

## BIODIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURE

# Long Live Sustainable Lifestyles!

Agriculture provides people with a host of consumer goods – from the rich diversity of fruits, vegetables, roots, tubers and nuts to the multitude of fibres, fuels and timber. Human health, nutrition and well-being relies on biodiversity for most agricultural goods and a multitude of others—medicines and supplements, cosmetics and biochemicals. Pollution, land conversion and over-extraction of resources from biodiversity and the environment, damages ecosystem services that maintain the conditions for life on Earth.

Sustainable lifestyles for you, your family and friends are essential for safeguarding natural resources and conserving biodiversity for future generations. Sustainable lifestyles and practices in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and manufacturing need to be maximized so that pollution and waste will be minimized. Exploration and education for sustainable production and consumption play an important role in adopting sustainable practices into our everyday lives.

### SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The choices people make in their everyday consumption for food and other agricultural goods have an **ecological footprint** and often, larger ramifications that they are unaware of, such as the polluting factor of transporting goods to markets. A person's ecological footprint is the land and resources necessary to produce what they use and to recycle their wastes.

Sustainability is the capacity to “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>1</sup> Developing sustainable lifestyles and practices requires finding workable solutions to imbalances through more responsible consumer behaviour.

“Many people in the world need to consume more just to survive. Many others may need to make more responsible choices. In the end, this will mean that fewer resources are needed and fewer emissions are generated, while still serving the needs of the world's population.”<sup>2</sup>

Sustainable consumption is not just an environmental issue but also one that promotes a dignified standard of living for everyone. Consuming sustainably is a key challenge for many, as it requires clear information, access to sustainable products and services and adequate infrastructure for their provision. Look for sustainable alternatives—such as **organic foods**, **fair trade products** or **free trade organic products** and **certified sustainable goods**—that are available to you and that you can adopt within your budgetary constraints.

But don't be fooled by imitation products! A green label doesn't necessarily mean it is sustainable. And don't get caught by hidden factors when looking for sustainable alternatives! For example, organic production is sustainable at a local level but transporting these products to distant markets creates pollution. Another hidden factor is that food processors often discard “ugly-looking” or unattractive but perfectly edible produce. So, when you can, buy directly from the farm!

### STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

There are several simple habits that consumers can adopt to become more sustainable and to reduce their ecological footprint. Start by rethinking consumption patterns and needs to **curbing unnecessary consumption**. **Reducing** waste, for example by buying products with little packaging, is a key component of sustainability. Also, fresh foods are healthier than eating processed foods. **Reuse** products before recycling. **Buying sustainably made products** is a key part of creating a sustainable lifestyle. It takes many resources to produce some foods, especially meat. Minimizing consumption of high-energy input foods reduces your ecological footprint. **Recycling** wastes, such as composting food wastes like potato skins and orange peels, is part of nutrient cycling. As you explore and adopt sustainable alternatives share the information with others!



**Table 1: Elements of a sustainable lifestyle and sustainable practices that you can explore**

Sustainable Lifestyle	Sustainable Practices
CURBING UNNECESSARY CONSUMPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Rethinking consumption patterns</li> <li>▶ Do I already have this product?</li> <li>▶ Do I need this product?</li> <li>▶ Can I find a sustainable alternative?</li> </ul>
REDUCE WASTAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Avoid buying goods with throwaway parts, instead buy products with recyclable packaging</li> <li>▶ Use cloth or reusable bags when shop-ping</li> </ul>
BUY SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Organic free trade goods</li> <li>▶ Certified sustainable products, such as wood and paper</li> <li>▶ When buying foods with throwaway parts bring your own! (Such as a mug, cutlery and food container)</li> </ul>
EAT DIVERSE SUSTAINABLY-PRODUCED FOODS FOR A NUTRITIOUS DIET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Eat local organic foods, including produce and meats when they are available</li> <li>▶ Do not eat too much meat as it requires more resources to raise animals</li> <li>▶ Do not consume species in decline or endangered</li> </ul>
RECYCLE WASTES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Compost food wastes</li> <li>▶ Recycle plastic, metal and other materials according to the facilities that exists in your region</li> </ul>

1. United Nations, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987. *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, United Nations, New York, published as Annex to General Assembly document A/42/427. World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future, also published 1987 by Oxford University Press, Oxford.

2. UNESCO-UNEP, 2002. Youth Xchange: training kit on responsible consumption—the guide. UNESCO-UNEP, Paris. <<http://www.uneptie.org/pc/sustain/reports/youth/YXC%20clean%20dec%202004.pdf>>