



SDG Information Pack

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NATURE
PROVIDES A
FREE LUNCH
BUT ONLY
IF WE Control
OUR APPETITES

WILLIAM RUCKELSHAUS

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Video: 2030 - SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dR0dzsFxjXc> (Ted Talks)

Workshop outlines:

- Page 39 – [Stepping Stones](#) for the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Page 91 – [Understanding the SDGs](#)

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

By 2030 the UN want to:

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. Achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.
3. 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. 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.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

By 2030 the UN want to:

5. 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. Ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

(Source: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/metadata-compilation/Metadata-Goal-12.pdf>)

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

How are the UN going to make this happen?

- 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.

TARGET 12-1



IMPLEMENT THE
10-YEAR SUSTAINABLE
CONSUMPTION AND
PRODUCTION
FRAMEWORK

TARGET 12-2



SUSTAINABLE
MANAGEMENT AND
USE OF NATURAL
RESOURCES

TARGET 12-3



HALVE GLOBAL PER
CAPITA FOOD WASTE

TARGET 12-4



RESPONSIBLE
MANAGEMENT OF
CHEMICALS AND
WASTE

TARGET 12-5



SUBSTANTIALLY
REDUCE WASTE
GENERATION

TARGET 12-6



ENCOURAGE
COMPANIES TO ADOPT
SUSTAINABLE
PRACTICES AND
SUSTAINABILITY
REPORTING

TARGET 12-7



PROMOTE
SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC
PROCUREMENT
PRACTICES

TARGET 12-8



PROMOTE UNIVERSAL
UNDERSTANDING OF
SUSTAINABLE
LIFESTYLES

TARGET 12-A



SUPPORT DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES' SCIENTIFIC
AND TECHNOLOGICAL
CAPACITY FOR
SUSTAINABLE
CONSUMPTION AND
PRODUCTION

TARGET 12-B



DEVELOP AND
IMPLEMENT TOOLS TO
MONITOR SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM

TARGET 12-C



REMOVE MARKET
DISTORTIONS THAT
ENCOURAGE
WASTEFUL
CONSUMPTION

Facts and Figures

Here are only some (of many) interesting and/or shocking facts related to SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production:

- The material footprint per capita in high-income countries is 10 times the level of low-income countries ([UN, 2023](#))
- The world is seriously off track in its efforts to halve per capita food waste and losses by 2030: An estimated 17 per cent of total food available to consumers is wasted. About 60 per cent of this waste occurs in households- predominantly in developed countries ([UN Stats, 2023](#))
- There is a rapid rise in e-waste (electrical and electronic equipment waste) which is driven by growing consumption and short product life cycles. In 2019, the amount of e-waste generated globally was 7.3 kilograms per capita, out of which only 1.7 kilograms was managed in an environmentally sound way ([UN Stats, 2023](#))
- The capacity of developing countries to generate electricity from renewable sources has soared over the last decade, from 109.7 watts per capita in 2011 to 245.7 watts per capita in 2020, outpacing population growth ([UN Stats, 2023](#))
- We produce around 300 million tons of plastic waste per year, which is almost the equivalent to the weight of the entire human population! ([UNEP, 2022](#))
- If the global population reaches 9.8 billion by 2050, the equivalent of almost three planets will be required to provide the natural resources needed to sustain current lifestyles ([UN, 2024](#))
- In 2022, 190 million tonnes of toxic chemicals were produced in the EU ([Eurostat, 2024](#))

To find out more, check out the [UN website](#)!

Understand

Situation Globally

As with most SDGs, progress regarding SDG 12 varies greatly between countries and/or regions. The [SDG12 Hub](#) is a great starting point for exploring how well different countries are doing, looking specifically at the targets and indicators of SDG 12 (even though unfortunately not all countries, including Ireland, have provided data for this).

SDG 12 is also in a unique position when it comes to comparing the situation and the progress being made in different countries: issues such as fast fashion are very closely tied to globalisation - without the exploitation of workers in countries of the so-called Global South, it wouldn't be possible in our Global South societies to get fashion for the price it's currently sold for.

In the EU, a variety of policies have been put in place in the last few years, aimed at addressing aspects of SDG 12. These include (among others):

- The [8th Environment Action Programme](#) to 2030 - the EU's legally agreed common agenda for environment policy.
- The [Circular Economy Action Plan](#) was adopted in 2020 and aims at doubling the EU's circular material use rate in the next 10 years.
- On a more global level, the [Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency \(GACERE\)](#) was launched to bring together governments and relevant organisations to advance the transition to a more circular economy.

Understand

Situation in Ireland

According to Social Justice Ireland's [Sustainable Progress Index 2024](#), Ireland isn't doing very well on SDG 12. Out of the 14 EU countries considered for the report, Ireland is ranked at 10th place. Among the main issues described are a very low recycling rate of municipal waste, and low indicators of circular material use.

Similarly, this [OECD report](#) from this year shows that only 2 per cent of material used in Ireland is circular - which means that it's part of a circular economy in which existing materials and products can be used as long as possible, through methods such as sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling.

In addition, the report shows that the largest part of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions comes from agriculture, a lot of which would be due to [livestock farming and meat production](#) (particularly beef) - which, in turn, would be considered a big factor that makes our production and consumption less responsible and sustainable.

However, there is much work being done in Ireland, in order to improve the situation:

- Did you know that, since summer 2022, Ireland's Landmark Circular Economy Act is now a law in Ireland? It is called the [Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022](#), and it aims to move Ireland away from a "take-make-waste" economy, and to incentivise the use of recycled and reusable alternatives.
- Have a look at Ireland's¹ Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections](#) for 2022 to 2040.

What other initiatives are you aware of? Do you think these are going far enough - or what else would be needed?

Understand

Responsible Food Production

Food production globally (and in many regions) exceeds environmental limits (or is getting closer to them). This leaves no choice other than rethinking the way we produce and consume food, and find more effective and responsible production practices.

Here are just a few insights into sustainable food production and the need for change:

- Why do we need to change our food system? The UN Environment provides this short [video](#) to give you an overview of facts & figures of why we need to change our food system.
- Know the facts - have a look at the World Food Programme's [article](#) on food loss and how it links to sustainable food systems!
- Have a read of this article: [Indigenous knowledge is key to sustainable food systems](#)

In this recent [article by The Guardian](#) reveals how a shift towards a more sustainable global food system could create up to \$10tn of benefits a year, improve human health and ease the climate crisis.

What else do you think we can do to make our food production more sustainable?

Understand

Responsible consumption - Food

Should the global population reach 9.6 billion by 2050, the equivalent of almost three planets could be required to provide the natural resources needed to sustain current lifestyles. "

([UN, 2024](#))

The choices we make regarding our food - as a society and as individuals - have an impact on the environment. Here are just two (of many) aspects to consider when reflecting on and rethinking our own food consumption:

Food miles:

- What are food miles? Check out this [video](#)!
- Why not calculate your own food miles [here](#)?
- Do food miles really matter? This [article](#) looks at this question from different angles!

Meat consumption and the environment:

- This [video](#) explore the effects of meat production on the environment.
- Have a look at this [article](#) on the effects of meat consumption on the environment.
- Here's a [list of documentaries](#) to explore!
- For a long read (not without triggers): Jonathan Safran Foer's 'Eating Animals'.

Understand

Responsible Consumption - Waste

Another significant aspect of consuming responsibly is how we deal with waste. Especially plastic is part of our everyday lives. It has lots of great qualities, but it is also a major contributor to the pollution of the earth.

Did you know that...

...about half of all the plastic produced is designed to only be used once?

... plastic waste can persist in the environment for centuries (because of its durability and resistance to degradation)?

... our oceans could contain more plastic than fish by 2050 (if nothing changes for the better)?

Here are some more resources and insights into waste production - and how it can be done more responsibly:

- Which countries produce the most waste - and which companies? A survey recently conducted has found that that 60 firms are responsible for half of world's plastic pollution, read more [here](#)
- Take a look at the [Plastic Waste Makers Index](#) - any surprises? How are we doing in Ireland?
- Waste generation and management: How can we become more sustainable? Watch this [video](#) to get some ideas - is there anything you would add to this?
- Need some more inspiration for becoming more responsible consumers? Check out this brilliant [list of documentaries](#)!

Understand

Plastic - Pollution and Microplastics

Here are some ideas for delving deeper into the topic of plastic pollution (and how we can reduce it):

- For a great overview on plastic pollution, check out this section of the [UNEP website](#)!
- Or have a look at this [article](#) that explores what's possible in the future, on the journey towards zero plastic pollution - and also what isn't!
- A very inspiring projects to have a look at is Amicitia's ['A Giant Leap'](#) - a project that looked creatively at future scenarios.

Microplastics

While some products very obviously contain plastic, it is not as clear in other cases. This is often due to microplastics: tiny pieces of plastic that often end up in our oceans and freshwater.

Microplastics have been found in every human placenta tested in a recent study which analysed 62 placental tissue samples. The study found that the most common plastic detected was polyethylene, which is used to make plastic bags and bottles.

Read The Guardian article in relation to this study [here](#)

- To get a better idea of the effects of microplastics on freshwater plants and animals (and ultimately our food chain!), check out the [research report](#) "Impacts of Microplastics on the Irish Environment", published in June 2021.
- Here is a useful [article](#) suggesting some easy ways you can reduce microplastic pollution & consumption in your daily life!

Understand

Sneaky Plastics

Especially with microplastics, we often don't even know what we consume contains plastic. Here are some (of many) examples for how sneaky plastic can be:

- **Clothing:** You are probably wearing plastic. Plastic fabric is commonly listed as polyester, rayon, acrylic, spandex, and nylon (among other names). Washing plastic-based clothing releases microplastics which end up polluting our waterways.
- **Salt:** A lot of the plastic products we produce end up breaking down into tiny pieces that cannot decompose entirely. These microplastics end up in abundance in our oceans, where most of our salt is harvested from. Ultimately, a percentage of these microplastics end up in our salt supply.
- **Teabags:** Teabags can contain up to 25% plastic. Why? A plastic polymer is used to seal the bags as well as keep its shape when it's dunked into hot water. Although teabags are often thought of as compostable, the added plastic also means that they won't completely decompose.
- **Bath and Beauty Products:** Microbeads! These tiny pieces of plastic are added to a variety of products to add scrubbing and exfoliating power. They are e.g. for whitening toothpastes, facial exfoliators, sunscreen, and body scrubs. The pieces are so small that they can't be processed out by wastewater treatment facilities, which means they end up in our waterways.

Understand

Action for SDG 12

Here are just a few organisations/initiatives/policies that are making a difference for SDG 12, in Ireland and worldwide:

- Since 2020, with the [Microbeads Act 2019](#), it has been prohibited in Ireland to manufacture cosmetics, personal care products, household and industrial cleaning products that contain microbeads (or place them on the market, export or import them).
- The [Community Resources Network](#) is the all-Ireland representative body for community-based reuse, recycling and waste prevention organisations.
- Have a look at [Too Good To Go Ireland](#), get some tips on how to reduce food waste, and maybe even join them, as an individual or a business!
- Check out [The Story of Stuff](#) - they make movies on plastic pollution, but also provide other great resources and information.
- Have a look at [Initiative 20x20](#), a country-led effort aimed at changing the dynamics of land degradation in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Read about Andrea Latas who founded the [Latin Latas](#) in Colombia, an initiative that works with young people through the means of instruments made from rubbish.

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Action is a key component of Goal #12: Responsible Consumption and Production. Take one or more of this month's #SDGchallenges below to make your contribution.

Get Informed – Engage with articles, blogs, videos and campaigns in this information pack.

Be Political – Write to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Educate – Host a workshop, talk or discussion about Goal #12 – Responsible Consumption and Production, or just initiate an informal chat among friends or family.

#MerryThriftmas – Explore the potential of shopping presents second hand this December!



ACT

Challenge #1 - Get Informed

We are asking you to read up about Goal #12 and to learn about the efforts being made around the world to achieve 'Responsible Consumption'. You can begin this journey of learning by reading the articles or watching the videos in the 'Understand' section of this info pack.

Challenge #2 - Be Political

Write/email the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, and their minister, expressing the need to reduce consumption levels in Ireland and to consider the environmental impacts of Irish overconsumption.

Contact him at eamon.ryan@oireachtas.ie

Challenge #3 - Educate

This challenge invites you to discuss Responsible Consumption and Production with your friends, family or colleagues. It can be an informal chat with a cuppa or an organised workshop where you can tackle the issues head-on with a group.

Be sure to share any educational activities with us using #SDGchallenge.



ACT

Challenge #4 - Reduce Your Food Waste

Many of buy more food than we need, let fruits and vegetables spoil or take larger portions than we can eat. These habits put extra strain on our natural resources and damage our environment. When we waste food, we waste the labour, effort, investment and the precious resources that go into producing it, transporting and processing it. In short, wasting food increases greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to climate change.

Here are some small simple actions you can take to reduce food waste

- **Adopt a more sustainable diet** The internet is full of quick healthy recipes that you can try!
- **Buy only what you need** Plan your meals. Make a shopping list and stick to it, and avoid impulse buys.
- **Store food wisely** Move older products to the front of your cupboard or fridge and new ones to the back.
- **Start small-** Take smaller portions at home or share large dishes at restaurants.
- **Love your leftovers** If you don't eat everything you make, freeze it for later or use the leftovers as an ingredient in another meal.
- **Grow scraps from cuttings!** Here is a useful and easy-to-follow [guide](#) on how to do it!

When sharing, don't forget to use **#SDG12 #ResponsibleConsumption #Reduceyourfoodwaste**



ACT

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Caroline Corrigan, Alumna of the Saolta SDG Advocate Programme 2022

For many years I lived the glamorous life of a site engineer with a wardrobe that consisted of concrete-covered jeans, a jumper and rigger boots. Once I moved to a desk job I discovered a love for fashion and now describe myself as a reformed shopaholic. I started to investigate the impact of fast fashion on the environment and I was appalled, I then looked at the impact it has on people and was even more horrified, especially as 80% of garment workers are women. Garment workers are often lowly paid, work in unsafe conditions, work long hours and are subject to all kinds of abuse, basically, they become trapped in a poverty cycle that is very hard to escape from. To make this even worse, we, as consumers, think nothing of buying cheap clothes and throwing them away without a single wear, placing no value on them and by association placing no value on the people who make them.

As an SDG Advocate my action project is around awareness of the damage fashion causes to people and the planet and having a local clothes swap planned for the new year. I also undertook #SecondHandSeptember where I celebrated all this preloved.

The good news: there are lots of SDG12-related actions you can do as an individual without giving up the fashion fix. First and foremost is buying #preloved and in some cases never loved! There are enough clothes already made to clothe the next 6 generations so there is certainly plenty to choose from! Charity shops are bursting at the seams with great clothes (as well as books, toys and household goods) and nothing beats the feeling of finding something you love with the label still attached and for sale at a fraction of the price. The stigma around charity shops is now gone and they have become, as they say in the fashion industry, 'bang on trend'! Everyone benefits when you shop in these shops and now thanks to thriftify you can shop these shops from the comfort of your sofa. You can of course 'shop your wardrobe', and if you have hoarding tendencies like me then this is really easy, you can make changes to your clothes to suit current trends and if you are not great at sewing there are plenty of people who are.

If you are buying new then there are two things to look out for. Firstly, greenwashing, this is everywhere: fashion brands claiming their clothes tread lightly on the planet, that they are made from recycled something or other, most likely this is only a very small percentage of the material. We are often lured into fashion trends and toxic brands like Shein release thousands of new trends a year (my skin crawls when anyone mentions a Shein haul) and often use influencers to promote their 'sustainability', the influencers are often blind to the greenwashing.

Secondly, read the labels, if it is made in a poorer or developing country and costs you only a couple of euro to buy then it is very likely the garment is highly unsustainable and made using cheap labour. I would love to see carbon labelling on garments, like on food labels, highlighting at a glance how bad it is for people and the planet. There is a great website called 'Good on you' that rates clothing brands and allows you to search for sustainable and ethical brands.

Another good way to reduce consumption is to do the 30 times test on the garment, simply ask yourself if you would wear the garment 30 times? If yes then ok to buy but if not put it back on the hanger and walk away. I have found this useful and statistics show us we wear 20% of our clothes 80% of the time, we always go back to our favourites.

Finally, changing consumption behaviours can be hard but there are good circular economy alternatives out there to that allows us to be more mindful towards sustainability and people and you can't beat the feeling when someone compliments an outfit and to be able to say you got it for a fraction of the price the original owner paid.



Share

Sharing our actions on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram allows us to raise awareness about Responsible Consumption and Production in Ireland and around the world and about the Sustainable Development Goals. Please click on the icons below to link to our pages:



No matter which challenge you take, be sure to share it! Check out our Facebook page. You can share your actions here and inspire other SDG advocates!



Or you can Tweet us @devperspectives. Follow us for daily updates and interesting reads on Responsible Consumption and Production for this month!



Follow us on Instagram @devperspectives and make sure to tag #SDGs and #globalgoals in your posts