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THE AWARE CONSUMER

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IN FOCUS

Consumer Friendly
State Awards 2020

World Consumer Rights Day 2020

**THE SUSTAINABLE
CONSUMER
AND**



INITIATIVE OF ODISHA GOVERNMENT
On Good Governance

PLUS

ROUND UP • MY MARKET • THE PRESCRIPTION



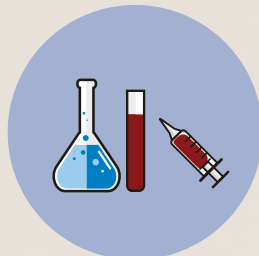
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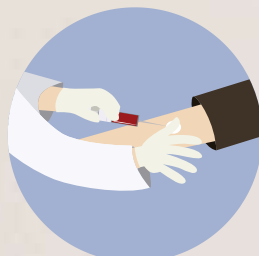
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QUALITY IN PATIENT CARE



BEJON KUMAR MISRA | bejonmisra@theawareconsumer.in

The **POWER** To CHANGE

This World Consumer Rights Day is our chance to make the biggest impact possible. Climate change is a global challenge that requires coordinated and global solutions. Working together, our voices calling for change are far more powerful than they would be alone.

THE CLOCK IS ticking on our planet. It is a question of the survival of human race. Though I am no doomsayer, however, I would like to refer to January 2018 forecast of Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. That January, they moved the doomsday clock closer to midnight, and warned the world that it is as close to catastrophe in 2018 as it has ever been. The scientists had cited growing nuclear threats, climate change and a lack of trust in political institutions for setting the doomsday clock at two minutes to midnight — 30 seconds closer than it was in 2017. The clock was left unchanged in 2019 due to the twin threats of nuclear weapons and climate change. In 2020, the clock is closer than ever: It moved 100 seconds to midnight on January 23.

According to the Bulletin of the Atomic the two threats to humanity continue to exist simultaneously — nuclear war and climate change. This existential threat is compounded by a threat multiplier, cyber-enabled information warfare, that undercuts society's ability to respond. The scientists warn that the international security situation is dire and it is not only because these threats exist. They blame the world leaders for allowing the

international political infrastructure for managing them to erode.

While countering nuclear war and cyber threat may be beyond the realm of ordinary citizens and consumers like us; it is undeniable that we can be the force for change as regards climate change. This is why the 2020 theme of World Consumer Rights Day “The Sustainable Consumer” resonates so strongly with current world scenario.

Each one of us can become a sustainable consumer by becoming a conscious consumer. With the power of the internet at our disposal, becoming one just requires a little bit of knowledge and tweaking our lifestyle a wee bit to allow for decisions that have minimum impact on the planet.

So, let us vow this 15 March 2020, the World Consumer Rights Day, to start with small transformations within us to leave this world a better place for our children. We have the power to change.



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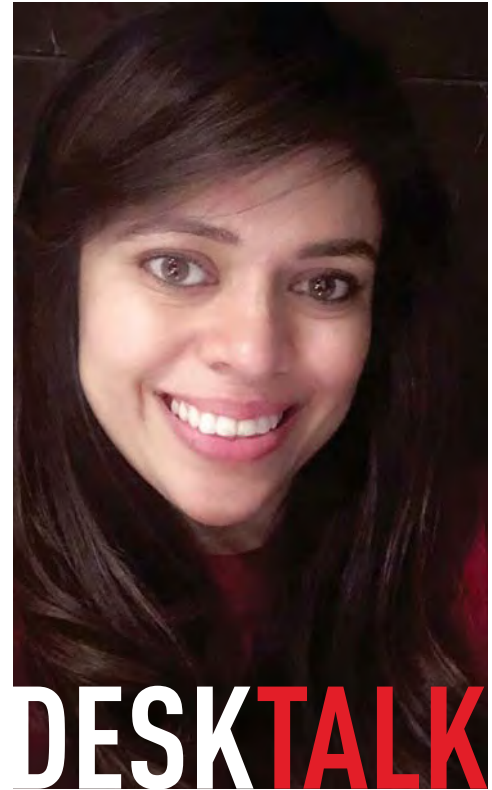
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Message from the Editor-in-Chief

POOJA KHAITAN

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Become A Sustainable Consumer



LET US FIRST look at a few facts about plastic. According to the National Geographic, more than 5 trillion pieces of plastic are already floating in our oceans; worldwide, 73 percent of beach litter is plastic which includes filters from cigarette butts; and by 2050, virtually every seabird species on the planet will be eating plastic. Gross, you may say! In fact, already around 700 species of marine animals have reportedly eaten or become entangled in plastic so far.

Now look at these facts:

As of 2015, more than 6.9 billion tons of plastic waste had been generated. Only around 9 percent of that was recycled and 12 percent was incinerated. But a whopping 79 percent accumulated in landfills or environment. And this plastic would remain on earth for 450 years to forever, as per estimates.

Yet, around the world, nearly a million plastic beverage bottles are sold every minute and the largest market for plastics is packaging materials. This is the trash that accounts for nearly half of all plastic waste generated globally. Worse, more than 40 percent of plastic is used just once and then tossed in the bin.

Plastic waste includes bottles, bottle caps, food wrappers, grocery bags, and polystyrene container. The more plastic we consume, the more we produce – world plastic production has increased exponentially from 2.3 million tons in 1950 to 162 million in 1993 to 448 million by 2015. In 2018, world plastics production totalled around 359 million metric tons.

And, plastic is just one part of the environmental issue. Climate change is no longer a topic discussed in elite scientific gatherings alone. It concerns you and me, the ordinary citizens, as millions of us are reeling under the effects of climate change. Long harsh winters and longer harsher summers are just the tip of the iceberg. It is up to us how we change the narrative around climate change.

Becoming a sustainable consumer is the first step towards it.

A handwritten signature of Pooja Khaitan in black ink.

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RESEARCH FEATURE

WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY 2020
THE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER & SDGs



It is through the path of Sustainable Development Goals that we can become truly empowered sustainable consumers.



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STATE AWARDS



5th Edition
of The Aware
Consumer
State Awards
2020

15th March, 2020



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HORIZONS

DRIVE TOWARDS
SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION



Rising consumer awareness is leading the march towards sustainability. It is important to ensure that the momentum continues.



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INTERVIEW

Shri Ranendra Pratap Swain
Hon'ble Cabinet Minister,
Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare,
Co-operation, Government of Odisha
in Bhubaneswar



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MY MARKET

UNDERSTANDING
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



Sustainable future is today an imperative for the human species. But first we must understand what it is and how we can work towards achieving it.



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OUT OF THE BOX



The practice by richer countries to dump their plastic waste in poorer countries may no longer be possible under a UN treaty.



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IN FOCUS



PLASTICS -
THE BANE OF
PLANET EARTH



HELENA LEURENT
DIRECTOR GENERAL, CONSUMERS INTERNATIONAL

"The consumer voice is too absent from international discussions that impact our lives, and this was the resounding message we delivered to world leaders at Davos. The consumer advocacy movement is a crucial partner for providing local and global, real-world experience and perspective, as well as urgency and activism for constructive change. This will also require change in the consumer movement to support meaningful innovation"

ROUNDUP



Now that consumers are becoming more conscientious shoppers, it seems everyone from artisan-produced luxury labels to discount mass retailers are positioning themselves to appeal to those seeking more sustainable product



Rise Of The CONSCIOUS CONSUMER

For sustainable consumption to become a movement, we need to adopt a multi-pronged strategy

DATA BRIEFING

55% -

359 million tons of plastics were produced globally in 2018; more than 50 percent of it was in Asia.



NOT SO LONG ago, owning the latest launch in fashion, mobile to automobile seemed to be the right thing to do. Many of us are still in that phase of mindless pursuit of tangible possessions disregarding the cost of our passion to the planet. Shopaholism as a disease seems to have afflicted consumers in developing countries, with rising purchasing power and access to global brands. However, things seem to be changing as obsession for the latest luxury items is becoming a dated pursuit for many. Globally, consumers are becoming more knowledgeable about the impact of their choices on the society and the planet.

Millennials and minimalism

The drive towards minimalism could be because of the fact that today's generation grew up in an atmosphere of abundance, most in two income families, and never felt the pinch. The past generations had to work hard to make every purchase, and hence, the purchasing power became a status symbol and their acquisitions artifacts of their new status. Also, the current generation lives in a digital age and knowledge about the consequences of any action is easily available, be it smoking or shopping mindlessly.

In the past decades, fast fashion became a phenomenon and flooded world markets with cheap goods. The high street brands that thrive on the wear-it-once culture promote multiple fashion seasons. Mindless consumerism is the order of the day as nobody wants to be seen dead in something "oh, so last season"; and it is nobody's concern that the planet has turned into a dumping yard for unsold goods and consumer discards.

But internet has a way of making someone's secret everyone's open secret. Conscious activists and green warriors soon exposed the underbelly of fashion industry – how cheap labor was being exploited in poor countries and how fashion was becoming a burden on the planet.

The overabundance of the past decades has resulted in driving the younger generations away from this culture. They are actively adopting the credo of less is more, guided not just by the idea of decluttering but also as a way to pursue meaning and happiness; much like our ancestors did.

A welcome change indeed, as the Consumer International observes that consumers have a vital role to play, firstly, through their purchasing power, and also through their ability to push for system change in supply chains or changes in regulation.

Globally, governments are pushing for sustainable consumption and disposal, and consumers are responding positively by making changes to their lifestyle to be more sustainable – recycling, reducing food waste and avoiding unsustainable products.

This changing perspective has meant there is pressure on brands to offer sustainable products and convince consumers, especially millennials, that are committed to sustainability – 66% of consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable brands, the figure rises to 73% millennials.

However, despite this change in attitude, when it comes to actually spending on green and sustainable products, there is a lag between intention and action. There is an urgent need for businesses and governments to ensure fair social conditions that promote sustainable consumption. According to a survey, 37% consumers don't know how they can help tackle climate change and 59% feel they do not get enough support from governments, and 51% from business.

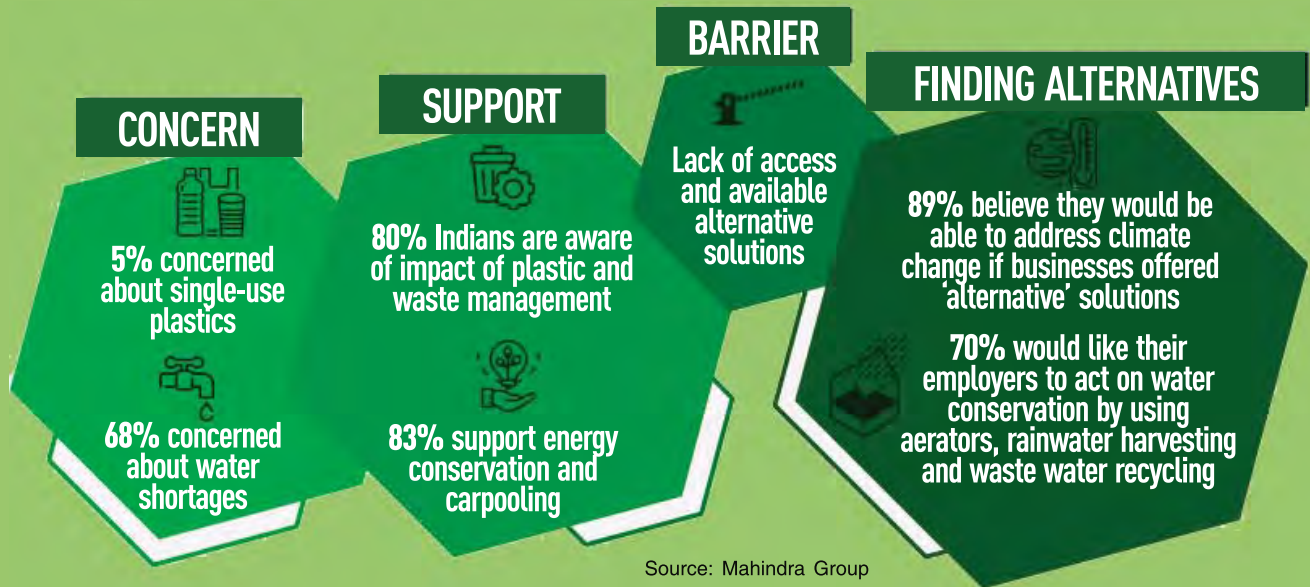
Consumers need information, choice and infrastructure to live more sustainable lives. Needless to say, a drive for sustainable future cannot succeed without the main protagonists, the consumers. Hence, it is critical that all efforts are made to sustain the shift towards sustainability by consumers.

It is important to narrow the intention-action gap if we are to meet our sustainability goals. According to a study



Become a sustainable consumer today!

GREENER SOLUTIONS: A BUSINESS NEED



by Unilever, how much of greenhouse gas emission takes place depends on the product choices of customers and also how they use and dispose these products. If it is done in a sustainable way, taking care to conserve water and energy while say using the washing machine or recycling packages and containers instead of discarding it after a single use. The Harvard Business Review has identified five ways that companies can influence green habits in consumers. These include – use social influence, shape good habits, leverage the domino effect, decide whether to talk to the heart or the brain, and favor experiences over ownership.

Give consumers an alternative

According to the Mahindra Group's 'Alternativism' report, four out of five (80%) Indians are aware of the impact of plastic and waste management, while three out of four respondents (75%) claim to be 'concerned' about the risks that single-use plastics pose to the environment. Additionally, 83% of Indians describe themselves as 'interested' in making lifestyle changes such as carpooling, using public transport or driving electric vehicles to conserve energy. 70% of respondents are 'aware and informed' about the environmental issue of water conservation, while more than two out of three (68%) are 'concerned'

about water shortages in the near future that countries like India are almost certain to face. 70% of respondents would like their employers to act on water conservation by using aerators, doing rainwater harvesting and recycling wastewater, among other initiatives.

The expectations of Indians from the business community are also very clear. 89% believe they would be able to address climate change more actively if companies offered alternative products and solutions.

The research states, just over a quarter (27%) of Indians are able to find alternative products minimizing their use of plastic.

According to the report, 'alternativism' is a state-of-mind, a readiness to experiment and speculate, a commitment to think differently and an opportunity to innovate. The lack of alternatives is, in part, exacerbated by conventional thinking being applied to solutions that address climate change. True sustainability can only be achieved through unconventional, alternative thinking concerning business models, production, materials, infrastructure, commercial propositions and valuations. However, this process is not linear, there are no guarantees.

Conclusion

All efforts must be made to make sustainability a lifestyle mantra. This can be done if it resonates with the lifestyle choices people make. Governments and industry must work to ensure that sustainable choices are easier and affordable, so that they become the first choice for even the price conscious. Sustainability should not become bracketed with premium goods, rather it should be for mass consumption. ▶

Say it with flowers,
but ensure it is locally grown.

Celebrations need
not increase your
carbon footprint.
You just need to
become a conscious
consumer.

Sustainable Valentine's Day

IMAGE: PIXABAY

HEARD OF SUSTAINABLE Valentine's Day? For the uninitiated, it is about becoming sensible and taking sustainable decisions when celebrating the lovers' day. Social media influencers have come up with a list of DIYs and advice for those celebrating the day that could be your little way of giving back to the planet or saving it further trauma.

In the past decades, all these 'days', be it Mother's Day, Father's Day, Friendship Day or what not, have become an avenue of commercial exploitation for companies. It is as though at least one day per month there is something to celebrate and you are being urged to hit the stores and buy a gift for those you love, no matter that the reason is quite meaningless. From weeks ahead you are bombarded with advertisements and promotional exhorting you to buy gifts and cards.

The waste generated due to these celebrations is unimaginable – useless gifts that land up in the landfill, paper cards made at the cost of millions of trees, plastics from packaging, food wastage and every other imaginable thing that is harmful for the environment.

These celebrations have become consumerism-driven events, and we are under pressure to buy, buy and buy to conform. However, it is up to us how we can stop this mindless circus.

While celebrating these bonds is certainly important, we can make it more meaningful by ensuring that we do not increase our carbon footprint. For the millennials especially, who are concerned about the planet and want to live sustainability, these events can be an opportunity to invest in gifts that are planet-focused and earth-friendly. Love is all about respect and care and what other way to do it than by respecting the environment all the while?

Here are a few sustainable ideas for celebrating these events:

- Recycle, Reuse paper bags as wrapping paper - it is better for the planet
- Make a card - instead of buying a card that would only be thrown in the dustbin after the day, making one is not only cost-effective but also earth-friendly
- Buying flowers? Yes, go ahead, but instead of buying an exotic bouquet, buy the flowers that are locally grown. Your small gesture will go a long way to strengthen local economy.
- You can ditch the flowers altogether for a plant. A plant not only lives longer, it adds to the aesthetics of the house and if you choose carefully, it can even act as an air purifier.

So, go ahead and enjoy with a conscience! ▶

IMAGE: PIXABAY

Consumption overkill.



On 29 July 2019, humanity used up nature's resource budget for the entire year.

EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY 2019

Was July 29, The Earliest Ever



Earth Overshoot Day

For all of us in the international community to continue living as we currently do, we need 1.75 Earths. The reality is we have just one planet. We must begin to live as sustainably as possible and within what our planet offers.



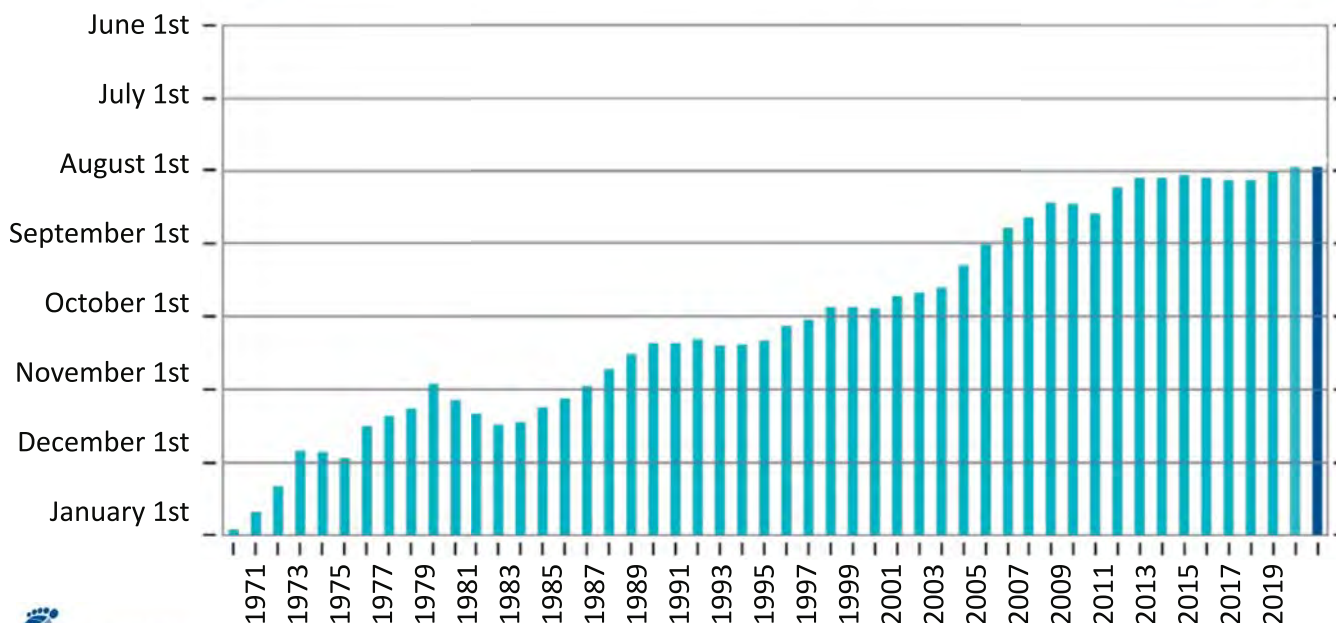
1 Earth

Earth Overshoot Day

1970-2019



1.75 Earth



IF YOU ARE wondering what Earth Overshoot Day is, then here is a primer: Earth Overshoot Day is the date on which human species' demand for ecological resources like fish and forests, for instance, and services in a given year exceeds what earth can regenerate in that year. The concept was originally conceived by Andrew Simms while working at the UK think tank New Economics Foundation.

In 2019, on July 29, we used up nature's resource budget for the entire year, according to Global Footprint Network, an international sustainability organization that has pioneered the Ecological Footprint. The Earth Overshoot Day moved up two months over the past 20 years to 29 July in 2019, the earliest date ever.

Unfortunately, we keep growing this deficit by liquidating our planet's natural capital and accumulating waste, primarily carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

What this means is that we are currently using nature 1.75 times faster than what our planet's ecosystems is capable of regenerating. This is akin to using 1.75 earths. Overshoot can happen because we are depleting our natural capital, and this compromises our future resource

security. The costs of this global ecological overspending are becoming evident in the form of deforestation, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, or the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The latter leads to climate change and more frequent extreme weather events.

As Earth Overshoot Day is occurring ever earlier in the year, and a big part of it is the growing amounts of CO2 emissions, it is important to take decisive action.

Moving the date of Earth Overshoot Day back 5 days each year would allow humanity to reach one-planet compatibility before 2050. Significant opportunities to achieve this are in five key areas: cities, energy, food, population, and planet. For instance, cutting CO2 emissions from fossil fuel burning by 50% would #MoveTheDate by 93 days.

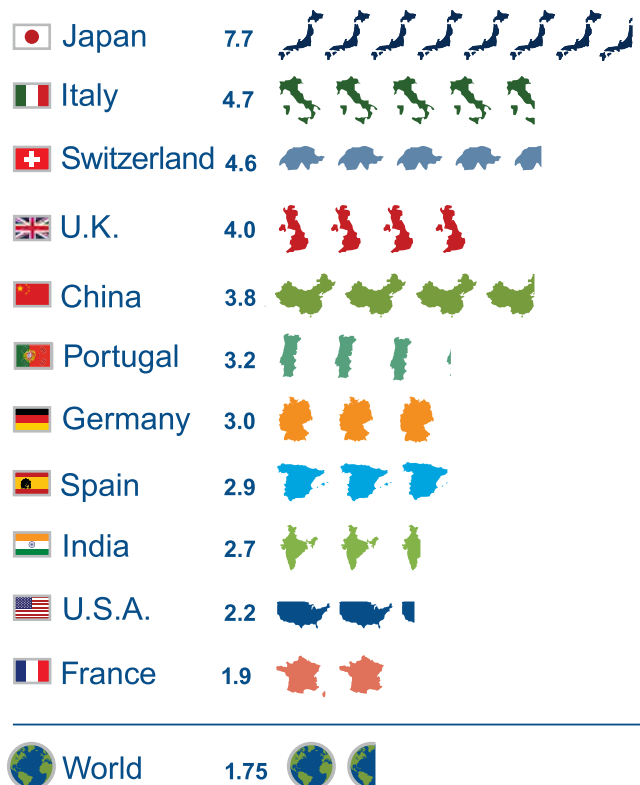
Global Footprint Network has launched the beta version of the #MoveTheDate Solutions Map. It is designed to complement the Footprint Calculator. The latter enables people to calculate their own Ecological Footprint and their personal Earth Overshoot Day.

Source: Secondary research & media reports

How many Earths do we need if the world's population lived like...



How many countries are required to meet the demand of its citizens...



Source: Global Footprint Network National Footprint Accounts 2019



Consumers, Beware

All That Green Choice May Be Just GREENWASH

In the absence of clearly defined concept and guidelines to regulate sustainability, consumers are exposed to potential frauds in the market and must exercise caution when buying for products labelled so.

The world has witnessed a surge in consumers who are adopting sustainability as their lifestyle mantra. Especially in the last decade, as the threat of climate change has become menacingly real, there has been voluntary adoption of products and brands that promise to care for the environment and be ethical. However, the sustainability movement has become an opportunity for businesses to promote their products as green or sustainable and also to flaunt corporate social responsibility credentials. However, it is anybody's guess as to how much these products and practices actually adhere to the sustainable label.

From multinational corporations like Walmart, PepsiCo, McDonald's and Starbucks, who have made sustainability central to their corporate philosophy, to local brands, a plethora of companies have joined the green bandwagon.

However, in the absence of a clearly defined concept, sustainable is a wholly unregulated word. The result is companies bandying about the term in their advertisements and PR with impunity. The absence of international standards that enforce a compliance level to be adjudged sustainable, companies around the world are defining sustainability in their own terms. The result is a befuddled consumer left to draw their own interpretations.

All that grass is not green, it could be greenwash.

Obviously, there is no consensus as to what exactly sustainability is.

Defining sustainability: a challenge

Sustainability as a concept has its roots in sustainable development., which was presented in the World Commission on Environment and Development's report in 1987. Sustainable development was defined as that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs". It also established the three pillars of sustainability: social, environmental and economic. This has been referred to as the 'triple bottom line' and the United Nations now call these pillars the three Ps: People, Planet and Prosperity.

Sustainability as a concept has been dynamic, evolving and gaining traction and being associated to newer fields. As the world evolves some practices become redundant and are no longer sustainable. As such, the concept of sustainability cannot be static, and this makes defining it a challenge. This makes sustainability more like a goal to work towards rather than a set of well-defined, measurable practices, as some argue.

The crux is that sustainability remains an ambiguous term free to individual interpretation, business compulsions and political agendas.

The business of sustainability

Sustainability hence has become a malleable business concept. To cater to the growing sustainability demand from consumers, corporates are exploiting these ambiguities and are touting their sustainable credentials while setting their own standards of sustainability.

As such, we have big corporations like Walmart, PepsiCo, McDonald's and Starbucks setting their own sustainable goals, practices and certifications and making these initiatives a funnel to advertise their sustainable credentials to consumers and promote the brand. Thus, sustainability has become a brand value to build brand reputation and public profile and access new markets.

However, as the range of sustainability claims of different brands, established and suspect, has resulted in an ever-increasing volume of standards and commitments; for consumers, this raises the challenge of distinguishing between truly ethical companies and opportunistic ones who are capitalizing on the sustainability trend.

Sustainability is not just subscribing to one set of practices. Yet, corporations focus on specific elements of

sustainability that they find convenient while obscuring the whole spectrum of sustainability issues. An investigation in their so-called sustainability claims reveals a whole horde of unsustainable practices.

Confusing labelling

The simultaneously growing sustainable certification and eco-labels field has become complex as sustainability encompasses from production practices and workers' welfare to recycling and wastage considerations and much more. Most companies sport certifications and labels like 'organic', 'fair trade' and 'carbon neutral', and eco-friendly, etc. However, whether it is the biodegradable packaging or the use of all natural ingredients that is being certified is unclear.

The plethora of certification and eco-labels have actually failed to provide accurate information to consumers, which is contrary to its purpose. It has only ended up creating more green noise and increasing consumer confusion.

In fact, Which?, a consumer group reports that basis a survey of 1,000 people it found that even those consumers who actively seek sustainable food products had little understanding and awareness of most ethical certification schemes and labels on the market. Fairtrade was the most understood term (82%), followed by organic (54%). However, most consumers were still confused as to what these standards actually meant.

Notably, in 2012, while the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in its Green Guides set guidelines for marketers on environmental claims; it declined to provide guidelines for the term 'sustainable' saying it "lacked an adequate basis to give meaningful guidance."

Sustainability is a broad term, lending itself to a diversity of use and imagery, and it is practically impossible to test the claims. However, the lack of guidance means that the term 'sustainable', like the term 'natural', may come to mean everything and nothing at all.

Hence, achieving the goals of sustainability may remain a pipedream till we succeed in advancing our understanding of sustainable practices; finding effective mechanisms to measure it; and developing appropriate definition to regulate the use of the term, may prevent its misappropriation by motivated companies.

Till that happens, we need to be aware that every green choice being offered in the market may be a potential greenwash. ▶

Source: Secondary research & media reports



World Consumer Rights Day 2020

The Sustainable Consumer & SDGs

It is through the path of Sustainable Development Goals that we can become truly empowered sustainable consumers.



For a sustainable future, we must strive to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

COME MARCH 15, the world will get together to celebrate World Consumer Rights Day 2020. Consumers International has announced that the theme for this year will be 'The Sustainable Consumer'. However, if we as consumers intend moving away from the annual ritual of observing a day dedicated to us to actually implementing the changes to become sustainable citizens of the planet, there is a lot that we need to do, and now.

The focus of the campaign this year is the need for sustainable consumption globally, as well as highlighting the important role that consumer rights and protection can play. Consumers International highlights the need to move from intention to action. To protect the planet and provide fair social conditions for current and future generations, i.e. "we need to think about the way we produce and consume goods and services". What sustainable consumption means is the efforts we need to undertake to increase resource efficiency and fair trade while helping to alleviate poverty and enable everyone to enjoy a good quality of life with access to food, water, energy, medicine and more.

As the international consumers body points out, the demand for sustainable products is increasing – especially among the younger consumers. It cites the data of a global study by Nielsen that found 66% of consumers saying they're willing to pay more for sustainable brands. However, some studies have found the actual purchases of sustainable products to be in the 20-30% range. It's low because sustainability is not the easy choice for consumers and requires effort on their part to research or identify the right purchase, change behavior or requires paying more.

Various studies point to early signals of a narrowing of this intention-action gap and as they say, strike when the iron is hot – it is imperative that we push forward towards a tipping point. That will happen when we collectively succeed in making sustainable consumption the easy option for consumers.

Sustainable consumption is but a part of the overall Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); specifically Goal 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. As consumer-citizens, it is our duty to ensure that we choose the path to sustainable future and make every effort to fulfill the SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goals

The concern for sustainability is not new. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future, and was adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. The agenda incorporates 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. The SDGs recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and

working to preserve our oceans and forests. These goals provide the map to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, addressing global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The 17 Goals are all interconnected.

In the context of the Consumer Rights Day 2020 theme, it is pertinent to revisit the SDGs and understand how they inform the spirit of Sustainable Consumer.

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere



For the poor sustainable choices are a luxury.

Globally, more than 700 million people or 10% of the world population is still living in extreme poverty. Worldwide, the poverty rate in rural areas is 17.2 per cent—more than three times higher than in urban areas. A job alone does not guarantee a decent living. Worldwide 8 per cent of employed workers and their families were living in extreme poverty in 2018. More disheartening is the fact that that one out of five children live in extreme poverty. Poverty affects children the worse and it is important to ensure social protection for all children and other vulnerable groups if we want to reduce poverty. Sustainability in this scenario is a luxury.

Goal 2: Zero hunger

How we grow, share and consume our food impacts how much food we have for all and what kind. Needless to say, if we adopt the right means to do agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and stop food wastage down the chain; the



world will not be short of nutritious food for all and will be able to generate decent incomes, apart from supporting people-centered rural development and protecting the environment. This what we call sustainable production. We cannot reverse the damage already caused by our thoughtless actions. But if we can change the way we grow our food and consume it, we can ensure food for the 821 million people who are hungry today and the additional 2 billion people expected to be undernourished by 2050.

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Sustainable development cannot take place if the people who populate the world are unhealthy. Hence it is important to promote healthy living well-being at all ages. Despite significant strides in the field of healthcare, the world still needs to achieve the target of less than 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030 and reducing premature deaths due to incommunicable diseases by 1/3 by the year 2030. We still need to work towards eradicating a wide range of diseases and address various persistent and emerging health issues. This calls for sustainable choices in every field of life.



Health for all is a primary concern.

Goal 4: Quality education

Can sustainable development happen without educated citizens? Quality education is the foundation to creating sustainable development. Educated individuals are aware of their rights and responsibilities, understand the need



An educated citizen is an aware consumer.

for a sustainable way of living to ensure a sustainable future for our children and can work to improve quality of life, and develop or work with tools that can help develop innovative solutions to the greatest ills plaguing the world. Education can enable consumers to make informed consumption choices.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



There can be no development if half the world's population are not given equal opportunities.

It has long been recognized now that no sustainable development can take place in a world where there is discrimination against women and others. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and necessary for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. In the corporate world, diversity and inclusion is yet to become a fundamental pillar of business organizations. Progress is happening but a lot still needs to be done to ensure women get their rightful dues. Women are central to a family's decisions on sustainable lifestyles.

Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all

While there is sufficient fresh water available on our planet to fulfill our need for clean water, due to our bad planning and infrastructure, many are denied this basic necessity. Add to this, the rampant wastage of water via unsustainable industrial practices and domestic consumption. Globally, water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation are the chief reasons for food



Water is the elixir for development.

insecurity, limited livelihood choices and lack of educational opportunities for poor families. According to the UN, more than 2 billion people are currently living with the risk of reduced access to freshwater resources and by 2050, at least one in four people is likely to live in a country

affected by chronic or recurring shortages of fresh water. Sustainable consumption what can save the world.

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy

Energy is central to nearly every major challenge and opportunity the world faces today. However, our current practices have resulted in much wastage of energy. Working towards this goal is especially important as it interlinks with other Sustainable Development Goals. Focusing on universal access to energy, increased energy efficiency and the increased use of renewable energy through new economic and job opportunities is crucial to creating more sustainable and inclusive communities and resilience to environmental issues like climate change.



Sustainable energy sources will ensure all-round development.

Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

With global unemployment rates of 5.7% and even a job not being guarantee to ensure escape from poverty in many places; it calls for a rethink and retooling of economic and social policies aimed at eradicating poverty. For sustainable economic growth, we need to create sustainable jobs that can act as impetus for



There must be decent employment opportunity for all.

economic growth without adversely impacting the environment. There must be job opportunities and decent working conditions for the entire working age population.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

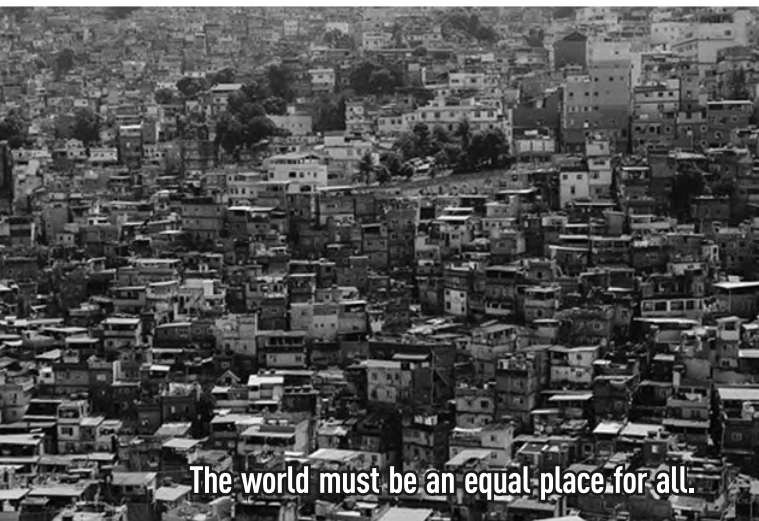
While SDG recognizes investments in infrastructure – transport, irrigation, energy and information and communication technology – as crucial to achieving sustainable development and empowering communities; it also calls for sustainable and environment friendly processes. Industries are responsible for environmental degradation to a large extent, for example unmitigated mining and extraction, pollution of rivers and water bodies, air pollution through carbon dioxide emissions, deforestation, etc. True manufacturing is an important driver of economic development and employment, but it must become conscious of the cost to environment.



Industrialization and innovation go hand in hand.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Despite efforts aimed at poverty reduction, inequality persists across the globe. and large disparities exist in access to health and education services and other assets. Economic growth must be inclusive and



The world must be an equal place for all.

incorporate the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. Though inequality has been reduced both between and within countries, policies must be universal in principle, paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized populations to eradicate inequality.

Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Cities are hubs of progress and must be built in a sustainable fashion to allow people to advance socially and economically. According to the UN, the number of people living within cities is forecast to rise to 5 billion by 2030. This would create unimaginable pressure on the cities and calls for efficient urban planning and management practices to tackle the challenges that would arise due to the rapid pace of urbanization. Cities need to develop environment friendly management practices with regard to waste, pollution and poverty control. As sustainable consumers/citizens, we need to contribute our mite to make our cities sustainable.



Our cities must be safe sanctuaries.

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

What is sustainable consumption and production? SDGs explain it as promoting resource and energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructure, and providing access to basic services, green and decent jobs and a better quality of life for all. With sustainable consumption and production, we can achieve overall development plans, reduce future economic, environmental and social costs, strengthen economic competitiveness and reduce poverty. Sustainable consumption and production follows the dictum of “doing more and better with less”. This leads to reducing resource use, degradation and pollution along the whole life cycle, while increasing quality of life. Consumers need to be educated on sustainable consumption and lifestyles, knowledge about standards and labels that will help them follow the path of sustainable consumption reducing cost to the planet.



Our consumption patterns must change and dictate production methods.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Climate change is a global problem. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries. Changing weather patterns, rising sea levels and extreme weather events are added to greenhouse gas emissions are jeopardizing lives of citizens. It is feared that world's average surface temperature may likely surpass 3 degrees centigrade this



The threat of climate change is real, and we must combat it seriously.

century. The impact of these changes will affect the poorest and most vulnerable groups the most. Fortunately, there is rising awareness among nations for the need to develop affordable, scalable solutions to cleaner, more resilient economies. More and more people are turning to renewable energy and working towards adopting sustainable living practices that do not threaten the environment.

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

Sustainable consumption dictates that we respect our oceans. These water bodies are crucial drivers of global systems that make our planet habitable. Sadly, our unmindful practices have led to rapid deterioration of coastal waters owing to pollution. Ocean acidification is impacting ecosystems and biodiversity.



Goal 15: Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss

We need our forests to provide us food security and shelter, combat climate change, protect biodiversity and the homes of the indigenous population. Hence, it is our duty to protect forests. It is indeed a sad commentary on human greed that thirteen million hectares of forests are being lost every year while the persistent degradation of drylands has led to the desertification of 3.6 billion



hectares. Despite 15% of land being currently under protection, biodiversity is still at risk. Deforestation and desertification are the result of human activities and climate change and pose major challenges to sustainable development. If we allow deforestation and desertification to continue, the lives and livelihoods of millions of people will be jeopardized, and they will be pushed into poverty.

Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies

We cannot hope to have a sustainable future for our children if we do not address the need to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Sustainable societies promise access to justice for all and invest in building effective, accountable institutions at all levels. To build such societies we must put in place efficient and transparent regulations to protect individual rights.



There can be no progress without peace.

Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society are crucial for sustainable development agenda. When we share principles and values, vision and goals with the interests of the planet at the center, we build inclusive sustainable societies.



Conclusion

The goal of sustainable consumption cannot be achieved in isolation. As consumers we must become aware of the role that we have to play in the achievement of SDGs and ensure a sustainable future for our children. Only then can we become truly sustainable consumers. ▀

Source: Secondary research & media reports

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

**Embracing
High Level
Living And
Thinking**

IMAGE: PIXABAY

An economy that regenerates itself.

Circular economy takes the concept of sustainability to another level. Here consumers and producers, function in an economy that believes in zero waste. Products work well past their age and can be perpetuated to posterity through compost.

THE PAST FEW years have seen the concept of circular economy being promoted across the globe. Many celebrities have become vocal votaries of this way of life.

What its proponents like is the fact that it is an industrial economy that instead of being destructive is restorative. Here producers and consumers are intentionally using renewable energy and the use of eliminating toxic chemicals in products. They are adopting methods that minimize waste through a well-thought-out plan.

A circular economy generates minimum waste as it ensures that products are circulated and used by multiple users for as long as possible creating a safe and effective environment.

In such an economy, waste is a resource or as raw material for other processes. Since we are using products from cradle to cradle; we minimize the use of our precious natural resources in production and consumption. To fashion new products, we are not using virgin raw materials; rather we use recycled material. Practitioners of circular economy promote the use of renewable energy sources ensuring that none of their actions has a negative impact on the environment.

By ensuring that materials are free from hazardous substances and chemicals, we restrict the flow of unsafe materials in society. The circular economy distinguishes between biodegradable components and those components that have been manufactured technically or synthetically and cannot decompose naturally. For example, the fashion industry would prefer to work with natural fibers such as cotton, silk, wool, viscose and wood that are biological nutrients and biodegradable. On the other hand, polyester, nylon, acrylic, metals and plastics are technical materials and need to be recycled consciously.

So, what circular fashion?

Anna Brismar has defined the concept of 'circular fashion' basing it on the chief principles of circular economy and sustainable development. Circular fashion relates to the entire fashion industry from apparel to shoes to accessories. "Circular fashion can be defined as clothes, shoes or accessories that are designed, sourced, produced and provided with the intention to be used and circulate responsibly and effectively in society for as long as possible in their most valuable form, and hereafter return safely to the biosphere when no longer of human use," Brismar defines in Green Strategy, 2017.

Circular fashion may be a new concept for the world, but when we look at the practices adopted by our parents and grandparents, we can find echoes of it everywhere. Even today, village economies in India are based on what has been defined as circular economy.

While Circular fashion dictates products be designed in such a way as to have a long expiry date, make efficient use of resource, not be packed in with toxins, be biodegradable, recyclable and be produced ethically; it also emphasizes the need for sourcing materials locally. It harps on consumers using a product for as long as possible taking good care of it; instead of discarding a product on wear and tear, opting for repair; refurbishing a product to elongate its use and also extending its use to other users. This could be done either through renting, buying secondhand, or exchanging, etc. But that's still not the end of a product's life cycle. It can be further redesigned to give it a new lease of life or the components of the product could be used manufacture something new.

The next stage is when finally, the product cannot be used any longer in any of its avatars. Instead of consigning it to the piling landfills, it should be composted to give back to the ecosystem. The idea is that through its circular use a product should bring no harm to the environment, instead contribute in some way to the development.

In our villages we can still find examples of circular products. Saree, a garment worn by Indian women is a perfect example. Handspun and handwoven, these garments are handed down to generations. When they are torn, women repair them and continue wearing. When they cannot be repaired, they are turned into garments for kids, converted into thin blankets, cushion covers, curtains and even into sanitary pads.

Unfortunately, today less than 1% of clothing is recycled into new garments.

To conclude, when we talk of a circular fashion industry, we mean a system that regenerates itself through circulation of garments that give maximum value for the lowest time before reentering the system using the principles of reuse or recycle.

Given the fast rate of depletion of natural resources and the cost of fashion to the environment, the frugality of circular fashion is the right antidote. The world must actively move towards becoming a circular economy if we are to survive as a species.

A frugal and sustainable way of living.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Need of the hour

The circular economy answers to the current needs of the planet. No wonder it is being promoted as a practical solution to the imminent resource crunch facing us. Over the decades, we have mindlessly depleted the natural resources of the planet such as rare earth metals and minerals. We have been living in economies that promote massive waste generation. It is estimated that a circular economy could reduce the pressure on resources and by decoupling economic growth from resource consumption; lead to more prosperity.

Circular economy could impact the aspirational consumption culture positively and make people move away from ownership model of assets to a sharing economy culture where we don't buy everything that we need and instead prefer to either pay per use – from smartphones to washing machines, clothes and DIY equipment; or we have a product-as-service models.

But circular economy is not just a decision that individual consumers make. It is an entire system and to transition to it we require complex redesigning of the processes. This raises the demand for new skills. It is also time to build the right framework and guidelines around circular economy. What we can expect is disruptive

innovation, that is breakthrough technology and design that would promote circular models of commerce, that would displace the existing markets and create new ones.

Businesses will either have to disrupt their own models from within, or risk being disrupted. It is time we actively engaged in building a circular economy by working on various infrastructures, modes of collaboration and set up new business models. Everything changes, from new design practices that are introduced to new customer services provided.

Whatever the methodology, the aim is to maximize product longevity and durability through newer design and sourcing priorities. At the same time the idea must support repair, redesign and recycling services.

Many fashion companies are moving from offering customers the possibility to rent/lease clothes as opposed to buying. Also, it may entail repair services, whereby customers can hand in broken products for repair or get a repair kit for mending at home. Companies will also need to offer redesign services elongate the life of products. In effect, we will move towards a 'functional service' model wherein manufacturers or retailers will retain the ownership of their products and act as service providers. They will the use of products, and the products itself.

Source: Secondary research & media reports



THE AWARE CONSUMER
STATE AWARDS



BY

THE AWARE CONSUMER MAGAZINE
IN COLLABORATION WITH
QUALITY COUNCIL OF INDIA, NEW DELHI

BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA ON 15th MARCH 2020



Guests of Honour and Jury releasing the Analysis Report for The Aware Consumer State Awards 2018



The Aware Consumer State Awards 2018

INTRODUCTION

Since the last 35+ years we have observed that Governments have been promoting various initiatives to empower the Indian consumers to access better quality products and services at the most affordable price, by using modern technologies and providing reliable information to the citizens thus enabling consumers to make an informed choice at the point of purchase. New regulations and policies are framed based on global best practices in the interest of the consumers. As we are all aware, the new Consumer Protection Act 2019 has come into force and rules are being framed in consultation with all the stakeholders and soon they will be notified by the Central and State Governments. The turning point in the history of the consumer movement in India was the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act 1986. Since then the States have been provided with certain amount of resources from time to time by the Central Government to strengthen the legal redressal mechanism as per the provisions of the law and also strengthen the infrastructure in terms of better amenities and facilities to seek prompt redressal against consumer complaints, improving testing facilities of products and measure the quality of services provided by the public and private enterprises conducting business in every State. However, we find even after such financial and technical support, several states are yet to institutionalise the consumer awareness and redressal mechanism as desired by the consumers. The Consumer Protection Act 1986 was framed to ensure the consumer is protected from Unfair Trade Practices and paid compensation on damages caused due to deliberate act of negligence or sale of sub-standard products and service. When markets are deregulated and open market policies are encouraged, healthy competition is the only way to protect the consumer but with a regulatory oversight to check market dominance and unfair trade practices to also monitor sale of unsafe and sub-standard products, cartels and deceptive advertisements. India still lives in rural environment, where consumers face several challenges due to lack of awareness on the consumer's rights and responsibilities. The New Consumer Protection Act, 2019 strengthens the rights of consumers, which brings into its fold, new modes of selling (like e-commerce, tele-shopping, direct selling etc) and will apply to all goods and services, including sale or

construction of houses. It also defines unfair contracts, enlarging the scope of unfair trade practices mentioned in the earlier law. It allows consumers to file complaints with consumer commissions at the place of their residence or work and not necessarily from where the item was purchased, or the service availed. Consumer affairs ministry will also frame rules for filing complaints electronically and paying the required fee digitally. Consumers will also be allowed to seek a hearing through video conferencing. A commission cannot reject a complaint without hearing it (within 21 days of filing it). The law also has a provision for dispute settlement through mediation. The new law makes it mandatory for manufacturers, sellers or service providers to compensate consumers for defects or deficiencies in products and services. Sharing of personal information of consumers is recognised as an unfair trade practice under the new law, which also proposes strict action against advertisers for misleading ads. A national level regulatory authority known as the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) will have powers to initiate class action and enforce recall, refund or return of products unlike the existing consumer protection councils which are only advisory bodies. The government removed healthcare as one of the services to make the bill 'non-controversial'. While the CCPA will be a central regulator for consumer issues, there are other regulators for various sectors (like telecom, insurance), which leaves the scope for overlapping jurisdictions and confusion. While the law proposes a 21-day deadline for hearing complaints, the posts of President of Consumer Forums are lying vacant in 118 of the 596 districts and as many as 362 posts of Commission Members are lying vacant. Similarly, the Law does not mention what qualifications are needed to be a member of the redressal body. This may lead to conflicts of interest if a current or former government employee ends up hearing a case involving the government. It is time for all the stakeholders to incentivise the States which are Consumer-Friendly based on a transparent measuring index undertaken by the stakeholders jointly as a partnership initiative to encourage all the 28 States and 9 Union Territories of our country to become consumer-friendly in the next five years. This exercise will not only incentivise, also educate the various State Governments on some of the global best practices on, how to become consumer-friendly and assure efficiency and effectiveness in public services and governance.



The Aware Consumer State Awards 2018



Guests and Jury Lighting the Lamp – 2018



Receiving Awards:

Kerala

Himachal Pradesh

Karnataka



The Aware Consumer State Awards 2018

CONSUMER FRIENDLY STATES AWARD 2020

Since the last few years, the Government of India has been trying to empower consumers by bringing modern regulations and policies. Unfortunately due to poor enforcement, there is a gap between delivery mechanism and consumer's expectation from State Governments

Turning point was the enactment of Consumer Protection Act 1986, Consumer Disputes Redressal mechanism gave the consumers a proper means of being heard and settle disputes. States were provided with resources from time to time from

Central Government to strengthen the legal redressal mechanism.

To understand how the various State Governments are moving towards making their territories consumer friendly, both online and offline, the Consumer Friendly States Award was devised.

The Consumer Friendly States Award include all the States as well as Union Territories for assessment and ranking purposes. India is a nation of wide disparities such as geographical, historical, administrative structure, population size, etc within the states

and among the states and UTs. In the process of ranking, to ensure rationality, equity and level-playing field, the States and UTs are grouped into three categories – (i) North-East and Hill States (11) (ii) Union Territories (7) and (iii) Big States (18).

It should be noted that a similar categorisation has been adopted by the Prime Ministers' Awards for Excellence in Public Administration and Good Governance Index, instituted by the DARPG, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Government of India.

FINAL RANKING

#	BIG STATES	RANK	NORTH EAST AND HILL STATES	RANK	UNION TERRITORIES*	RANK
1	Kerala	1	Himachal Pradesh	1	Delhi	1
2	Haryana	2	Arunachal Pradesh	2	Lakshadweep	2
3	Telangana	3	Uttarakhand	3	Pondicherry	3
4	Madhya Pradesh	4	Sikkim	4	Chandigarh	4
5	Odisha	5	Assam	5	A&N Islands	5
6	Maharashtra	6	Tripura	6	D&N Haveli	6
7	Gujarat	7	Nagaland	7	Daman & Diu	7
8	Jharkhand	8	J & K	8		
9	Chhattisgarh	9	Manipur	9		
10	Andhra Pradesh	10	Meghalaya	10		
11	Goa	11	Mizoram	11		
12	Punjab	12				
13	Tamil Nadu	13				
14	Rajasthan	14				
15	Karnataka	15				
16	Uttar Pradesh	16				
17	West Bengal	17				
18	Bihar	18				

OBJECTIVES

- To engage with all the Stakeholders to develop a credible and transparent measuring instrument to identify the Consumer-Friendly State(s) in our country.
- To mobilise all key stakeholders and commission a study by using the agreed instrument to collate the data, emerging from the study and present before a JURY of experts to declare and make public the final outcomes emerging from the study.
- To award the State(s) and the Key stakeholders engaged in consumer welfare as Champions over an event every year under the JAGO GRAHAK JAGO Multi-media Campaign on the occasion of the World Consumer Rights Day (15th March) started from 2016.

state awards

5TH EDITION OF THE AWARE CONSUMER STATE AWARDS 2020 //

RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

- Such a study may be made an annual feature to bring transparency and accountability towards the consumers. We must further encourage and incentivise the States on Consumer Protection & Awareness.
- We need to redefine the parameters in the coming years to ensure pro-active participation by all the 37 States/UTs and preparations should start from January onwards
- There is need for updating of Websites of the States as in many cases the incumbents had changed; most websites did not provide e mail IDs and in some cases the e mails sent through digital mode were found non-functional.
- Over the years the pendency cases of consumer complaints have been increasing in many states, therefore states need to dispose the cases and the same need to be updated on ConfoNet Dashboard. ▶

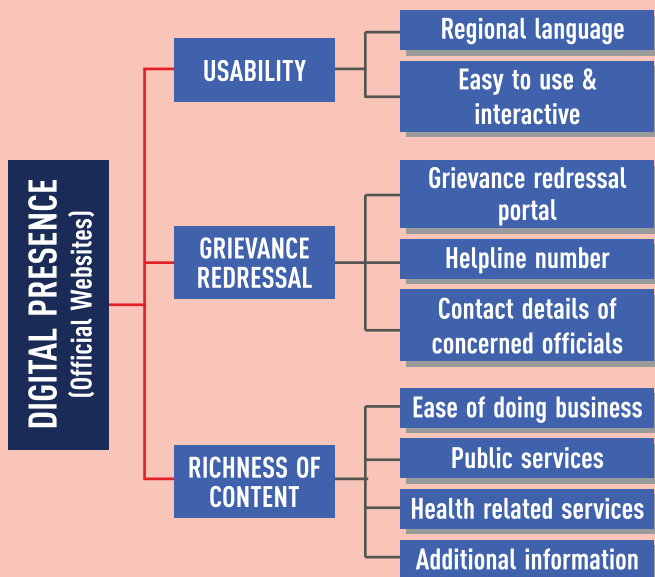
Refer www.theawareconsumer.in for further details

We identified 4 key indicators based on which all the 36 States/UTs have been scored. All the indicators assess the states on important aspects like the disposal of Consumer Court cases, villages and towns being declared Open Defecation Free, Access to potable water, Ease of Doing Business, official websites and information found on it.

All the States/UTs have been assessed on 4 key indicators with their respective breakdowns have been provided in table.

RANKING & SCORING PARAMETERS			
S.No.	Parameters	Score	Weightage
1	Website Parameters	9	40%
2	Public Infrastructure	1	20%
3	Judiciary & Public Security	1	30%
4	Commerce & Industry	1	10%
TOTAL		12	

The respective elements of all key indicators is given as follows:



PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES

#	Indicators	Weightage
1	Access to Potable Water	0.25
2	Towns declared Open Defecation Free (ODF)	0.1
3	Village declared ODF	0.1
4	Connectivity to Rural Habitations	0.1
5	Access to Clean Cooking Fuel (LPG / PNG)	0.1
6	Access to Power Supply	0.05
7	Availability of 24X7 Power Supply	0.05
8	Energy Availability against the Requirement	0.05
9	Growth in Per Capita Power Consumption	0.2

Weightage: 20%

JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SECURITY

#	Indicators	Weightage
1	Conviction Rate	0.3
2	Availability of Police Personnel	0.25
3	Proportion of Women Police Personnel	0.15
4	Disposal of Court Case	0.15
5	Disposal of cases by consumer courts	0.15

Weightage: 30%

COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

#	Indicators	Weightage
1	Ease-of-Doing-Business (EoDB)	0.9
2	Growth Rate of Industries	0.05
3	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Establishments	0.05

Weightage: 10%

If you wish to know about a State/UT, the first place is always the website of the particular region, hence based on 9 elements the websites of all the States/UTs were scored and are given the highest weightage in the scoring.

The next step in making the states consumer friendly is their grievance and redressal system, hence, the Judiciary and Public security was given the weightage of 30%, followed by Public Infrastructure and Utilities (20%) and Commerce and Industry (10%). ▶

Drive Towards Sustainable Consumption

WE ARE A wasteful species! The global consumption patterns are a scathing exposé on how wasteful we are. Globally, every minute we are in the process of buying and selling nearly one million plastic bottles, despite the fact that our oceans are being strangled by the five trillion pieces of plastic that are floating in it. We live in a world of excess and annually we are buying over 80 billion new clothing items. When it comes to food, we are consuming 3.9 billion tons of food, however, one-third of this food is lost or wasted.

However, things seem to be changing. We seem to be moving away from unsustainable consumption habits to more frugal living, thanks to the millennials, a generation that bore the brunt of its parents' excesses.

This generation is all about sustainable living and does not hesitate to take to streets with its demands for action on climate change from industry and governments.

The Consumer International has shared five notable trends that are actively driving progress towards sustainable consumption:

Consumer demand for more sustainability information


Consumers in the digital era are armed with knowledge and they demand information and action. To be able to adopt sustainable lifestyle, consumers need clear and intuitive information on sustainability. Consumers must be able to make decisions which support a more

sustainable lifestyle for all and for this they must have access to education and be able to get clear and reliable information on product sustainability claims.

What can kill the consumer's desire to adopt sustainable lifestyle, is unreliable information that erodes their trust. For companies across the world, greenwashing has become a standard practice whereby consumers are being misled by unsubstantiated sustainability claims on products. For example, IDEC (Brazil) found misleading claims in 48% of the 500 products they analyzed.

But, businesses can ill-afford to neglect consumers' desire for authentic and reliable product information, as only those companies will remain in business that provide clear, responsible and transparent sustainability claims.

Rising consumer awareness is leading the march towards sustainability. It is important to ensure that the momentum continues.



Tell me why?

Sustainable mobility and ridesharing

Mobility solutions that use latest environment-friendly technologies will be instrumental in reducing our global carbon footprint. There is a gradual shift to electric vehicles and innovations like ride-sharing models, carpooling, metro trains and cycling or walking to work, will propel the world towards more sustainable mobility..

The year 2019 was marked by changing consumption habits of consumers and a notable trend was the growing demand for ridesharing services. The global market in

ridesharing services is forecast to reach \$170 billion by 2025. Ridesharing and carpooling have come up as sustainable models, as they reduce the need for car ownership.

Consumers are taking to the streets with campaigns that can gain traction and impact and force governments and businesses to review their demands for sustainability. There are movements underway pushing consumers to commit flight free 2020 in order to contribute their mite to the movement.

Circular design and sustainable fashion

The Consumers International Summit in May 2019 saw the emergence of a strong theme – the role that 'Gen Z' is playing in demanding more transparency on the sustainability claims of brands and manufacturers.

The fashion industry seems to be adhering to the demands of the consumers for openness and honesty on sustainability issues. Some brands are already setting the benchmark for

IMAGE: PIXABAY

IMAGE: PIXABAY



Fashion need not be at the cost of the environment.

sustainability and are working to provide clear and transparent information on the production processes, sustainability efforts and CSR initiatives aligned to sustainability.

The fashion industry also seems to be embracing the concept of circular



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Time to ditch that car.

fashion, i.e. they are producing products from safe and renewable materials that are built to last, and also recycling old clothes. These companies have embraced circularity. These ethical companies are working to educate consumers about viable options for donating unwanted clothes, as well as upcycling, recycling or reinventing them.

The drive for sustainable packaging

The drive for sustainability would be defeated in the absence of sustainable packaging. Packaging is a huge barrier in our path to achieve real progress towards sustainable consumption. Shopping offline or online results in accumulation of an endless supply of needless packaging. There is movement to ban unnecessary packaging as consumers demand action and value sustainable packaging. The industry too is committed to a no plastic economy with many big corporations developing action plans to address the menace of plastic waste. It is hoped that the changing consumer behavior and awareness efforts on how to dispose



Hold on to that mobile phone a little longer please.

of unsustainable packaging will propel the sustainability movement forward.

Building products to last & planned obsolescence

Products come with a shelf life, be it food or clothing. However, while consumers accept this, there is

growing discomfort with products that have a defined lifetime. While product lifetime is actually decreasing, for example of the products that we use daily, like electronics and mobile phones that are vulnerable to damage and have high repair costs, there is an increasing desire to prolong the lifetime of products. There is worldwide action to strengthen and protect the rights of consumers that includes their right to product repairing mechanisms to address the products that die too soon. There are legislations in many countries on the rising e-waste problem and technology companies are increasing their focus on using renewable materials. ▶

Source: Secondary research & media reports

Can we curtail our packaging waste?



Odisha

'MO Sarkar'

Gives Power To The People

The 5T charter –
transforming governance.



LAST YEAR, THE Odisha government took some determined steps to strengthen governance in the state. This was after Shri Naveen Patnaik returned as the Chief Minister of the state for the fifth time. He launched two visionary programs – the 5T mission and 'Mo Sarkar', which means My Government in Odia. The 5T mission, which is based on the principles of Team, Technology, Transparency, Time and Transformation, was to function as the central tenet that informs all governance endeavors in the state. The government also announced ambitious plans and set 15 August 2020 as the deadline for delivering all public services either through online or Common Service Centers. All concerned government departments were asked to finalize their 5T charter by September 15 and fine-tune their process and procedure to affect 20% weightage for performances in the

achievement of 5T in the annual appraisal of officials.

At the time of launching the initiative, the Chief Minister had tweeted: "Glad to initiate 'Mo Sarkar', an initiative under 5T program to herald a transformation in government offices. People are the real masters and every institution exists to serve citizens in a professional and dignified manner."

The idea behind 'Mo Sarkar', which is a transformative initiative under 5T program, is to promote transparency in governance. The initiative was launched on October 2, and according to reports, it was implemented at all the police stations along with 21 district headquarters hospitals and three government-run medical college hospitals at Cuttack, Berhampur, and Sambalpur. However, it is said to have become effective at all the 30-district headquarters by October 30.

The 5T charter is based on the philosophy that transparency, teamwork, technology and time lead to transformation. To ensure that the government officials undertook the program seriously, the Chief Minister also made them take a pledge. "Today I would like to administer us an oath....people are the soul of democracy. Every institution in a democracy is for the people, created by their money, to empower and serve the people. Every institution exists for serving the people. They own the institutions. Every person visiting any institution will be treated with dignity and his issues have to be treated in a professional and ethical manner. People are the masters and those who work are paid by the people," he said while administering the oath.

At a one-day IAS (senior officers and collectors) conference organized to deliberate on the new initiative of the state government and the challenges faced, Patnaik made his ambitions regarding the program very clear: "I have a family of four-and-a-half-crore people of Odisha and with their blessings, I am serving them for the last 20 years. I want our children to have a quality education, our brothers and sisters to have good jobs, our elders to have good health care facilities," he said.

Further, exhorting the officials he said, "You are all the drivers of this transformation agenda and I am sure this conference will help us in this regard. The spirit behind our governance is reflected in the preamble of Mo Sarkar."

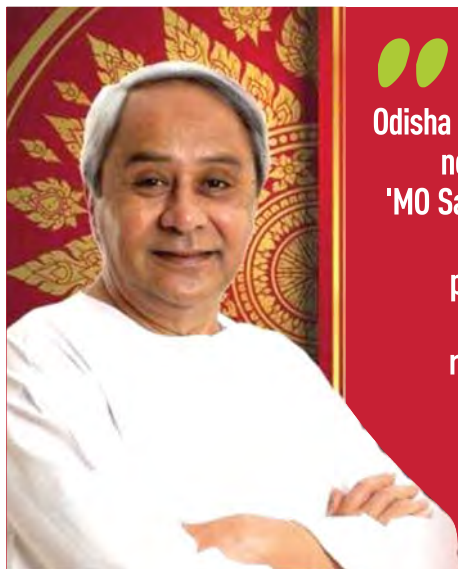
'Mo Sarkar' is like a people-centric outreach program or a contact program whereby the Chief Minister and other officials interact with the citizens and seek their feedback on the kind of response and service they receive when they visit government facilities. The initiative is touted as the most ambitious program of Patnaik in his five terms in office. The purpose of launching this program is to ensure the accountability of public officials in delivery of government services. Bureaucracy in India is notorious for its red tape and the attitude of entitlement. In a country like India, where more people reside in the rural areas and are afraid to even approach officials for any purpose, an initiative like 'Mo Sarkar' is much needed.

The five parameters that govern 'Mo Sarkar' are teamwork, technology, transparency, transformation and time limit (the 5Ts) and under the scheme, the government seeks feedback from people on the quality and timeliness of the services, and basis the feedback from the public, reward or punish would be given to officials.

Notably, 3 of the 5Ts existed in earlier Patnaik government's previous term too and the last two were added in this term.

Under the first phase of implementation, police stations and government hospitals were brought under the ambit of the program, with the plan to extend it to cover other services as well. In fact, in January this year, the departments of Industry and MSME were brought within in the ambit of 'Mo Sarkar' initiative, with the aim to bring in behavioral change and professionalism in the officialdom in their dealings with entrepreneurs, investors and other stakeholders. Making a formal announcement to this effect, the Chief Minister said, "I am glad that the Industries and MSME department is coming under the 'Mo Sarkar' initiative. Considering the rapid industrialization and growing investments into the state, it is necessary that these quintessential departments of the government

come under this initiative. I am aware that these departments, particularly the corporations of IPICOL and IDCO, are the most 5T and 'Mo Sarkar' ready by the virtue of the high facilitation standards they have set over the years and would prove to be a model for other departments. The fact that Odisha recently edged past Maharashtra as the most attractive destination in the country for investments during the April-September period of Financial year20 is an indicator of the professionalism of these departments."



Odisha government's novel initiative, 'MO Sarkar' and the 5T charter of principles that govern it, are revolutionizing governance in the state.

To streamline the program and ensure that it functions independently, a Department of 5T was created to carry out the initiative under the CM's direct supervision. The charge of this newly created department is with the Chief Minister's private secretary V. Karthikeyan Pandian.

Patnaik had flagged off 'Mo Sarkar' initiative by calling up randomly selected visitors to police stations and hospitals and asking them for their feedback on the quality of services received and the treatment that was meted out to them at these establishments.

While the impact of the initiative on accountability is still to be measured; the effect of the launch was obvious on people, raising their hopes that with the Chief Minister personally monitoring the program, officers would be more responsible and responsive now.

The government, however, did not leave things to chance or the goodwill of the officers to ensure that the citizens are heard and served sincerely. It decided to reflect the implementation of 5T charter and 'Mo Sarkar' initiative in the annual PAR of different categories of government employees. This decision will apply to the

employees of departments which are implementing the 'Mo Sarkar' initiative.

The government would accord 20 per cent weightage for the performance of government employees in the implementation of 5T components. Out of the allotted weightage of 20 per cent for 5T Charter, 5 per cent will be assigned in respect of performance under 'Mo Sarkar' initiative.

Further, in case of All India Service (AIS) officers, out of an overall numerical assessment of 10, a value of two would be assigned with respect to the performance of an officer on 5T and 'Mo Sarkar' initiative. One mark has been assigned for implementation of 5T Charter of their departments, 0.5 marks each for implementing the Charter of the government and 'Mo Sarkar'. 10 per cent has been earmarked for implementation of 5T Charter of Department while 5 per cent each for the implementation of 5T Charter of the Government and 'Mo Sarkar'.

Under the initiative, anyone visiting any of the offices under the Mo Sarkar program will have their mobile no registered in the 'Mo Sarkar Portal'. Calls will be made by the Chief Minister, the Minister and the Departmental authorities to randomly selected numbers. In the case of negative feedback, the concerned office or institution would be assigned poor ranking. Consistent good feedback would bring a number of incentives to the concerned officers including out of turn promotions.

The initiative seems to be working as media reports said that the government officials are a harried lot these days. With the CM cracking the whip, officials used to sloth and turpitude, are now on their toes trying to meet the targets under Mo Sarkar and 5T or face the music.

The 5T initiative hangs like the Damocles' sword over the employees and most fear that there is a 6th T – Termination – that has not been made public. Under this, employees found wanting the discharge of duty, could be served notice.

According to media reports, these fears are not unfounded as based on a performance review, many government staff have already been relieved of their services as part of the initiative to ensure accountability.

To bolster the initiative and completely eliminate the prevalent culture of touts, the government also launched a massive crackdown on these middlemen who ruled the roost in RTO offices and hospitals. Reports say that in the first phase itself more than 200 touts were rounded up and the exercise to weed out middlemen from public utilities continues.

From all accounts, the 5T charter as a governance model to find out how far the administration has been able to reach people in a transparent and timely manner, is proving to be effective. Adherence to 5T charter has now become the top priority of government officials and with a separate department to monitor the work, there is no let-up in the efforts.

The 'Mo Sarkar' initiative is being extended to all departments like agriculture, food supplies and consumer welfare, women and child development, cooperation,

panchayati raj and commerce and transport. The Chief Minister has announced that all departments will be brought under 'Mo Sarkar' by 31 March 2020.

The initiative has received both bouquets and brickbats. The opposition BJP in Odisha has criticized it saying there was no innovation in it and that different versions of 5Ts are in effect at several places and that it is just a rehashed agenda of the five management principles. It has criticized the creation of a dedicated 5T department saying that there was no need for a separate 'power center' for the program as it would undermine the efficiency of other departments.

However, the Odisha government's 5T initiative to ensure good governance in the state received endorsement from the NITI Aayog. "Odisha has adopted a 5T agenda to transform education system, achieve the goal of all children at grade-appropriate learning level in a school environment that is conducive and engaging," the tweet by NITI Aayog said.

Odisha Assembly members too have praised the 5T initiative cutting across party lines. In the health sector, 5T implementation has shown positive results and services have improved.

The efforts to bring transformation in the lives of tribal people are showing results. The people of Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Rayagada are getting immense benefit from the new medical college hospital in Koraput. Further, Koraput DHH now has the facilities of ambulance service along with other infrastructure. It is being perceived that regular visits by senior officers will certainly help improve health care services in the tribal districts.

Members agreed that health care facilities in Koraput and Nabarangpur hospitals have improved after the visit of 5T Secretary and other officials, adequate attention is being given to the improvement of health care infrastructure in the State. They also said that the 5T initiative has helped to bring down corruption in the health sector.

As the gaps in services are being exposed with regular visits, interactions and outreach, the government is trying to plug the loopholes. For instance, vacant posts of doctors are being filled up to tide over the shortage of medical staff.

"People are the real masters in a democracy and every institution exists to serve citizens in a professional and dignified manner. 'Mo Sarkar' is an initiative under the 5T model of governance to herald a transformation in government offices," the Chief Minister had said in a video message in October last. He had also told reporters that feedback from the people on 'Mo Sarkar' is satisfactory.

Under 'Mo Sarkar', the identity of the people giving feedbacks is kept confidential. This is to encourage them to speak up and give honest opinion without the fear of any reprisals from the officials. The objective of the program is to ensure that people coming to government offices are provided all necessary services and that they do not have to compromise on their dignity to receive what is rightfully theirs. ▶

Source: Secondary research & media reports

“

Mo Sarkar is an initiative under the 5T model of governance to herald a transformation in government offices. It brings the government machinery closer to the citizens”



In an interview with The Aware Consumer,

Shri Ranendra Pratap Swain

Hon'ble Cabinet Minister, Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare,
Co-operation, Government of Odisha in Bhubaneswar, discusses
the revolutionary initiative and explains its vision and goal.

Q What is Mo Sarkar about? What is its vision and goal?

Mo Sarkar is a transformational initiative under the 5T Programme. It attempts to bring in professionalism and behaviour change in government offices through a direct random feedback system from citizens who visit government institutions for various services.

Basically, it is a programme to ascertain how the citizens is treated in the government offices and whether their issue was dealt with professionally and ethically. It is not a grievance redressal mechanism. Rather, it is an attempt to strengthen institutions through a feedback mechanism about the system and the officials who run it.

The spirit behind 'Mo Sarkar' is that people are the soul of democracy. All the institutions exist for serving the people. All the staff are paid by the people. People own the Government institutions and people are the masters of the Government. It is an empowerment initiative to treat every citizen visiting a government institution in a professional and ethical manner.

The valuable feedback received from the people will help improve accountability of the institutions to the people. Based on the feedback, either positive or punitive action will be initiated so that the institution will improve its performance.

Q Which departments are currently under the ambit of 'Mo Sarkar'?

On 2nd of October 2019, all police stations in the State of Odisha under Home Department and 21 district headquarter hospitals and 3 medical colleges came under the ambit of 'Mo Sarkar'. Later on, Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment, Higher Education, Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare, Women & Child Development and Mission Shakti, Housing & Urban Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, Labour and ESI, Industries, MSME, Commerce & Transport, Revenue & Disaster Management, ST & SC Development Departments have been included in 'Mo Sarkar'. By 5th of March 2020, Government has planned to cover all the Departments and offices in the State under this great initiative.

Q Are there any perceptible changes in functioning of the departments since the launch of 'Mo Sarkar'. What parameters have been used to gauge the development?

Certainly, there have been perceptible changes in the functioning of the departments after launching of 'Mo Sarkar'. Decisions are taken quickly and pace of development has been faster than before. People are expressing their level of satisfaction which is ascertained from the feedbacks received from them. Government officials are dealing with the people in a more professional and ethical manner. People are happy with receiving calls from the Chief Minister, Ministers, Secretaries and other senior officers of the Department

regularly to express their feelings about the manner government officials are functioning.

Q What is 5T charter? How it is related to Mo 'Sarkar'?

The 5T Action Plan aims at bring out possible transformation in governance and make government accountable to the people. Under the 5T Charter - Technology, Transparency, Team Work and Time leading to Transformation - each department has formulated an action plan for implementation of various programmes and schemes in a time bound manner. The Government has initiated 5T charter for further improving administrative efficiency and faster delivery of services.

Adherence to 5T charter is now the top priority to Odisha Government. It brings the government machinery closer to the citizens. It will trigger a transformational change in the State of Odisha. The vision is to make Odisha the most citizen friendly State in India and the goal is to make the Government efficient, effective, transparent and accountable to the citizens. 'Mo Sarkar' is a transformational initiative under the 5T programme.

Q Have you incorporated the idea of 5T and 'Mo Sarkar' in your Department?

Yes, we have already started implementing 5T charter in Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare Department as well as Cooperation Department. Complete AADHAR seeding of the beneficiaries under the food security programme and mandatory AADHAR authenticated transactions in fair price shops, increasing participation of women self help groups as fair price shop dealers and use of data analytics tool for better monitoring and predictive analysis as well as implementation of web-based paddy procurement automation system are some of the measures we have taken under 5T in Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare Department. Similarly, computerization in primary agricultural credit cooperative societies and integration of regulated market committees on e-NAM platform are some of the measures taken under 5T in Cooperation Department. Our Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare Department has been included in "Mo Sarkar" and Cooperation Department will be included by 5th of March, 2020.

Q How do you plan to inculcate this change amongst the officers and change their work culture ?

Every person visiting any government office should be treated with dignity. The change amongst the officers and their work culture can only happen when we as Ministers set good examples and adopt the best practices. We have to first inculcate good work culture in ourselves before expecting the same from others. We should also reward and recognize the officers in public events who adopt the spirit of "Mo Sarkar" principles and are found committed towards the citizens. We should regularly conduct feedback from the citizens on the quality of service delivered.

Q How is the Government monitoring the implementation of 5T and 'Mo Sarkar'? Reports said it will be reflected in Annual performance Appraisal Report(PAR) of different categories of Government employees as per official notification. How is this being done" Any other monitoring mechanism?

The Odisha Government has decided to reflect the implementation of 5T charter and 'Mo Sarkar' initiative in the Annual Performance Appraisal Report (PAR) of different categories of Government employees including the All India Service Offices.

For positive feedback the institution and its staff will be appreciated Sustained positive feedback will give good ranking for the institution and out of turn promotion. On the other hand negative feedback will be taken seriously. After confirmation by more random feedback disciplinary and other action will be initiated against the officials who are responsible. The institution and its functioning will be kept under close watch till it improves.

Q 'Mo Sarkar' seems to be a citizen contact programme. How is it different from such programmes being implemented in other states?

Through a system of direct random feedback 'Mo Sarkar' aims at improving two things. First improving the functioning of government institutions and the way they treat the citizens. Secondly, it aims at improving the functioning of government officials and the way they professionally and ethically deal with people's issues.

'Mo Sarkar' arguably the first of its kind initiative in the country. The officials would be ranked as per the people's feedback.

When you go to any government office, your telephone number is registered and you receive an SMS, you can get your number registered in the 'Mo Sarkar' portal by giving a missed call to 14545.

Out of all the numbers registered in the 'Mo Sarkar Portal' randomly selected numbers are picked up and calls are made to get feedback.

In a bid to make governance more people-centric, Odisha Government has launched an initiative in which Chief Minister, Ministers, Secretaries and other senior officers dial common citizens and seek feedback on the kind of response they get during their visit to government offices.

Q What is the roadmap of your Department to fully integrate the ideas of 5T and "Mo Sarkar" in governance ?

Under the programme, the phone numbers of all the people visiting different government offices will be registered and an SMS will be sent to their numbers within 24 hours. If the SMS is not received or the number is not registered, the concerned person can make a miss call to 14545 to get the number registered. These numbers will be randomly collected and the Chief Minister, Minister in charge of the department. Secretary, Director and other officers will call numbers in a random



manner to seek feedback from the end-users.

Government employees will be ranked on the basis of the feedback and employees with good rank will get the out-of-turn promotion while action will be taken against employees with poor rank or negative feedback. The identity of the persons giving negative feedback will be kept secret in order to encourage free and frank opinion on the quality of service. My departments are fully committed in the implementation of Mo Sarkar and 5T.

Q What is the vision for 5T and 'Mo Sarkar' in the next few years?

People are the real masters in a democracy and every institution exists to serve citizens in a professional and disciplined manner.

With an aim to make the governance people-centric, Our Chief Minister Sri Naveen Patnaik launched the 'Mo Sarkar' initiative on Gandhi Jayanti in a bid to make governance more people-centric.

The vision of the Mo Sarkar is to make Odisha the most citizen friendly state in India and the goal is to make the Government efficient, effective, transparent and accountable to the citizens.

The initiative will revolve around the citizen's perception on the quality of service delivered by the government machineries. ▀



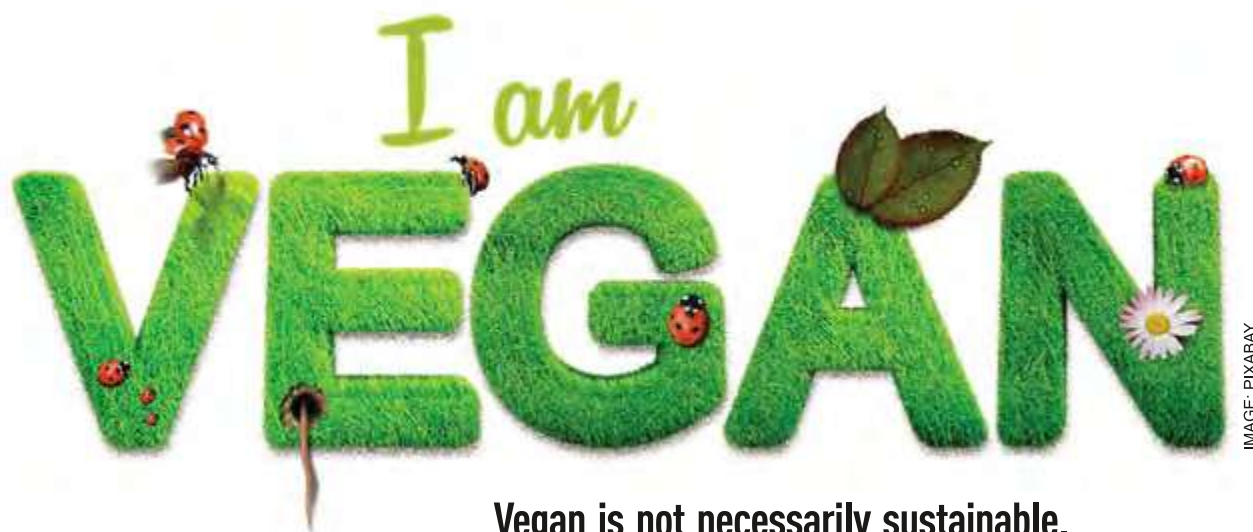
Pyush Misra
Director,
Consumer Online Foundation

VEGAN FASHION



A Way Of Life ?

The British Retail Consortium recently released guidelines for the fashion industry in pursuit of vegan fashion and has made it clear that vegan is not necessarily sustainable. It is time for consumers to understand the differences when choosing the vegan way of life.



Vegan is not necessarily sustainable.

RECENTLY, THE BRITISH Retail Consortium (BRC) came up with a set of guidelines for the UK fashion industry intending to clarify the many nuances of the growing vegan market. The guidelines, that are voluntary in nature, are aimed at helping consumers purchase products labelled as vegan with confidence.

Now if you are wondering what vegan fashion is, here is a head-start on the fashion trend...

For starters, Vegan and sustainable are not the same thing.

The idea of vegan fashion had once invited ridicule. It was dismissed as a short-lived fad at best. Surprisingly, despite these dismissive predictions, vegan fashion has become an on-point trend, if not mainstream, with even luxury brands trying to climb the bandwagon.

A People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has defined vegan products as being “clothes, shoes and accessories that contain no leather, fur, wool, skin, exotic skins or any other animal-derived fabric.”

Veganism has moved from being the credo of a clique to becoming the lifestyle choice of many increasingly conscious consumers. There is an ever-increasing band of vegans who demand cruelty-free products. This has led a rising number of retailers, beauty brands and designers changing their game to cater to the demands of the animal-free market.



Be vegan, say no to animal-derived products.

As vegan market is still taking shape, it is up to the retailers to ensure that the goods they certify as vegan are truly so. Retailers can ensure that their sourcing process is completely vegan by asking a series of questions from their suppliers during, setting up strict internal checks and maintaining a checklist of animal-derived products.

Vegan design products are fast becoming as popular as vegan food, but the guidelines stress that labelling

a product as vegan does not necessarily mean that it is sustainable.

The BRC guidelines state that retailers should not claim a product is sustainable just because it is vegan. A vegan product does not automatically become sustainable because while vegan relates to the absence of animal-derived materials; sustainable could mean different things depending on the issue under consideration – it could mean a

product saves water, has small carbon footprint or is environment-friendly in some other way.

There exists confusion over terms such as sustainable, biodegradable and circular, as there is a lack of precise definition for each term that has left them open to abuse.

Brands openly indulge in greenwashing wrongly claiming that their products have no negative impact on the environment, in the absence of strict advertising regulations in many countries. Whether this is deliberately done, or it happens due to a lack of understanding of what each term involves, is not established.

The BRC guidelines are prompted by the fact that many retailers are found to be capitalizing on the increasing fad amongst consumers to spend on ethical products. The guidelines say that only those products that can otherwise be made with an animal-derived product but have not, should be labelled as vegan. In essence, vegan products offer an alternative to consumers to those items that traditionally use animal-derived materials or ingredients. The vegan product in such cases, uses an alternative to the animal-derived component, for example leather in a belt replaced with a non-animal derived alternative.

The guidelines clarify that a product that is not traditionally made with animal-derived materials cannot be considered vegan. For example, a cotton T-shirt or sari cannot be labelled vegan because it is traditionally made with cotton.

Supply chain must be monitored

To qualify a product as vegan, a retailer will have to remove animal-derived materials from its supply



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Purple color is derived from sea snails, hence supply chains need to be monitored to ensure absolute veganism.

chain. However, while it is easy to remove leather as a primary product in the manufacture of fashion items, as it is easier to label; many derivatives like glues, dyes, pigments and inks used in the fashion industry also contain animal-derived products. To be able to label a product vegan, the retailer must also eliminate such animal-derived products from the process.

The guidelines list wax, found in water-resistant items, casein glue that uses milk proteins, purple coloring derived from sea snails and urine from mammals – which is used to dissolve dyes – as some of the animal-derived products that need to be taken into consideration.

The BRC guidelines state, “Classing a product as vegan not only rules out using leather, wool and natural silk (which comes from the silkworm), but also many glues, dyes, and chemicals derived from animals.”

Though there are some tests available to identify the presence of animal DNA in products, these are not definitive. Thus, it is difficult to ensure supply chain transparency with regard to vegan products.

Demand for vegan products is rising

Despite these constraints, the demand for vegan products is rising with more and more consumers choosing a vegan way of life. Strict veganism followers are increasingly demanding that their clothing purchases be clearly labelled.

There is hence a need for clear certification, labelling and registration in the vegan products domain to provide assurance to consumers that they are purchasing pure vegan products.

Since, veganism is moving from the stage of a fad to a conscious decision by consumers to follow its prescripts; retailers must ensure that they are providing cruelty-free products to these ethically minded consumers.

It is actually not hard to practice such veganism, and the bonus is the guilt-free conscience that you can sleep with at night. ▀

Source: Secondary research & media reports

What does sustainable future look like?

Understanding SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Sustainable future is today an imperative for the human species. But first we must understand what it is and how we can work towards achieving it.

IMAGE: PIXABAY

FOR SOME TIME now we have been hearing a lot about sustainable future. The expanding community of environmental experts and crusaders are painting a vision of this future and talk of building a such a future. But what is this sustainable future? What does it look like? A clear answer is yet to emerge.

To explain the concept, a frequently cited definition is from a Brundtland Report of 1987: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

This definition however leaves a lot to the imagination, as it does not answer specifics like whose needs and what exactly will these future needs be. Without knowing what sustainability is or looks like it is too much to expect people to adopt a sustainable way of life.

Sustainability: A multi-meaning term

Sustainability lends itself to many aspects of economic activity and living. It finds application in economic growth as sustainable development, in business as sustainable entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility, etc., in consumption as sustainable consumer and consumption, etc. Sustainability, as we can see is an amorphous term finding a myriad of applications. As an underdefined term, sustainability needs be defined and be specifically in sync with the aim in the particular area. We need to move away from speaking in sustainability generalities.

Finding the best fit sustainability paradigm

It would certainly be more effective to break sustainability into smaller, more achievable components than to speak of it in grand terms. To sustain the global sustainability narrative here is what we must do first:

1. Make sustainability sector specific

Sustainability of environment is certainly not the same as sustainable business. Even in business the challenges that logistics sector faces in sustainability is entirely different from that of FMCG or for that matter any other sector. It is also to be ensured that all the sector move towards specific sustainability goals together. Sectoral growth is interdependent, and one sector cannot move towards becoming more sustainable while the other becomes less sustainable. Within a sector too there are various challenges. For example, creating more sustainable energy system could mean different things to different people. It could be reducing carbon footprints to renewable energy sources.

2. Set the bar

Living in a more sustainable world is all very well if the vast majority are on the same page as to what it means to them. Unfortunately, every individual has his/her own idea of sustainable. It is time to define the specifics of what sustainable future means. Also, the time frame over which we aim to achieve sustainability.

3. A goal for all

Sustainability benefits everyone and it must be apparent to each individual as to how it benefits him/her. When we talk of sustainable energy, how do we justify it benefits even those in poor countries who live without access to electricity? We need to explain why sustainable living benefits not just humans but animals, plants and the entire planet.

4. Picture sustainable future

How would sustainability future look like? How would it be different from the world we live in today? What would be the trade-offs to achieve this future? Would it mean sacrificing comforts and trading it for primitive lifestyle? It is not possible to build our cities again or change our current lifestyle. We still need to drive to work. Walking or biking is not an option when distances are great. We need viable alternatives like metros and buses that run on clean fuel. We need to paint a realistic picture of this to motivate people to give up a few things and trade it for a sustainable future. We need to make it comfortable and convenient for them to live without life's little luxuries that damage our planet.

What we talk about when we talk about sustainability

Who can predict what the future will look like? None as we know. But we need to design a possible vision of sustainable future and develop a roadmap to achieving it. Hard task you may say. Thankfully there are organizations dedicated to this task. They are working with governments and organizations and industry to put sustainability into action now that would help achieve visions of the future. Organizations like the UN are preparing a roadmap for the future of sustainable development and Sustainable Development Goals are aimed at building this future.

Non-profits dedicated to environmental concerns and sustainable future are also working with organization, academic institutions, thought leaders and others to ensure sustainability does not just remain a good idea but is taken forward to create a sustainable future.

The task of creating a sustainable future does not just rest with organizations and governments. It is the responsibility of each individual to question their daily acts to ensure what they are doing in their day to day life will ultimately lead to a sustainable future.

Prove the doomsayers wrong, take steps today

For years, people around the globe have been looking at approaching 2030 with trepidation. According to the Forum for the Future, the run-up to 2030 has been forecast to be a challenging time for human beings on the earth. A civilizational collapse has been forecast in 2030 by Limits to Growth, and John Beddington, former Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK government has forecast that 2030 would be the year when a 'perfect storm' of resource and climate crises would happen. The IPCC has also warned that we have but a decade to avert catastrophic climate change.

The consensus is that we are heading towards a climate breakdown and not climate change as some anticipate with 1.5°C of global warming. In 2020, the world enters a decade of great uncertainty, volatility and suffering; the window of opportunity to create a sustainable world for people everywhere to lead fulfilling lives on a healthy planet has become narrower than before.

But future always offers multiple opportunities. And as the Forum for the Future says, a positive future is still possible. However, for this to happen people in positions of power across the world will have to step in and work systemically together to achieve this future.

There is an urgent need to understand how the world is changing, what implications does it have for the sustainability of the future and what actions are required today to ensure our sustainable future. With concerted efforts to rewrite our future with actions taken today can we hope to change the course of the 2020s before it transforms us.

Forum for the Future outlines seven areas of change to achieve sustainable future.

The plastics kickback: Plastic pollution has today become so pervasive that governments have had to resort to drastic actions to curtail the issue. But despite bans and global call to action, the problem persists. We have largely failed to address the root causes or avoid unintended consequences. It seems we are so addicted to plastic because it's cheap and convenient.

Migration and the climate crisis: In 2018, migration reached its peak since WWII. Climate change will become a major driver of migration in the future as habitats and employment become affected by extreme weather conditions rendering many homeless and without a means to sustain themselves. People will leave their lands affected by climate change and extreme weather conditions in search of better opportunities, potentially sparking a humanitarian crisis and protectionism. The world will need to put in place structures and systems to cope with this imminent crisis.

Nationalism marches again: A wave of nationalism has taken over governments with sentiments rising around the

globe. Going by the recent developments it appears we would soon be leaving the globalist era to move into a period of fragmentation and competition. In this scenario, we will need to move beyond divisive narrative to implement effective action on sustainability.

The onlife: In 2019, almost half the world went online. The online space is a mostly unregulated one that holds us slave to echo chambers that could lead to serious consequences for society and our ability to create change. There is an urgent need to bring in regulations to make online life more structured.

The rise of participatory democracy: As the globalist vs nationalist debate intensifies, citizens and governments are experimenting with new ways to come together and make decisions – a local antidote to global issues. There is a need to strengthen participatory governance models to ensure decisions for the greater good are taken.

Changing consumerism in Asia: Around the globe, lifestyles with heavy environmental footprints have become the norm. But in Asia there are faint hints of a new flavor of consumerism brewing. We need to work on bringing this new system together in a way that

creates meaningful change and offers a new lifestyle for aspirational citizens.

Biodiversity in free fall: Currently, the world is experiencing a sixth mass extinction event that undermines the natural systems on which the survival of humans as a species depends. Our planetary systems are moving into a state of collapse and there is an urgent need for call to action on all fronts and across all sectors. Loss of species is not an isolated event occurring around the world; these losses are all connected and seen in totality paint a dismal picture. While there are signs of restoration and regenerative approaches, but we need to make it a widespread movement to save our planet.

Together, these seven areas have big implications for the way we can address global challenges. There are positive developments all around but there is also a need for deep shifts in mindset and attitudes to be able to achieve the sustainable development goals and ensure a sustainable future for all. ▶

Need to
create
sustainable
footprint.

IMAGE: PIXABAY

Source: Secondary research and media reports



The practice by richer countries to dump their plastic waste in poorer countries may no longer be possible under a UN treaty.

AS IF OUR waste is not enough, most poor countries also end up trying to dispose the garbage of the rich nations. Reports say, the total waste generated by the world in 2016 was 242 million tons of plastic waste – a figure expected to grow by 70% in 2050 as per the World Bank report of 2018 titled 'What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050'. According to Sensenseo Global Waste Index 2019, we are currently generating two billion tons of waste per year between a population of 7.6 billion people.

Why is waste production increasing so fast? Part of the problem could be population increase. However, it is the high and disproportionate levels of consumption

within a handful of developed nations and their gross mismanagement of waste, that have led to this environmental catastrophe, says Sensenseo. The worst offender is the United States, generating the highest waste per capita worldwide. Each US citizen produces an average of 808 kilograms per year, that is almost a ton of waste per US individual. This is double of what citizens of Japan generate.

Generating alarming amounts of waste could be forgivable if we had sustainable sources of disposing off our garbage. But as the Global Waste Index highlights, it's not just the generation of waste that threatens our planet in the decades to come, it is also the way we choose to manage it.

The Bigger Threat

It is the trade in plastic waste that has become a bigger threat. Waste plastic is sold as a commodity and traded in a global market that generates \$200 billion every year.

Rich countries export their plastic waste to poorer ones for disposal, as a way of getting rid of their garbage. In poor countries the recycling cost of waste is much cheaper and firms in the business of waste buy the plastic waste from the rich countries and then send it to developing countries for disposal. In this way rich countries get rid of their burden of finding a place and a way to dispose their own waste at home.

The tragedy is that the waste from developed countries lands in those countries that do not possess advanced knowhow to dispose it properly. This results in dumping by these importing countries as their recycling capacity is low. The plastic garbage eventually finds its way to the land dumps and sea.

A Treaty for Change

Things are about to change however, as the UN has taken a decision that could aid countries worse affected by plastic garbage and with the lowest capacity to manage it. The Basel Convention is a little-known treaty that the poor countries can waive to say no to exported waste.

Correcting a Festering Injustice

The UN had adopted the Basel Convention in 1989 to deter wealthy nations from exporting their toxic waste to poor countries. It is a well-known fact that wealthy countries relocate their waste to countries with lower recycling costs and lax regulations that give ample opportunities to abuse the system.

The rich countries have a history of abusing their privilege. In 1988, reports exposed how Italian waste management firms were storing hazardous wastes in drums labelled as building materials in a Nigerian fishing village. Canada had not only dumped waste including nappies in Philippines but also delayed for years repatriating it when caught. As a result, Canada's waste is still sitting in Philippines since 2013.

The disheartening images of plastic waste piling up on beaches in many emerging countries and on some of the remotest islands in the world resulted in efforts led by Norway to bring in the Basel Convention for its original purpose. After negotiations held in Geneva the complex issue of plastic waste found some resolution. Though countries like Argentina and the US and the recycling industry warned that bringing in regulations would make the problem of recycling plastic even more difficult at a critical time when there is a need to recycle even more waste. Developing countries on the other hand presented a grim picture of plastics littering their lands, seas, beaches and even glaciers.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

We are not your garbage dump.

A proposal was moved by Norway to change how the treaty regulates plastics. It was decided to move many types of plastics from the “non-hazardous” category to a list of wastes “of special concern.” As a result of these efforts, from 2020 waste exporting countries will have to inform importing developing countries if these plastics are in a waste shipment. Armed with this information, countries will have the right to revoke their “prior informed consent”. Thanks to the treaty, for the first time in history, developing countries can say NO to a shipment of plastics.

Fair Practices

However, this will not mean an end to the menace of plastic waste as the decision only applies to low-value, hard-to-recycle plastics. Plastic waste like food packaging or single-use water bottles or plastics that are soiled or mixed together, i.e. each component of the plastic product is made using a different type of plastic; are difficult to recycle. Most recyclers don't want to touch these plastics as there is not much profit. This results in this plastic garbage being dumped in poor countries.

With developing countries being given the right to know what comes in the garbage shipment and the right to refuse their refuge, a big step has been taken in the direction.

In 2018, China took a major decision and banned the import of contaminated and cheap plastic waste. Notably, it was the world's largest importer of plastics for recycling. More developing countries need to come up with such bans to save their environment.

Once cheap routes to export plastics waste are restricted, it is expected that rich countries that produce the most plastic garbage will start using their recycling systems for managing their own waste; which certainly are more advanced than that of the countries where they dump their waste. This could be the start of ending injustices to developing countries.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

India's Plastic Waste Increases

Meanwhile, India's plastic waste continues to pile thanks to a legal loophole that may have allowed plastic waste imports to the country.

The plastic waste in the country quadruples, even though India does not have the expertise to handle its own waste. According to reports, there is an influx of PET bottles into the country despite a ban on the import of plastic waste.

Since China's ban came into effect, there is major pressure on other countries to boost recycling efforts. India seems to have become the latest dumping ground with the industry exploiting the loopholes.

According to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Smriti Manch (PDUSM), India's imports of plastic scraps from China, Japan, Italy and Malawi for recycling and imports of PET bottle scrap and flakes has quadrupled. In fiscal year 2016-17, the imports were 12,000 tons growing to a staggering 48,000 tons in FY 2017-18.

Notably, India took a major step to reduce its plastics burden banning the import of plastic waste, especially PET bottles, in 2015. The main reason was its inability to recycle such waste. India's inadequate waste management infrastructure has meant that most of the plastic waste end in landfills. To make matters worse, a subsequent amendment was introduced in 2016 allowing agencies located in Special Economic Zones to import

plastic waste. According to reports, this is the loophole being exploited to import plastic waste. Media reports that while government officials agree to a substantial increase in plastics waste, the actual figure could not be confirmed.

Prior to China banning import of plastic waste, India was the tenth largest importer of plastic trash. The increase in trash shows that now India is emerging as one of the prominent dumping destinations for plastic waste. Notably, a higher percentage of plastic waste is recycled in India internally than richer countries. However, this may become skewed if import of plastic waste goes on.

The measures to ban plastic usage in India have had received mixed results. While several states banned the usage of plastic bags, the regulations soon came undone. Many ended up either lifting or diluting the ban due to intense lobbying by the industry.

China's ban has put several countries in a spot. Though it had informed the World Trade Organization of its intent to ban import of plastic waste, countries like the US and UK were unprepared to deal with it, as China was their largest importer of plastics waste. Countries around the world are scurrying to take measures to control plastic waste and its recycling, but experts feel Southeast Asia could emerge as the new plastic recycling hub. ▀

Source: Secondary research & media reports

PLASTICS

The Bane Of Planet Earth

While China and European Union move towards eradicating the use of single-use plastics, India falters.



Plastic trash is killing our oceans.

IMAGE: PIXABAY

THE RISING ENVIRONMENTAL consciousness, after centuries of human disregard for the planet has had governments scurrying to announce measures to stop environmental degradation or at least arrest it without damaging economic costs. One aspect of this is the global crackdown on plastic waste. Countries across the world are announcing stringent laws to stop or minimize the use of plastic. A small yet significant step towards sustainable planet.

In Europe, the European Parliament has voted to prohibit single-use consumer plastic items including plates, cutlery and straws as of 2021. The step has been taken in a bid to clean up oceans. The ban on single-use plastics also extends to beverage cups, food containers and cotton bud sticks. EU governments have expressed their support for the ban and the final approval due on April 15 will be a formality,

Plastics account for around 80 percent of marine litter and the alarming data made the EU take prompt decisions on the planned restrictions. In less than a year, the deliberations were wrapped up and the European Commission proposed the curbs in May 2018. Representatives of EU governments and the 751-seat Parliament reached a negotiated deal in December that year.

Concerns around plastic waste poisoning our seas are not misplaced. Experts warn that if we do not take strict action to stop plastic use, by 2050 we may have more plastic than fish in the oceans.

The EU legislation has set a 90 percent collection target for plastic bottles by 2029 and a 30 percent goal for recycled material in them by 2030.

Meanwhile, India has been dithering over its decision to ban single-use plastic. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had indicated the government would crack down on single-use plastic from October 2019 and completely ban it by 2022.

However, with the economy in slowdown coupled with rising unemployment, the government has been forced to do a rethink. The proposal to impose a blanket ban on single-use plastic is, hence dragging.

In his Independence Day speech in 2019, the PM had promised to crack down on single-use plastic from 2 October 2019, as a mark to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. This proposal is part of broader efforts to completely ban plastic by 2022. However, no announcements were made to ban it on 2 October.

While state-owned organizations like Indian Railways and Air India banned single-use plastic on the heels of the announcement by the PM, other sectors took it slow despite the widespread concern that single-use plastic can't be recycled and is a major cause of environment pollution.

According to media reports, the government has held some meetings with stakeholders, but no concrete steps have been initiated to curb the use of single-use plastic. It has been left to the states to take action to ban single-use plastic. Some states already have a ban in place. However, there is no initiative as yet at the national level, though reports say NGOs and other civil society organizations have been asked to share their opinion. Media reports said that the delay in taking action could be due to the state of the economy as any decision taken in a hurry could impact jobs. Reports also said discussions are being held on options that could be available.

Meanwhile, plastic manufacturers have sought a holistic policy on plastic ban. According to reports the manufacturers have submitted suggestions to the government on recycling of plastic products.

The general sentiment is that the momentum has petered out as the Center has left it to the jurisdiction of states. Reports suggest that the government is still developing guidelines and has yet to define single-use plastic. Ban can be implemented only after the meaning of single-use plastic becomes clear. The government also needs to explore alternatives to plastic before the ban is imposed. Further, a roadmap to implement nation-wide ban needs to be outlined before the ban comes into force.

The huge size of the industry is also acting as a deterrent to the blanket ban, say reports. A report by Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM) and consultancy firm Ernst and Young pegged the packaging industry, which is the highest user of plastic, at around Rs 5.15 lakh crore in the 2019-20 fiscal year. The industry accounts for 35 per cent of all plastic used in the country and is followed by the building sector (23%), transport (8%), electronics (8%), agriculture (8%) and other sectors (18%).

Further, 50-60 per cent of the plastic industry comes within the informal sector and employs huge numbers, who will be directly impacted in the scenario where the factories are forced to shut down due to the ban. If the industry is forced out of business, it could mean huge setback to the economy.

The importance of the sector can be estimated from the fact that there are more than 50,000 functional plastic manufacturing industrial units that are employing 4 to 5 million people. Closure of the industry could render more than six lakh people unemployed.

According to reports, the plastic industry produces around 90 lakh tons of single-use plastic every year. This plastic produce includes gutkha pouches, plastic carry bags, small bottles, straws, tumblers and cutlery, etc. The plastic industry is set to grow further on the back of e-commerce platforms and organized retail.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Going zero-waste is possible.

While India dithers, China has gone ahead and banned single-use plastic. The phenomenal rise of the food delivery business in China had created a mounting headache for it – the deluge of single use plastic like plastic takeout containers, chopsticks, and bags. Food delivery through app has become very popular and is giving rise to a pile of plastic trash.

In Chinese cities such as Beijing or Shenzhen, ordering lunch at the office involves delivery through an app—and along with it comes a pile of plastic trash. In 2018, more than 10 billion deliveries were made via the food apps in the country which was just double of the figure in 2017. The rising pile of plastic trash from food deliveries rang the alarm bell and spurred the Chinese government to pass an ambitious new ban on single-use plastic.

While environmentalists are lauding the move, experts fear that the ban may not necessarily achieve its goal. They feel that the it may just result in China shifting to compostable plastic. However, there is little investment in composting technology and infrastructure, and this may end up creating massive trash problems. Real change

cannot happen with a ban; it calls for a culture shift, say experts.

Having said that, industry-watchers hail the fact that this is the first time that China has actually identified the real culprits – single-use plastics – as the crux of the country's plastic pollution crisis. But, in the absence of clear guidelines it is difficult to see how the plan to tackle the plastics menace will pan out. It may just result



**Ditch the swabs,
they are non-biodegradable.**

IMAGE: PIXABAY



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Why add to this waste, carry your own environment friendly bottle.

in a shift from one type of single-use plastic to another, they say.

China plans to implement the ban in phases and by the end of 2022, phase out production of foam takeout boxes, plastic swabs, and products with plastic microbeads. It is also looking at banning plastic straws in some important cities and plastic bags and tableware are also to be included in the list by the end of the year. The plan is to bring in more areas under the ban by 2022. Banning of plastic packaging used by delivery services in some cities is also the anvil. By 2025, even more areas will be covered under the ambit of the ban.

China plans to shift to using biodegradable plastic post the ban on nondegradable plastic bags, tableware, and other plastic packaging is effective. Though the ban is encouraging, experts fear that as compostable plastic can only be broken down successfully in industrial composting facilities, in the absence of adequate numbers of such composting facilities, single-use biodegradable plastic may flood China in the next few years. Experts opine that big food delivery companies may also shift to biodegradable plastic forks and boxes instead of going for alternatives that may be inconvenient for consumers. E-commerce companies could also shift to this option and become a major source of biodegradable plastic waste.

Though the ban talks of improving recycling

infrastructure and promoting alternatives such as cloth bags, by including biodegradable plastic as an option, it may be defeating its purpose. Environmentalists say that a fork made from PLA, which is a common biodegradable plastic, does not decompose if it ends up in the ocean.

As it is, China is struggling with recycling, with its e-commerce sector generating around 850,000 metric tons of plastic waste annually, and 95% of it not being recycled. It is estimated that China recycles around 22% of its post-consumer plastic. Though it is more than what the U.S. recycles, but still it indicates that most of China's plastic waste is ending up in landfills. To add to it, these landfills are mostly inadequately managed and scraps of plastic escaping into the environment cannot be ruled out.

Despite these challenges, it is hoped that China's ban will have positive impact and there should be a reduction in the demand for fossil fuels that are used in plastic production. Currently, China is the world's largest import market for plastic, particularly polyethylene used in plastic bags. As oil companies ramp up production of plastic, with China managing to drop its demand, along with single-use plastic bans in the European Union and elsewhere, should act as a warning for the industry and make it think of alternatives. ▶

Source: Secondary research & media reports

THE PRESCRIPTION

Time to recharge
the sustainability
movement.



Sustainability Movement Slowing Down, Time For A Soul Search

Though large groups of consumers want ethical and sustainable goods; the sustainability movement is slowing down. It is now up to the governments and industry how they make sustainable goods more affordable and accessible to sustain the momentum towards sustainable goals.

IT'S A CLASSIC case of wanting to have your cake and eat it too. You can't hope for a sustainable future without having to pay for it. Sadly, according to a new report from Nosto, an e-commerce personalization platform, showed that of 2,000 U.S. and U.K.-based shoppers surveyed, majority want modern fashion retailers to follow sustainable practices and pay fair wages to workers; but they were unwilling to pay for the extra costs that would be incurred in the process.

According to the report, while 52% of consumers want the fashion industry to adopt more sustainable practices, only 29% of consumers are willing to pay more for sustainably made versions of the same items. Not only this, 62% of consumers also want discounts on sustainable clothing items. Apparently, there is a gap or a disconnect between consumers' idea of sustainable fashion and where they eventually spend their money.

Oeko-Tex, which is an ecological certification company has shown that while 69% of millennials say they look at claims of sustainability and eco-friendliness when researching for clothing purchases, only 37% actually spent their money on brands that are focused on sustainable fashion.

It's not surprising then that the 2019 Pulse of the Fashion Industry 2019 Update report indicated that sustainability efforts by the fashion industry is taking a backseat. The report brought out by Global Fashion Agenda and Sustainable Apparel Coalition in partnership with Boston Consulting Group, using a scoring system called the Pulse Index has evaluated fashion retailers' sustainability goals and implementation efforts. According to its findings, while the fashion industry improved its overall score to six points in 2017, in 2018 that score decreased to only four points. Though efforts at sustainability are slowing down as a whole; however, some fashion retailers have found a more sustainable approach to tackle business problems though with some trade-offs.

The finding that eco-friendly efforts by fashion labels are slowing down is disappointing in the context that the fashion industry is among the top ecological offenders producing the highest volumes of waste.

There are however reports that consumers globally are demanding more from the companies with which they do business. Consumers today are invested in ethical practices and look for brands that are ethical and eco-friendly and that put people and other living species ahead of profits. The shift towards ethical consumption is led by an estimated 83 million millennials globally. As is obvious, companies cannot afford to ignore this vast segment of spenders and must learn to the values of compassion and authenticity, if they are to survive. The millennials spending power is such that it can damage a brand irreparably if they decide to boycott its products. They are projected to spend \$1.4 trillion annually by 2020 according to a research by Accenture.

Undeniably, this change in consumer preference is being led by technology as it brings the power of

information into their hands. Consumers can research online to get information about a company's practices, mission and values. They can also find reviews and customer feedback online that help create a holistic picture of the company. Millennials are hence an aware lot and are attuned to the developments around the world. They are also inclined to take action to address pressing concerns that the world is facing. Further, they are conscious that they do not inadvertently end up contributing to the existing problems and aggravating it.

Consider this: According to the Horizon Media's Finger on the Pulse study, 81% of millennials would like companies to take a public pledge to be good corporate citizens. Apparently, reports that say millennials are a self-absorbed generation are way off the mark. The 2015



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Looking at labels to ascertain sustainability claims is not enough you need to spend on it too.

Cone Communications Millennial CSR Study also had indicated that 62% millennials would be willing to take a pay cut to work for a socially responsible company.

In 2018, 59% of people bought goods or services from a company they considered socially responsible, says the 2018 Conscious Consumer Spending Index. The report says that 32% of Americans planned to spend even more in 2019 on companies that they found aligned with their social values. Further, 32% of Americans refused to support a company that they felt was not socially responsible.

The seventh annual Conscious Consumer Spending Index (#CCSIndex) gave a mixed diagnosis on the state of social responsibility in America. Based on the poll of 1,057 Americans conducted by Good.Must.Grow., a socially responsible marketing consultancy, the report found that the consumer demand for socially responsible goods and services remained high in 2019. Majority of Americans were found supporting socially responsible



IMAGE: PIXABAY

The power of information at the fingertips for the sustainability conscious.

organizations and one-third of Americans planning to increase the amount they spend on “good” products and services in the next year.

However, the bad news was that the momentum for the “do good” movement was flagging off and for the third-straight year, fewer Americans reported participating in a range of “good” behaviors, such as recycling, reducing consumption, donating to charity and buying products and services from socially responsible companies. The biggest drop came in the “being green” category, which hit a high of 90 percent in 2015.

Business sustainability is now no longer sufficient for companies to tout their credentials. They also must focus on environmental sustainability if they want to be the company of choice for the environmentally conscious millennials. The time for doubts is over and as researchers at Yale and George Mason University found, Americans know that climate change is happening and more than 60% accept that the changes have been brought about by humans. Hence, consumers are now questioning as to what businesses are doing to limit their carbon footprint, emissions, water usage and damage to the earth.

For companies that want to demonstrate seriousness to save the environment, there are many ways of doing it. For one, e-commerce companies whose business is growing exponentially in the digital era can take up sustainability efforts by trying to offset the effects of emissions associated with shipping. This can be done by donating to relevant organizations invested in environment protection.

Other small efforts that go a long way in sustainability drive can be implemented internally by following greener office practices, like promoting carpooling, remote working or bus commute for employees.

Buyers polled in the Pulse of the Fashion Industry 2019 Update demonstrated their sustainability concerns by saying that they make more purchases from fashion brands that are focused on sustainability. Over 33% of consumers had switched brands to support those that take a public stance on environmental change; while 50% of buyers were planning to switch brands in the

future to support environment-friendly fashion brands.

However, if sustainability is to move from being a fashion statement to becoming a life mission, there need to be efforts to make sustainable affordable. Most companies that flaunt a sustainable cast, price their products beyond the reach of average consumer's budget. As a result, sustainable fashion has become the credo flaunted by lifestyle influencers and celebrities on their Instagram handles.

Environmentally and societally conscious social enterprises are taking the sustainability efforts forward in many countries. These companies are rooted in their local environment from sourcing raw inputs to employment and give back to the community in many ways. The vision of such companies is not profit for self,



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Businesses must be environmentally sustainable to appeal to millennial consumers.

but profits to help the community. However, before declaring oneself as a social enterprise, companies need to be aware because according to the 2017 Cone Communications CSR Study, 82% of people polled will hold a company accountable to share results if they make social or environmental commitments. Hence, you cannot be a pretender to the category and survive.

For businesses that feel being sustainable is an expensive affair; they should know that people are willing to pay more for sustainable goods, as says a Nielsen report (2015 Nielsen Global Corporate Sustainability Report). The report found 63% of people are willing to pay more for goods that demonstrate sustainability.

Further, according to the Conscious Consumer Index by Good.Must.Grow, on a scale of 1-10, most consumers rank themselves 7-8 in terms of how socially conscious they are when shopping. Obviously, companies can ill-afford to ignore the sustainability wave as they can miss out on a sizable chunk of consumers who are committed to sustainability goals. As consumers become ethical shoppers, business must follow suit or perish. ▀

Source: Secondary research & media reports

What Is **CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM?**

Conscious consumerism is a mindset, and it must become a habit for us if we want to save the world from impending environmental disasters.



Mindless consumption is now dated. It is the time of the conscious consumer.

THE TIME FOR mindless consumption is long over. Thankfully, over the past some years a silent revolution has been taking place in the consumer world. World over, as consumers become more aware of the perils of consumerism, some have been taking conscious decision to steer their way to sustainable consumption. However, companies fast on the uptake, have converted this mindfulness into a commercial trend, flooding the market with goods wearing the sustainable or green label. But are these products really what they claim to be?

Let us first try to understand what conscious consumerism is, all about.

Conscious consumerism, what's that pray?

Conscious consumerism is not buying a green product here or there to ease your conscience. Rather, it is the process of making positive decisions throughout the buying cycle consciously with the intention to counter at least some of the negative effects of blind consumerism on the planet. It is responsible or ethical consumption decisions taken by the consumer in every aspect of life – be it eating bar of chocolates, wearing second-hand or pre-worn clothes or using natural products like cosmetics and toiletries that have not been tested on animals or leave a huge carbon footprint.

When consumers become responsible towards their environment, they prefer products that promote sustainable farming and eco-friendly manufacturing. Not only this, responsible consumerism also means frugal consumption, hence only that much of products need to be created that are actually needed. There are other dimensions too to ethical consumerism like supporting equality, diversity, inclusion and humane working practices, no animal testing, etc., that drive this kind of consumption.

Conscious consumerism is aimed at using the purchasing power of consumers to drive the impact of consumption on the environment and society guided by what people buy, as well as why and how they make those purchases.

Conscious consumption, sustainability and social responsibility are often used synonymously or interchangeably. However, some of these phrases have been defined carefully, while others are used loosely. Conscious consumption is an umbrella term that means consumers engage in the economy with higher awareness of how their consumption practices impact society at large. For example, if someone shops sustainably wanting to preserve the environment, it is a means of consuming more consciously.

So, who is a conscious consumer?

As a corollary to consumers becoming more aware of their power to drive change and scrutinizing businesses, they buy from to establish their sustainable credentials; businesses must work hard to conform to the standards that these awakened consumers expect.

To truly understand the anatomy of conscious consumers, we need to understand some of their key characteristics.

Conscious consumers have a macro perspective. They want to use their individual influence to create global impact. For them consuming is a form of voting for companies that they deem to fit the sustainability paradigm. By purchasing products from such companies, they feel they are supporting those businesses that promote the values of sustainability.

Of course, such conscious consumers belong to the privileged and educated class who have the ability to make decisions that impact corporates.

As research over the years has confirmed, this category of consumers is generally younger or the millennial shoppers, born between 1981 and 1996.

Millennials drive the trend

A 2015 Nielsen report, Global Survey of Corporate Social Responsibility, found three out of four millennials willing to pay more for sustainable products. Further, of those surveyed, 51% of boomers (aged 50-64) were also inclined to pay higher prices for sustainable products too. However, for the millennials, sustainability is the way of life. Various research points to the millennials' preferences for walkability and public transport, that is a metro card over a car. This is a huge change from the time some 30 years ago when getting a driver's license and owning a car prefigured in their parents' generation.

The conscious adoption of a sustainable way of life is forcing companies to change their unsustainable ways to attract talent and retain this young dynamic workforce. Millennials assess a company's worth from its proclaimed values and would not dream of joining an organization whose values do not match theirs. Millennials are not out there to make money alone; they also want to make a difference and add value to this world.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

The new age consumers who shop with their conscience.

In the personal space too, millennial parameters are different. To them healthy food is not just what is good for health but also what is good for the health of the environment. Whether it be white good, brown goods or personal goods like toiletries, millennials want them to conform to their high standards of sustainable consumption.

Each of us can become a conscious consumer

How many of us have ever paused to think our roles as consumers? How many of us realize that by the mere act of buying products, we are financially supporting companies? These could be companies that we might not want to support socially, ethically or philosophically, given their practices. Yet, we still do.

The story of consumption begins small for most of us. We begin with rented accommodation and a few worldly possessions. As our means grow, so do our aspirations. Soon we buy our first car, which soon becomes inadequate to support the commute of the family. We not only graduate to a bigger car but add another one to the family fleet. Our possessions grow, and our home shrinks. We buy a house and continue building our possessions. We amass so many possessions that we don't need or use.

A conscious consumer makes the choice of weeding out all those possessions that are not required and makes a deliberate decision to spend only on acquiring that which is actually needed. One needs to be careful. Because it's easy to accumulate possessions even without much money. You have cheaper alternatives. Of course, sustainability doesn't come cheap. Ethically made goods are expensive so are organic products that are environment friendly.

Many conscious consumers, in an effort to minimize their ecological footprints, shop secondhand, use cloth diapers and sanitary napkins and buy locally made organic products. There are some simple ways in which you can become a more conscious consumer too, without having to spend a bomb.

Look for Certification

Sustainable consumption is not just eating those organic products. It actually is the goal to reduce our ecological footprint. In simple terms it is a measure of how fast we are consuming



Is the product really
what is claims to be?

resources and generating waste in comparison to how much time the planet will take to recover from the repercussions of our habits. Many companies claim their product is ethically sourced or handmade and provide details of the shock to environment during the manufacturing process. But before you reach out to these products, do check if they have the appropriate labels certifying the claims.

Arm yourself with knowledge about your favorite brands



Are the labels really true?

It would be a humongous task to research about each brand out there. What you can do instead is find out about those brands that you spend most on. Be it a clothing brand, a cosmetic brand or a restaurant. If you know how ethical or environment-conscious they are, you can be assured you are not supporting unsustainable production.

Invest in the right companies

Do research before you invest your hard-earned money in a company. The returns they offer may be tempting, but what is the cost to the planet?

Reduce your footprint

Carbon footprint has become common phrase in today's environment conscious world. It is the amount of greenhouse gas, specifically carbon dioxide, emitted from an activity. Find out what is your carbon footprint – is the AC you use certified to cause least damage to the environment? Are you using your car to drive down to the corner store when you can walk down to it? Such and any other questions will help you judge your lifestyle choices and reduce your carbon footprint.



Ecological footprints,
nor carbon footprints.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Be part of the no-fly movement.

Ditch that flight

Flying is one of the worst activities for the planet. There is a no-fly movement called flygskam (flight shame) in Sweden, as it aims to become carbon neutral by 2045. You can embrace it too by the choices you make. Going for a vacation? Choose a location nearer home. Visiting someone in the next town? Choose the train. Agreed it will take more time, but when you think of the cost to the environment, you will appreciate sacrificing these small comforts.

Go for green lodging and local shopping

Shop locally and organically, this does not just give earning opportunities to the local economy but is also cheaper. Why buy those exotic fruits that have to be flown all the way from Europe or America? Why eat fruits that are not grown in the season? Also, when traveling choose eco-friendly hotels or resorts that are certified by concerned agencies.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Is this certified green?

Polyester or cotton?

Polyester production for textiles releases toxic amounts of greenhouse gases. But though organic materials like cotton may be less destructive, they still contribute to climate change. The issue is not of choice here. Rather what we need to do is consume less so that production comes down. Don't buy stuff you don't really need it. Follow the lifestyle choices of our parents — be frugal.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Don't shop till you drop; less is more.

Shop secondhand

Shopping second hand is no longer looked down upon. This is a good way of contributing your mite to the environment. Here, your consumption is not creating more production.

Embrace a little minimalism

Conscious consumption is not just about choosing greener products; it also means questioning how and how much we consume. And here less is more. Become part of the minimalist movements and promise yourself to not buy anything for a year. Change your shopping habits. Minimalism will not only help you save money but also help live less wastefully.

Conclusion

Each small step that we take as a conscious consumer will make our carbon footprint smaller. It may not fix climate change, but our individual action could be the driving force for action at the higher level. It is our responsibility to leave the world a better place for our progeny. ▶

Source: Secondary research & mediareports

FOOD WASTE

Need To Plug The Gaps

Food loss and waste is not just an economic loss, it also impacts the sustainability of the planet.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

Waste not, want not.

WHAT HAS FOOD wastage got to do with sustainability? If you are among those who think there is no connection between the two, this article is for you. In fact, one priority included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is reducing global food waste. The target is for the world to cut per capita food waste by half by 2030. Yes, it is an ambitious target, but if achieved, it will promote food security, improve livelihoods, and also reduce greenhouse gas emissions besides saving land and water. Know that curbing food wastage is not just a goal in itself but also a means to achieve other SDGs.

IMAGE: PIXABAY



Why we must not waste food

Did you know that the world produces more than enough food to feed everyone? It is a sad commentary on how we handle our resources that despite sufficient food to go around, more than 821 million people go to bed on hungry bellies. What's even worse is that the number of hungry people has been increasing since 2015, when it steadily dropped between 2005 and 2015.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

There is enough food in the world to feed everyone, yet millions sleep on empty stomach.

It's shocking that about a third of the food produced globally, i.e. 1.3 billion tons each year, is lost or wasted. A January 2011 report by EAT-Lancet Commission states that achieving a sustainable food system would be impossible unless we address the challenge of food loss and waste.

The wastage is so scary to think of in the light of the wasted resources. A report says that the food that is lost or wasted uses up 28% of the world's agricultural land to grow. Food wastage also leads to collateral damages in the shape of climate change. It leads to around 8% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. It is estimated that by tackling food loss and waste does the supply chain, we can avoid producing around 1 billion tons of CO₂e per year.

The cost of this food wastage to the global economy is around US\$940 billion each year. If we can reduce

Food wastage leads to greenhouse gas emission.

food loss and waste, it could help us prevent these economic losses and help reduce the financial burden on the most vulnerable people of the world.

It is important that we address the food waste as it is an opportunity for us to address food insecurity and mitigate climate change. The impact of food waste is not localized and is a global epidemic. Hence, it needs to be addressed through a global approach. There is a need for dramatic reduction in food waste and this can be achieved by focusing on the systems by which food is produced, consumed and disposed of. This calls for systemic change and it is not a problem of the developing world alone. We must make concerted effort to reduce wasted or lost food in our value chain – from farm to fork.

Reducing food waste will address the challenges of food security and will also help close the calorie gap between where the world is now and where it needs to be to sustainably feed the planet. A 2013 report by World Resources Institute, 'Creating a Sustainable Food Future', had estimated that the world faces a roughly 70 percent gap between the crop calories produced today and those that will be needed to feed a projected population of more than 9.5 billion people in 2050. As such, if we could recover some of this lost and wasted food, we could be able to help close this gap. Any efforts to safe food would also lead to strengthening livelihoods and improving food security. Additionally, there would be no additional environmental costs.

Apart from the human cost, food waste also has a high environmental cost. It is an extremely inefficient use of resources and a study by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), states that food loss and waste accounts for about 3.3 gigatons of greenhouse gas emissions. What it means is that if we take food loss and waste to be a country, it would be the world's third-largest emitter, only exceeded by China and the United States. The wastage of resources is sad as to grow food that is wasted, huge amounts of water and fertilizer are used in its production that never even feeds humans. It is hence a big environmental cost that we pay for food which is of no use to humans.

Is there a way to stop food loss and waste?

Certainly, as food loss and waste are issues that have been overlooked for decades. Fortunately, it has begun to garner international attention from both the public and private sectors. In the U.S., its Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Agriculture have outlined ambitious plans which are in line with the SDGs, aimed at reducing food waste in the country by 50 percent by 2030. The UK has already made rapid strides in the areas, and in just five years has cut food waste by 21 percent. Meanwhile Denmark has cut food waste by an astounding 25 percent over a span of five years.

The industry is also not far behind the governments in taking measures to reduce food waste. The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF), which represents more than 400 companies across 70 countries, has set the target of reducing food waste among member facilities by half by 2025.

There was an urgent need to quantify the food loss basis the principle that states that what can be measured can be managed. In order to address the challenges of qualifying food loss and waste, the World Resources Institute has come up with the Food Loss & Waste Protocol (FLW Protocol), which is a multi-stakeholder effort that has developed the global accounting and

reporting standard (known as the FLW Standard) for quantifying food and associated inedible parts removed from the food supply chain (referred to for simplicity sake as 'food loss and waste').

With the help of the FLW Standard countries, companies and other organizations can account for the food loss and waste and report it in a credible, practical and internationally consistent manner. They can not only measure how much food loss and waste occurs but also identify where it occurs. This will help these bodies to develop targeted efforts to reduce food waste. This standardized protocol will enable governments and industry to identify appropriate strategies for making reductions. The benefits of such efforts will be economic and will help increase food security and reduce environmental impacts.

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has provided a list of key facts on food loss and waste that every human being must know.

- Around one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year — approximately 1.3 billion tons — gets lost or wasted.
- Food losses and waste amounts to roughly US\$ 680 billion in industrialized countries and US\$ 310 billion in developing countries.



IMAGE: PIXABAY

No food should be lost between farm to fork.

- Industrialized and developing countries dissipate roughly the same quantities of food — respectively 670 and 630 million tons.

- Fruits and vegetables, plus roots and tubers have the highest wastage rates of any food.

- Global quantitative food losses and waste per year are roughly 30% for cereals, 40-50% for root crops, fruits and vegetables, 20% for oil seeds, meat and dairy plus 35% for fish.

- Every year, consumers in rich countries waste almost as much food (222 million tons) as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (230 million tons).

- The amount of food lost or wasted every year is equivalent to more than half of the world's annual cereals crop (2.3 billion tons in 2009/2010).

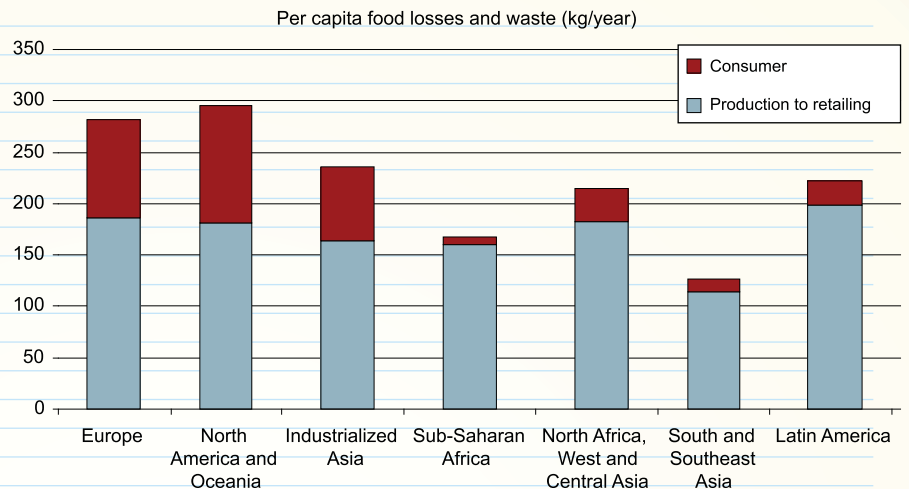
- Per capita waste by consumers is between 95-115 kg a year in Europe and North America, while consumers in sub-Saharan Africa, south and south-eastern Asia, each throw away only 6-11 kg a year.

- Total per capita food production for human consumption is about 900 kg a year in rich countries, almost twice the 460 kg a year produced in the poorest regions.

- In developing countries 40% of losses occur at post-harvest and processing levels while in industrialized countries more than 40% of losses happen at retail and consumer levels.

- At retail level, large quantities of food are wasted due to quality standards that over-emphasize appearance.

Per capita food losses and waste, at consumption and pre-consumptions stages, in different regions



- Food loss and waste also amount to a major squandering of resources, including water, land, energy, labour and capital and needlessly produce greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to global warming and climate change.
- In developing countries food waste and losses occur mainly at early stages of the food value chain and can be traced back to financial, managerial and technical constraints in harvesting techniques as well as storage and cooling facilities. Strengthening the supply chain through the direct support of farmers and investments in infrastructure, transportation, as well as in an expansion of the food and packaging industry could help to reduce the amount of food loss and waste. ▶

Source: Secondary research & mediareports

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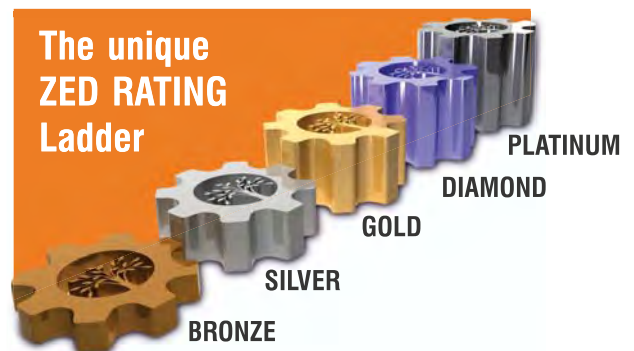
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Certification Scheme

A roadmap to
World-class manufacturing



HIGHLIGHTS

- ⚙️ A scheme by Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India
- ⚙️ Certification on the systems and processes of MSMEs
- ⚙️ Handholding MSMEs towards world class manufacturing
- ⚙️ Special emphasis on MSMEs supplying to Defence Sector
- ⚙️ Direct subsidy to participating MSMEs
- ⚙️ Creating a credible database of MSMEs for OEMS/CPSUs/Foreign Investors under "Make in India initiative"
- ⚙️ Quality Council of India (QCI) to function as the NMIU (National Monitoring and Implementing Unit) of the scheme

"Let's think about making our product which has 'Zero Defect'; so that it does not come back (get rejected) from the world market and 'Zero Effect' so that the manufacturing does not have an adverse effect on our environment"

SHRI NARENDRA MODI
Hon'ble Prime Minister



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