

# Sustainable Development Goal 12

## Sustainable consumption and production

### Introduction

SDG 12 is meant to ensure good use of resources, improving energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructure, and providing access to basic services, green and decent jobs and ensuring a better quality of life for all.

At the moment, worldwide consumption and production rest on the use of the natural environment and resources in a way that continues to have destructive impacts on the planet. Economic and social progress over the last century has been accompanied by environmental degradation that is endangering the systems on which our future development depends.

### Current Situation

More than 70% of the world's natural ecosystems – from rainforests to coastal zones – have been converted in some way to human use. Unsustainable use has led to land degradation with consequences like soil erosion, acidification, or biodiversity loss, and the acceleration of climate change resulting in worsening drought and water scarcity in many parts of the world. These trends underline the urgent need to strike a better balance between the ways in which we use resources and the measures we take to protect and restore them.

Unsustainable production and consumption patterns include a growing material footprint. This indicates the increasing pressure put on the environment to support economic growth, food waste leading to more loss of resources, pollution of water and air at a faster speed than what nature can repurify. Electronics and plastics are characterized by very high longevity and harmful impacts in nature, but in reality it has low recycling rates.



Figure 1. Increasing of global material footprint

## Importance

Sustainable consumption and production aims at “doing more and better with less,” increasing net gains from economic activities by reducing resource use, degradation, and pollution, while increasing the quality of life. Reducing food loss and waste can contribute to environmental sustainability by lowering production costs and increasing the efficiency of food systems.

Achieving sustainable consumption and production patterns will secure efficiency and productivity gains, ensuring that human activities remain within the carrying capacity of the planet, while respecting the rights of future generations.

## Challenges

The pandemic of COVID-19 forced a change in the behavior of the people, starting from restrictions on human mobility like remote working/school and lockdowns. All of this led to some positive environmental impacts, such as cleaner rivers and skies.

On the other hand, restrictions have created some negative environmental consequences, such as the increased demand for materials intended for the safety and comfort of the general population. Starting from wide uses of facemasks and other personal protective equipment ending in the increased online shopping for food, clothes.

Increased online shopping and food delivery services resulted in increased usage of single-use plastics. After COVID-19 governments need to work on policies which promote the development of active environmentally friendly bioplastics as well as technologies that promote circular economic principles. We should see the pandemic as an opportunity to develop plans and actions that would change current trends and shift consumption and production to a more sustainable approach. We can consider this transition successful if it results in improvements in resource efficiency, consideration of the entire life cycle of economic activities and active participation in environmental agreements.

## Progressing towards achieving the goal

As an individual the ways to help are simple, living buying and choosing sustainably, Here are some examples how you personally can contribute towards achieving this goal.

- There are charities supporting the goals. Find a goal 12 charity you want to support. Any donation, big or small, can make a difference!
- Shop, eat and drink locally. Supporting local businesses keeps people employed and money circles back into your community.
- Be conscious of packaging – the less the better!
- Buying second-hand is the obvious choice, do it when you can.
- Buy from companies you know have sustainable practices and don't harm the environment.
- Use food sharing applications. There are applications for donating your leftover food.
- Choose reusable products. Use an eco-bag for shopping, a reusable water bottle or a cup to reduce your plastic waste.
- Join petitions and campaigns which are against businesses with unsustainable practices.

As a business it is in your interest to find new solutions that enable sustainable consumption and production. Innovation and design solutions can both enable and inspire individuals to lead more sustainable lifestyles, reducing impacts and improving well-being.



## Resources and further reading:

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable\\_Development\\_Goal\\_12#The\\_Impacts\\_of\\_COVID-19](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_Development_Goal_12#The_Impacts_of_COVID-19)
2. <https://goumbook.com/sdg-12-responsible-consumption-and-production/>
3. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/>
4. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/sustainable-development-goals/why-do-sustainable-development-goals-matter/goal-12>
5. <https://sdg-tracker.org/sustainable-consumption-production>
6. <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/12-responsible-consumption-and-production/>
7. <https://www.undp.org/tag/goal-12-responsible-consumption-and-production>
8. <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/12-responsible-consumption-and-production/>

