

Since the issue of changing consumption patterns is very broad, it is addressed in several parts of Agenda 21, notably those dealing with energy, transportation and wastes, and in the chapters on economic instruments and the transfer of technology. The present chapter should also be read in conjunction with chapter 5.

A Focusing on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption

Basis for action. Poverty and environmental degradation are closely interrelated. While poverty results in certain kinds of environmental stress, the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances.

Measures to be undertaken at the international level for the protection and enhancement of the environment must take fully into account the current imbalances in the global patterns of consumption and production.

Special attention should be paid to the demand for natural resources generated by unsustainable consumption and to the efficient use of those resources

consistent with the goal of minimizing depletion and reducing pollution.

Although consumption patterns are very high in certain parts of the world, the basic consumer needs of a large section of humanity are not being met. This results in excessive demands and unsustainable lifestyles among the richer segments, which place immense stress on the environment. The poorer segments, meanwhile, are unable to meet food, health care, shelter and educational needs. Changing consumption patterns will require a multipronged strategy focusing on demand, meeting the basic needs of the poor, and reducing wastage and the use of finite resources in the production process.

Growing recognition of the importance of addressing consumption has also not yet been matched by an understanding of its implications. Some economists are questioning traditional concepts of economic growth and underlining the importance of pursuing economic objectives that take account of the full value of natural resource capital. More needs to be known about the role of consumption in relation to economic growth and population dynamics in order to formulate coherent international and national policies.

Objectives

- a To promote patterns of consumption and production that reduce environmental stress and will meet the basic needs of humanity;
- b To develop a better understanding of the role of consumption and how to bring about more sustainable consumption patterns.

Management-related activities *Adopting an international approach to achieving sustainable consumption patterns*

In principle, countries should be guided by the following basic objectives in their efforts to address consumption and lifestyles in the context of environment and development:

- a All countries should strive to promote sustainable consumption patterns;
- b Developed countries should take the lead in achieving sustainable consumption patterns;
- c Developing countries should seek to achieve sustainable consumption patterns in their development process, guaranteeing the provision of basic needs for the poor, while avoiding those unsustainable patterns, particularly in industrialized countries, generally recognized as unduly hazardous to the environment, inefficient and wasteful, in their development processes. This requires enhanced technological and other assistance from industrialized countries.

In the follow-up of the implementation of Agenda 21 the review of progress made in achieving sustainable consumption patterns should be given high priority.

Financing and cost evaluation The Conference secretariat has estimated that implementation of this programme is not likely to require significant new financial resources.

B Developing national policies and strategies to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption patterns

Basis for action Achieving the goals of environmental quality and sustainable development will require efficiency in production and changes in consumption patterns in order to emphasize optimization of

resource use and minimization of waste. In many instances, this will require reorientation of existing production and consumption patterns that have developed in industrial societies and are in turn emulated in much of the world.

Progress can be made by strengthening positive trends and directions that are emerging, as part of a process aimed at achieving significant changes in the consumption patterns of industries, Governments, households and individuals.

Objectives In the years ahead, Governments, working with appropriate organizations, should strive to meet the following broad objectives:

- a To promote efficiency in production processes and reduce wasteful consumption in the process of economic growth, taking into account the development needs of developing countries;
- b To develop a domestic policy framework that will encourage a shift to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption;
- c To reinforce both values that encourage sustainable production and consumption patterns and policies that encourage the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries.

Activities

A Encouraging greater efficiency in the use of energy and resources

Reducing the amount of energy and materials used per unit in the production of goods and services can contribute both to the alleviation of environmental stress and to greater economic and industrial productivity and competitiveness. Governments, in cooperation with industry, should therefore intensify efforts to use energy and resources in an economically efficient and environmentally sound manner by:

- a Encouraging the dissemination of existing environmentally sound technologies;
- b Promoting research and development in environmentally sound technologies;
- c Assisting developing countries to use these technologies efficiently and to develop technologies suited to their particular circumstances;
- d Encouraging the environmentally sound use of new

Harvest time in Perth. Each pound of bread produced in Australia costs the loss of seven pounds of topsoil forever. Soil is now less workable with low water retention, a decline in organic content, salinization and soil erosion - all direct results of deforestation.



Aluminium is easily recycled without losing its inherent properties. Recycling saves 95 per cent of the energy required to produce new aluminium from bauxite. It is also a source of income for groups and individuals who collect the empty containers.

and renewable sources of energy;

e Encouraging the environmentally sound and sustainable use of renewable natural resources.

B *Minimizing the generation of wastes*

At the same time, society needs to develop effective ways of dealing with the problem of disposing of mounting levels of waste products and materials. Governments, together with industry, households and the public, should make a concerted effort to reduce the generation of wastes and waste products by:

a Encouraging recycling in industrial processes and at the consumed level;

b Reducing wasteful packaging of products;

c Encouraging the introduction of more environmentally sound products.

C *Assisting individuals and households to make environmentally sound purchasing decisions*

The recent emergence in many countries of a more environmentally conscious consumer public, combined with increased interest on the part of some industries in providing environmentally sound consumer products, is a significant development that should be encouraged. Governments and international organizations, together with the private sector, should develop criteria and methodologies for the assessment of environmental impacts and resource requirements throughout the full life cycle of products and processes. Results of those assessments should be transformed into clear indicators in order to inform consumers and decision makers.

Governments, in cooperation with industry and other relevant groups, should encourage expansion of environmental labelling and other environmentally related product information programmes designed to assist consumers to make informed choices.

They should also encourage the emergence of an informed consumer public and assist individuals and households to make environmentally informed choices by:

a Providing information on the consequences of consumption choices and behaviour so as to encourage demand for environmentally sound products and use of products;

b Making consumers aware of the health and environmental impact of products, through such means as consumer legislation and environmental labelling;

c Encouraging specific consumer-oriented programmes, such as recycling and deposit/refund systems.

D *Exercising leadership through government purchasing*

Governments themselves also play a role in consumption, particularly in countries where the public sector plays a large role in the economy and can have a considerable influence on both corporate decisions and public perceptions. They should therefore review the purchasing policies of their agencies and departments so that they may improve, where possible, the environ-



mental content of government procurement policies, without prejudice to international trade principles.

E *Moving towards environmentally sound pricing*

Without the stimulus of prices and market signals that make clear to producers and consumers the environmental costs of the consumption of energy, materials and natural resources and the generation of wastes, significant changes in consumption and production patterns seem unlikely to occur in the near future.

Some progress has begun in the use of appropriate economic instruments to influence consumer behaviour. These instruments include environmental charges and taxes, deposit/refund systems, etc. This process should be encouraged in the light of country-specific conditions.

F *Reinforcing values that support sustainable consumption*

Governments and private-sector organizations should promote more positive attitudes towards sustainable consumption through education, public awareness programmes and other means, such as positive advertising of products and services that utilize environmentally sound technologies or encourage sustainable production and consumption patterns. In the review of the implementation of Agenda 21, an assessment of the progress achieved in developing these national policies and strategies should be given due consideration.