have been laughed at.

Most effective approach is to combine a range of policy measures - provide information, educate, work with supply chains, introduce taxes, and be prepared to regulate.

Since 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, the rhetoric on sustainable consumption has not been matched by policy commitments. SCP Action Plan is a first step to go beyond words and to change behaviour.

Our approach:

- the eco-design directive promotes a life-cycle approach. To be broadened, covering not only "energy-using" products, but also all "energy-related" products that impact on energy consumption during use (window frames, water-using devices...) In the future - include all products with a significant environmental impact. Meet mandatory minimum standards to be allowed on the European Market - standards to be "dynamic". We already have standards for food safety, car safety and toy safety, and introducing standards for environmental safety is only common sense.
- Establish benchmarks for good environmental performance – to be regularly updated. Incentivise the best performers through procurement practices and fiscal incentives. Encouraging the good while excluding the bad
- Improving consumer information improved energy labelling directives and the eco-label - labelling familiar from household appliances such as fridges and dishwashers will be extended to other products. Eco-label to become a "label of excellence" attracting an increased number of eco-labelled products. The more people see the label, the more they will change their behaviour

- Public procurement – target of 50% of all purchasing by public bodies to be carried out using green criteria.
- Measures to influence demand are also crucial, and retailers play a significant role here. We are cooperating with the largest retailers in Europe in the establishment of a Retail Forum. To facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practice, identify opportunities for new actions and, establish external monitoring of progress - to go beyond window dressing.
- Develop education and information tools and protect consumers from false environmental claims. No green-washing.

Business as usual – and consumption as usual – is not an option

Action Plan will

- measure the environmental performance of products
- take the most damaging products off the market
- boost demand for products that perform well.

It will promote the eco-efficiency of our economy. In 10 years time environmental product standards will be taken for granted.