



## Report outlines global patterns of resource consumption

**People are using** more of the Earth's natural resources than ever before, seriously harming the environment and placing the well-being of future generations at risk. A recent report finds that Europe is particularly reliant on imported resources and proposes actions to help societies move towards a more sustainable way of using resources.

**Ecosystems across the world** supply humankind with natural resources, including water, energy, land, food and raw materials for housing and industries. But growing populations and greater economic prosperity in many parts of the world has led to dramatic increases in the consumption of resources: between 1980 and 2005, the worldwide extraction of resources increased by almost 50 per cent, (from 40 billion tonnes to 58 billion tonnes) and is projected to increase to 100 billion tonnes by 2030.

The report argues that richer nations, such as in Europe, will have to substantially decrease their use of resources, to allow people in poorer countries better access to resources to improve their quality of life. Most resources are extracted from developing nations, where working conditions are often poor and environmental deterioration is remarkable. For example, in 2005, nearly half (48 per cent) of global resources were extracted from Asia, which is home to over half of the world's population.

Global demand for raw materials and products has significantly driven international trade over the last 50 years. Of all the major regions in the world, Europe has the highest net imports of natural resources, equivalent to almost 3 tonnes for every person in Europe each year.

Consumption patterns vary widely across the world. On average, a North American consumes 90 kg of resources per day, Europeans consume 45 kg each a day, in Asia, each person consumes 14 kg a day and Africans consume 10 kg a day each.

Improvements in the efficient use of resources have occurred, but economic growth has outstripped these gains and resource extraction and use continue to rise globally. It is not possible for natural resources to continue to be used at the same rate as in the past. Many non-renewable resources, such as oil, are estimated to be close to their peak levels of extraction and shortages are driving up prices.

Short-term measures to achieve this goal include: encouraging businesses to be more innovative in resource use, in response to higher prices for resources; making resource efficiency standards part of public procurement in Europe, encouraging a change in lifestyle and consumption and increasing recycling rates.

In the longer-term, new ways of growing the economy using fewer resources must be found. The report suggests society should re-focus on non-material aspects of well-being, such as relationships and more leisure time, rather than on material possessions, as is the case in many societies today.

**Source:** SERI, GLOBAL 2000, Friends of the Earth Europe. 2009. Overconsumption? Our use of the world's natural resources. Vienna/Brussels. The report can be accessed at: [www.foeeurope.org/publications/2009/Overconsumption\\_Sep09.pdf](http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/2009/Overconsumption_Sep09.pdf)

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