



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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2018 HLPF Review of SDGs implementation: SDG 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Status of Progress on SDG 12

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns” has achieved some progress to date, but significant gaps remain, and implementation efforts have so far been seriously under-resourced.

Overall, the development of national policy on sustainable consumption and production patterns (SCP) indicates overarching positive trends, as demonstrated by the fact that, since 2002, the number of such policies and instruments has almost continuously increased. As shown in reporting on SDG indicator 12.1.1, in 2018, undertaken by the 10YFP Secretariat, 71 countries plus the European Union have documented their macro-policies, regulatory, voluntary or economic instruments that support the shift towards SCP. Considering other sources of information, a total of 109 countries have or have had national policies and initiatives relevant to SCP. However, despite evident progress on the development of policies, knowledge resources and technical tools, the application and implementation of these to foster concrete and tangible changes in practices and impacts remains limited.

Regarding target 12.1 on the implementation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP), the comprehensive stock-taking at mid-term of the 10YFP has highlighted a number of achievements and opportunities to build upon, as well as challenges to be addressed over the next five years. Whereas an integrated approach to SCP requires strong coordination across the government, only 26 of the 71 countries that have reported on their policies on SCP have shared information on national coordination mechanisms. Only a few of these are mandated to coordinate policy implementation across ministries.

Regarding target 12.2 on the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, domestic material consumption (DMC) per unit of GDP changed globally from





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1.2 to 1.1 kg per dollar of GDP from 2010 to 2015, indicating that fewer materials are required to produce a unit of output. However, DMC per capita and in absolute terms from 2000 to 2017 is steadily growing globally, with consequences in terms of both resource depletion and associated environmental impacts.

In addition, in spite of the significant increase in the per-capita material footprint of developing countries, developed countries currently have at least double the per-capita footprint of developing countries for all types of materials. In particular, the material footprint for fossil fuels is more than four times higher for developed than developing countries. As fossil fuels directly impact the environment in various ways, the need to decouple their use from economic growth is key to achieving SCP.

Regarding target 12.3 on food loss and waste, several efforts and interventions designed to tackle food loss and waste are being implemented by a broad spectrum of stakeholders originating from the public and private sectors, international development agencies, civil society, academia and research communities. These include research to identify the causes and to recommend solutions to the problems; target-setting, the development of policies, frameworks and the enactment of legislation, the use of market-based instruments (taxes, incentives and subsidy schemes) investment in infrastructure as well as the implementation of global, regional and national campaigns and education to promote awareness and advocacy on the issue.

Regarding target 12.4 on environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer has a 100 per cent compliance rate with regard to transmitting information on the implementation of their obligations. The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade has a rate of 71 per cent. However, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants are only at 57 and 51 per cent respectively.

Serious concern exists in relation to the lack of adequate monitoring framework for many of the targets under Goal 12. Ten out of 13 indicators for Goal 12 remain as tier III indicators, meaning that no internationally established methodology or standards are yet





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available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested.

To fully cover all targets of Goal 12, additional indicators may be required for some targets under Goal 12. In this regard, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators has proposed including additional indicators for targets 12.4 and 12.6. Furthermore, target 12.3 may also require splitting indicator 12.3.1 into two sub-indicators to cover the food waste part of the target, as proposed by its custodian agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme.

Monitoring of the shift to SCP across sectors, organizations and countries is essential to identify emerging trends and strategic gaps, to scale-up and replicate innovative and impactful practices, and to demonstrate and showcase the benefits of SCP to build greater momentum for change. Under the 10YFP, the monitoring and reporting framework “Indicators of Success: Demonstrating the shift to Sustainable Consumption and Production” was developed to guide and measure the collective impact of policies, initiatives and actions for the global shift to SCP. The One Planet network, which has been formed to support the implementation of the 10YFP, has contributed to reporting efforts in this regard.

In addition, sustainability reporting is gaining momentum, driven by new private sector partnerships to achieve the SDGs along with growing interest from companies (especially large companies), regulators, investors and other stakeholders. According to a recent report from KPMG, 93 per cent of the world’s 250 largest companies (in terms of revenue) are now reporting on sustainability. Companies such as Nestle, Microsoft and Ikea are also increasing their engagement in the One Planet network programmes, specifically those on sustainable food systems, consumer information and sustainable lifestyles.

To respond to different levels in development and differing capacities among countries to address the challenges of Goal 12, particularly in small island developing States, least developed countries and other countries in vulnerable situations, capacity-building and sustainable finance are critical. In particular, availability of, and access to, financial resources to support actions that are transformational and at scale is a key factor in successful implementation. However, SDG 12 is the least well-resourced of all SDGs. In





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In addition to Member States and intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and financial institutions will need to play an important role in unlocking the necessary finance.

Detailed look at interlinkages and implications for policy-making and implementation to realize SDG 12

SCP is one of the most cost-efficient and effective ways to achieve economic development, reduce impacts on the environment and advance human well-being. SDG 12 is linked to nearly all other goals, notably SDGs 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 13, 14 and 15.

Achieving SCP will deliver not only SDG 12, but also simultaneously contribute significantly to the achievement of almost all of the SDGs, directly or indirectly. Although a stand-alone goal (Goal 12) has been included, SCP should be seen as an enabler for the implementation of a range of other goals and many of their targets. The relationship between SCP and other SDGs is reinforced by targets in SDGs 4 and 8 that link education and economic growth respectively to the achievement of SCP.

More resource-efficient production generates room for productivity increases that can have positive effects on value added and therefore on workers' remuneration. Particular attention to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises is needed, as such enterprises face greater challenges to enhance resource and energy efficiency. Supporting effective and accountable governance at all levels is needed to understand the appropriate incentives, regulations and relationships required for and with the private sector to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This is especially the case where there are trade-offs between SDG targets and the kind of transformation required by SDG 12 has to be more clearly defined.

There needs to be a shift away from economic models that value growth for growth's sake, toward a new mind-set that respects planetary boundaries, recognizes the economy as a subset of nature, and supports the concept of living in harmony with nature (reflected in SDG targets 8.4, 12.2 and 12.8, in particular). Regional priorities and variances should be kept in mind and accounted for; regional approaches lead to greater ownership of actions, more scale and coherence in those actions and in many cases progress toward





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multiple goals. Factors such as trade relations, institutional arrangements, and other power dynamics can negatively affect—and even undo—the efforts to achieve the paradigm shift for SCP.

A number of thematic issues have interlinkages with SCP, including climate action, sustainable transport and ocean and marine resource conservation, including actions to combat plastics pollution. For example, the whole 2030 Agenda, together with the Paris Agreement, sets a range of universal transformative objectives for shifting all countries onto a sustainable and low-carbon development path. The two agendas are deeply interdependent and reflect a strong potential for mutual benefits – they also both have the shift to SCP embedded at their core. SDG 12 is instrumental for reconciling economic, social and environmental objectives and decoupling greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from economic growth. For sustainable transport solutions, the principles of SCP, such as resource efficiency, are of utmost importance for the transport sector. The achievement of sustainable transport can be supported through policies and actions for SCP, on both the supply and demand side of this sector.

An illustrative interlinkage exists between SCP and the issue of plastics pollution in the ocean. Eighty per cent of all pollution in the sea comes from land, including some 8 million tons of plastic waste each year. Solutions are found in the lifecycle management approach to plastics that aims to avoid unnecessary use of plastics and prevent waste and to ensure that plastics are designed for collection, reuse, recycling and end-of-life management.

Furthermore, a number of other new and emerging issues come into play with SDG 12. First, the use of nanomaterials may not be effectively addressed by existing regulatory frameworks, due to their recent innovation and use and the health and environmental risks of these materials. Second, while innovative ICT applications can enable SCP, ICTs themselves require substantial energy consumption and specific technologies. Therefore, effective policies are needed to ensure the negative impacts of ICTs, such as e-waste, are minimized. Third, through its negative impact on the environment and natural resources which underpin livelihoods, unsustainable production and consumption patterns can present one of several factors leading people to leave their place of residence. From a migration-development perspective, policies need to take into account migration





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decision-making dynamics linked to production and consumption patterns, which in turn can be impacted by global trends and factors such as climate change.

Recommendations

It is important to convene and broker partnerships for sustainable development, cover gaps and create a more coherent response at scale by pooling expertise and assets across UN entities. It would be critical to strengthen existing multi-stakeholder partnerships on SCP. Partnerships involving the private sector and multi-stakeholder actors can be critical, as the private sector retains the capital and many of the technologies, knowledge and software necessary to enable the shift towards SCP patterns. Successful partnerships for SDG 12 will necessarily include industry to achieve scale through wide scale implementation on the supply side. Changing consumer behaviour is important, as is adapting operations of corporations, including their overall business model if needed, as they have a significant impact on how resources are used and consumer preferences and markets are shaped. There is a need for greater commitment by industry to prevent pollution of water, air and land on which communities depend, especially those in abject poverty, particularly with regard to chemicals and waste management. Creating balanced, effective and operational partnerships at scale is essential, but there is a need to understand what works best and delivers for the SDGs.

The One Planet network is a multi-stakeholder partnership for sustainable development and an implementation mechanism for SDG 12. Under the recently adopted “One Plan for One Planet: Strategy 2018-2022”, the One Planet network committed to strengthen its role and effectiveness as an implementation mechanism for SDG 12. A number of actions were identified in this regard, including to support the development of an effective monitoring framework for SDG 12. Enhanced support from a wider range of actors for the work of the One Planet network could substantially accelerate the achievement of SDG 12.

Overall, it is clear that a streamlined and coordinated approach for reporting across Goal 12 is required. To respond to the request of national statistical offices and national focal





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points to UN custodian agencies to collaborate more closely to limit the duplication of reporting efforts by countries, it will be necessary to clarify data flows and ensure consistent understanding of methodologies and terminologies for comparable data collection. It will also be important to facilitate a coordinated effort of UN custodian agencies for SDG 12, which could include streamlining methodologies, a centralized reporting system, joint awareness raising and capacity development. Strengthening coherence and support to Goal 12 across the UN System requires that SCP and Goal 12 be on the agenda of UN agencies at the highest level.

In view of the close interlinkages of SDG 12 and other goals, it would be important to ensure integrated policy-making and implementation at the national level. This can take place, for example, through national coordination mechanisms with the mandate to coordinate policy-making and implementation across ministries mandated to design policies which influence consumption and production patterns.

The need to finance a shift to sustainable consumption and production is evident. Sustainable financing, together with capacity-building, should be sought in a manner that ensures inclusiveness and equity, identifying and addressing those left behind, while achieving the relevant SDG targets.

