

Sustainable Development Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



What is Goal 12?

The UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection define sustainable consumption as “meeting the needs of present and future generations for goods and services in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable” and sustainable production as “the transformation of unsustainable consumption patterns through the development and use of new environmentally sound products and services and new technologies, including information and communication technologies, that can meet consumer needs while reducing pollution and depletion of natural resources.”

Sustainable development requires significant changes in human behavior to switch to equitable and careful use of natural resources; to alter wasteful practices regarding food, water, energy, electricity and resources and find efficiencies in their use; and to avoid environmental degradation. Consumers of various products demanding public access to information to make informed choices must be matched by producers who take their social and environmental responsibilities seriously and require the same values and concern for materials content and production methods all along their supply chains and distribution networks.

For social and economic progress and environmental protection to occur, we need to ensure that we are developing policies that are environmentally sound and that respect planetary boundaries. UNEP has identified key actions in both supply-side and demand-side activities including life cycle thinking through all stages of production and consumption and information such as ecolabelling.

What are the Targets?

- **1**

Implement the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries

- **2**

By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources

- **3**

By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses

- **4**

By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment

- **5**

By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse

- **6**

Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle

- **7**

Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities

- **8**

By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature

Means of Implementation

- **a**

Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production

- **b**

Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products

- **c**

Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities



Is this Possible?

Goal 12 of the Sustainable Development Goals is highly ambitious but may be possible to accomplish if appropriate indicators are developed to quantify progress in achieving the targets and adequate efforts are made for capacity building and sharing of best available technologies.

Specific targets related to sustainable tourism and to environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes are important universally, taking into account the capabilities of each state. Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources require the willingness of human beings to alter behavior and make decisions based on long-term rather than immediate gain.

States will need to involve civil society and utilize public-private partnerships to ensure that businesses are adopting practices that are environmentally sound. It is also important for corporations to adopt corporate social and environmental responsibility programs and to enforce these targets through every part of their supply chains as well. Governments at national and local levels will need to adopt new regulations and public policies while adopting sustainable practices themselves and encouraging private investment in sustainable products. Recycling, reuse, and prevention or reduction of waste must be universally adopted. When less waste is generated, governments need to spend less on waste management. When efficiencies are adopted, there are cost savings as well as economic, health, environmental and social benefits.

Each consumer and each producer at every level, whether government official, householder, or corporate contractor or manufacturer, must accept responsibility for choices among products, brands and suppliers and accept responsibility to achieve efficient use — of water, energy, food, electricity — daily in offices, factories, homes, public and private spaces. To make these choices responsibly requires access to information and adequate regulation by governments to ensure the targets of Goal 12 are met. Thus Goal 12 requires substantial efforts by all to achieve responsible and sustainable consumption and production to sustain life on our planet and conserve resources for future generations.

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