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# RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION: WHY IT MATTERS

## What is the goal here?

To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

## Why?

Economic and social progress over the last century has been accompanied by

environmental degradation that is endangering the very systems on which our future development and very survival depend.

COVID-19 offers an opportunity to develop recovery plans that will reverse current trends and shift our consumption and

**12** RESPONSIBLE  
CONSUMPTION  
AND PRODUCTION



Electronic  
waste  
grew by  
38%  
but  
less than  
20%  
is recycled

production patterns to a more sustainable course. A successful transition will mean improvements in resource efficiency, consideration of the entire life cycle of economic activities, and active engagement in multilateral environmental agreements.

### What needs to change?

There are many aspects of consumption that with simple changes can have a big impact on society as a whole. For example, the global material footprint – an indicator of the pressure put on the environment to support economic growth and to satisfy the material needs of people – grew by 17.4 per cent to 85.9 billion metric tons in 2017 as compared to 2010.

Reducing food loss and waste can contribute to environmental sustainability by lowering production costs and increasing the efficiency of food systems. Currently, we lose 13.8 per cent after harvesting and during transport, storage and processing alone, amounting to a cost of over \$400 billion a year.

We are also polluting water faster than nature

can recycle and purify water in rivers and lakes.

### How can I help as a business?

It's in businesses' interest to find new solutions that enable sustainable consumption and production patterns. A better understanding of environmental and social impacts of products and services is needed, both of product life cycles and how these are affected by use within lifestyles.

Identifying “hot spots” within the value chain where interventions have the greatest potential to improve the environmental and social impact of the system as a whole is a crucial first step.

Innovation and design solutions can both enable and inspire individuals to lead more sustainable lifestyles, reducing impacts and improving well-being.

### How can I help as a consumer?

There are two main ways to help: **1.** Reducing your waste and **2.** Being

thoughtful about what you buy and choosing a sustainable option whenever possible. Ensure you don't throw away food, and reduce your consumption of plastic—one of the main pollutants of the ocean. Carrying a reusable bag, refusing to use plastic straws, and recycling plastic bottles are good ways to do your part every day.

Making informed purchases also helps. For example, the textile industry today is the second largest polluter of clean water after agriculture, and many fashion companies exploit textile workers in the developing world. If you can buy from sustainable and local sources you can make a difference as well as exercising pressure on businesses to adopt sustainable practices.

To take action, visit: <http://www.un.org/en/actnow>

To find out more about Goal #12 and other Sustainable Development Goals, visit:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>