

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTIONS

– finding solutions together



Sustainable consumption means fulfilling our needs for food, shelter, clothing and services while protecting the earth's natural resources. This is an enormous challenge as it requires us to put aside narrow interests and share the earth's resources.

It requires us to preserve nature's capital to provide an adequate standard of living for those alive today *as well as for generation to come*. Addressing the twin challenges of poverty and environmental degradation requires changing how goods are produced, consumed and distributed. It also requires people to use resources more efficiently as well as thinking of the environmental impact of their consumption and acting to preserve the environment. Consumers have the responsibility to help to push our society towards economic prosperity, environmental quality and social justice. In other words, we have to move in the direction of sustainable consumption.

Watch Your Waste ...

Did you know?

- ❖ That solid waste (garbage) continues to build up in dump sites, landfills, rivers and the sea, long after you think you've disposed of it.
- ❖ That some of the things you throw away today will still be clogging drains, polluting drinking water and creating major health problems for your children and future generations.
- ❖ Disposable diapers and plastic bottles thrown into the sea take 450 years to degrade.
- ❖ Aluminum cans take 200 years to degrade and tin cans take 50.

- ❖ A Styrofoam cup takes 50 years to breakdown and a wax juice box takes 6 months.
- ❖ Glass bottles and jars can take more than 300 years to breakdown.
- ❖ Bio-degradable disposable diapers take 1 year.

Promoting Sustainable Consumption

The CAC is playing an important role in advising consumers on the steps they can take to ensure more sustainable patterns of consumption by:

- ▶ Disseminating information on environmentally safe consumption
- ▶ Speaking at public events, seminars and lectures about methods of sustainable consumption.
- ▶ Publishing educational material on the environment and on consumption practices that preserve the environment.
- ▶ Participating in radio discussion and interviews on the issue of environmentally-safe consumption.
- ▶ Participating in exhibitions and other events held by environmental NGOs.
- ▶ Participating in the work of the National Environmental Educational Committee and other groups working on sustainable development issues.
- ▶ Targeting focus groups focus groups for discussion on environmental issues as they relate to the consumer.
- ▶ Participating in meetings of the national committee over-seeing the phase-out of leaded gasoline.

Carbon dioxide emissions are causing an imbalance in the earth's atmosphere resulting in climate changes.

We cannot maintain current patterns of energy consumption without causing further damage to the earth's delicate climatic balance and leaving our children a future without energy.

80% of carbon dioxide is produced when fossil fuels and tropical forests are burned.

Global Warming is already affecting world food production patterns and causing increases in infectious diseases.

Fossil fuels, such as oil, gas and coal, are not renewable. They also contribute to global warming. Most of our energy comes from burning fossil fuels.

Illegal mining activity in Jamaica is causing river bed erosion.

97% of fuel used worldwide in transport is non-renewable fossil fuel. In Jamaica, 99% of the commercial energy demand is met by imported petroleum and coal.

The clearing of unstable slopes for cultivation, slash and burn methods, and poor farming practices are leading to soil erosion and causing fires.

Jamaica generates over 10,000 metric tones of solid waste per week. 20% of household waste is collected privately and often dumped in open areas. Final disposal of all waste consists of open dumping and burning. This is impacting negatively on the soil and air.

1 percent of the world's tropical forest is lost every year.

Here are some things we can do

ENERGY

- Be informed about the effects on the environment of non-renewable fossil fuels e.g. gas, coal, petroleum.
- Learn about the legislation governing protection of the environment and if you think it is inadequate, lobby through consumer groups, community organizations or any other avenue for amendments to be made
- Get information on current regulations and guidelines to prevent unsafe practices by producers and importers of fuels and alert relevant authorities, consumer organizations or the media when they are breached.
- Keep lights and appliances off when not needed.
- Use energy efficient lighting, for example, fluorescent bulbs, they cost more initially but last many times longer and pay for themselves in energy saved.
- Use solar and other low-impact renewable energy systems, wherever possible.
- Check regularly for leaking gas if you use a gas stove.
- Reduce your dependence on the car – walk, ride, use public transport or become part of a car pool
- Keep tyres at correct pressure to increase fuel conversation.

SOLID WASTE AND LAND PRESERVATION

- Know how your purchases of goods and services affect the environment
- Through consumer organizations, lobby for government incentives for the production of goods using recycled products.
- Advise environmental groups when anti-littering regulations are breached.
- Report beach and mining whenever it is observed.
- Mined out limestone quarries are found all over Jamaica. Community groups can work with landowners to explore ways to redeem and use these abandoned quarries.
- Farmers can adopt soil conservation techniques.
- Plant a tree for every one that is burned for fuel and cut down to clear farmland.
- Repair rather than replace.
- Take your own bags when shopping to reduce use of plastic bags, use less plastic bottles. Avoid Styrofoam.
- Avoid product designed specifically for a short life span.
- Collect waste and help to establish community centers where it can be pooled and sorted for re-use.

More than 1 billion people in the world live below the poverty line. 2 billion lack access to safe water. 3.1 billion have no sanitation.

In Jamaica, deforestation, poor land use and construction practices in the watersheds have changed the flow of rivers and accelerated soil erosion, causing siltation of reservoirs and damage to water treatment works.

In Jamaica, air quality is being affected by increased emissions from industrial sources and increasingly from motor vehicles. Major contributing industries include oil refining, bauxite-alumina processing, mining and quarrying, cement manufacturing, sugar processing and power plants.

More than 2 million deaths worldwide a year can be traced back to water scarcity and pollution.

In Jamaica, interior and coastal waters are being adversely affected by the discharge of sewage, industrial effluents, solid wastes and agricultural run-off.

Air pollution in Kingston continues to create health problems with the local population. Indications are that the concentration of lead in the air is higher than the limit set by the World Health Organization.

Ground water is being polluted by filtration from sewage and the leakage of caustic residues from the older red mud disposal sites. In Kingston and St. Andrew, aquifers have been extensively contaminated by sewage. Pollution of surface water is much more significant.

Sewage effluent and industrial waste are contaminating aquifers at an increasing rate.

Lead can cause circulatory, digestive and nervous disorders, especially among children. Although use of lead in paints, pipes and food packaging has gradually been stopped, this has not happened to the same extent with lead in fuel.

Water

- Learn more about proper disposal techniques, never throw garbage into empty lots – these lead to water contamination – or into a gully; it all ends up into the sea.
- Recycle engine oil. Never throw it down the drain. One litre of oil will contaminate up to two million litres of water!
- Never use pesticides or fertilizers near water sources, and never pour chemicals down the drain, this contaminates supplies.
- Combine plants that protect each other – acting as natural insecticides (e.g. marigolds, neem trees).
- Install an irrigation system and ensure that the water goes where needed and is not wasted.
- Much to reduce water needs and avoid watering in wind or in the heat of the day since the water will only evaporate.
- Water plants with leftover cold tea or coffee.
- Report odours, emissions that occur regularly in your area; they may reflect contamination of the water supply.
- Fix leaks and use low volume shower fixtures and low volume flush toilets.

Air

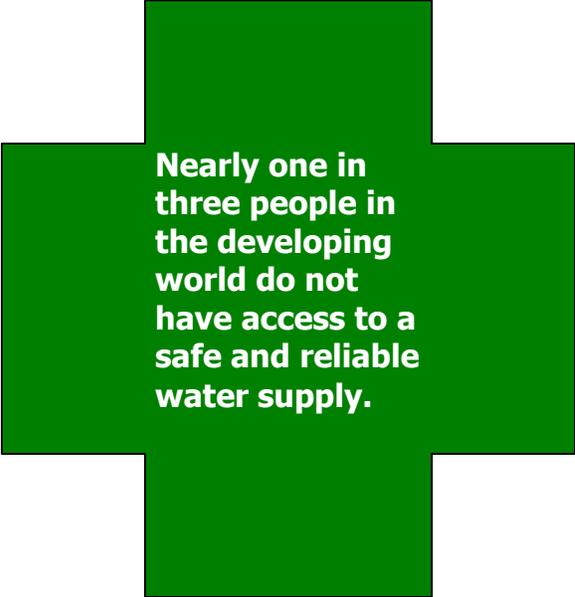
- Tune your car regularly.
- Stop burning garbage.

Did you know?....

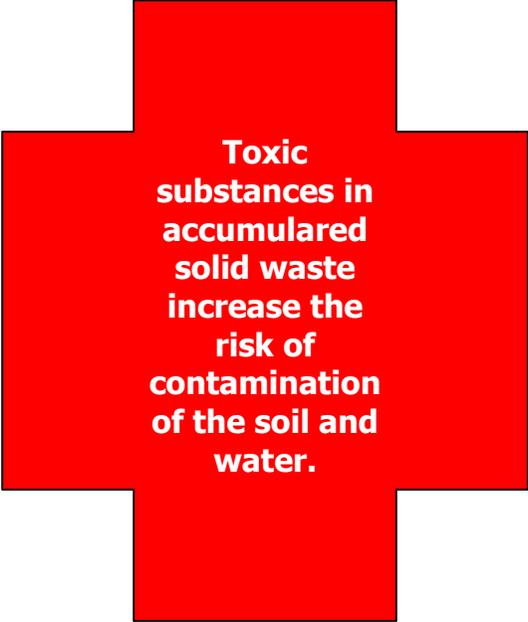
Forests are under severe threat due to a land clearing
For cultivation, fuelwood, and charcoal production.
Forest cover is disappearing at a rate of 3.3% per year.

Fish catches are being reduce by increasing numbers of
fishermen, poor fishing techniques in which fine mesh nets
trap immature fish, and illegal dynamiting and poisoning.

Coastal mangroves, wetland areas and sea grass beds which
Provide breeding, feeding and nursery grounds for fish and
shrimp are being destroyed. Harbours and nearshore
water bodies are becoming more polluted



**Nearly one in
three people in
the developing
world do not
have access to a
safe and reliable
water supply.**



**Toxic
substances in
accumulated
solid waste
increase the
risk of
contamination
of the soil and
water.**

Large areas of land in Jamaica are being used as landfills in which non-biodegradable materials are being dumped.

Incinerating plastic waste pollutes the air and creates health hazards.

90% of the world's drinking water comes from underground. This source is threatened with depletion and contamination, particularly from heavy metals and farm chemicals.