

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS AND FACILITATORS



Responsible consumption and production

Although we may be from different countries, speak different languages and have different cultures we all share one common home, earth.

The different parts of our natural world are interconnected – damage or misuse to one part of it can lead to devastating impacts on places thousands of kilometres away. The United Nations have set 17 Sustainable Development Goals for all countries to be achieved by 2030. One of these targets is to change our production methods and consumption habits so that they are sustainable. This resource contains information and activities to explore what consumption is, how it relates to global issues such as climate change and ideas about how young people can take action!

Key words:

- **Consumption** – Using energy, food and materials
- **Production** - The process of growing or making food, goods or materials, especially large quantities
- **Resources** - A supply of money, materials (oil, coal, precious metals, tools, etc) staff, and other assets that can be used on by a person or organisation in order to function effectively

Definitions from Oxford English Dictionary Online 2019

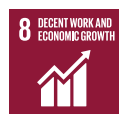
What's the problem?

Our planet is at crisis point. We are living in a throw away culture where we want to keep up with the latest trends for as little as possible. But this can't last forever – it is not sustainable.

Over use of natural resources to produce items or necessities for a growing population is taking our environment to breaking point. Many of these resources are non-renewable (we don't have an endless supply), cause harm when they are extracted and pollute our planet when they are consumed or discarded.



How does sustainability link to the other goals?



SDG 8 - DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Keeping low prices for the things that we purchase means that those who extract the resources or make the goods take the hit. The people that grow, make, mine, sew and put together the items that we use often face low wages, few rights and unstable employment.



SDG 14 - LIFE BELOW WATER

Oceans and seas are an important part of our ecosystem and vital for the three billion people who rely on them for their livelihoods.

Plastics often end up in oceans and seas. As they do not biodegrade, they break down and can become ingested by fish and birds. Overfishing can also lead to loss of species.



SDG 13 – CLIMATE ACTION

Methods used to produce and transport the things that we use and buy create emissions, such as CO2, which are contributing to man-made climate change. Many items that are made are used once or a handful of times, before being thrown away.



SDG 16 - PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Conflict has many causes but one of these is linked to the struggle for control of natural resources such as land, oil, precious metals and water.

Demand for resources to make products such as phones and food can lead to tensions between those who live on the land and companies who wish to extract resources.

ACTIVITY ONE

How much waste do you produce?

This data gathering task is perfect for students to take home as a homework project to think about about waste and consumption in our homes.

Need:

- Printed or digital copies of the table on page four



DEBRIEF

- In pairs or groups of four, ask students to reflect on the data gathered in their tables. What do they think about the amount of waste produced?
- Share the statistics about waste and consumption (below) with the class
- Ask the group to brain storm ideas to reduce the amount of packaging and waste used by households

FACTS



The population by 2050 is expected to be over nine billion. Consumption habits and action on climate change must be taken if we are to sustain this many people with the things needed for a healthy life. Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2017



In Ireland, we waste one million tonnes of food each year. 60% of this is avoidable (left overs, food not eaten on time, plate scrapings). This food waste costs Irish households on average between €400 and €1000 a year! Source: Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment 2019



The industries that make plastic use as much oil as the aviation industry. Source: World Economic Forum 2017



60% of Ireland's electricity comes from burning fossil fuels and 30% from renewable sources such as wind and biomass. This has improved but we still have a long way to go to improve sustainability. Source: Renewable Energy in Ireland 2019, SEAI

Table for activity one

Day	Number of items thrown away (approx)	Items/materials thrown into the black bin (general waste)	Items/materials recycled or reused	Is any food composted? How much?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Food waste



On paper, enough food is produced to feed the whole world, so is it shocking to know that 821 million people are hungry? Is it more shocking when you consider that each year, as a global community, we waste a massive 1.3 billion tonnes of food? This is one third of all food produced annually (FAO 2018).

This situation is an injustice in itself, however the consequences of food waste go even further. It is actually responsible for making even more people hungry.

1. To grow, transport, water, feed and power factories which make or process the food that we buy uses a huge amount of resources. Food production and transportation uses an incredible amount of fossil fuels to get food stuffs from the field to your supermarket.
2. Fossil fuels create carbon dioxide (CO₂) which is responsible for human induced climate change which we are seeing. On top of that, any food that is wasted creates emissions as it decomposes which produces even more CO₂.
3. Climate change is responsible for increasing the amount and intensity of extreme weather events around the world (stronger storms, more flooding, higher temperatures, less rain).
4. Many of these impact communities who are already living in poverty. These weather events are destroying crops, reducing yields (how much is grown) and killing livestock (chickens, goats, cows, etc).
5. This is creating more food insecurity, malnutrition and hungry people

One of the aims of SDG12 is to half the amount of global food waste that retailers and consumers produce, as well as reduce the amount of food that is wasted in its production (in the fields, in factories, in transport).



In Ireland we waste approximately 1 million tonnes of food each year.¹



Often 'ugly' fruit and vegetables never make it to the supermarket and go to waste without ever reaching consumers. A study by the University of Edinburgh found that Europe discards approximately 50m tonnes of ugly fruit and vegetables each year.²



Consumers in Europe and North America waste 95-115 kg of food a year per capita, while consumers in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-East Asia throw away only 6-11 kg a year.³



In developing countries 40% of food is wasted post-harvest while in countries like Ireland more than 40% of food is wasted by retailers and consumers.⁴



Food waste costs an average household in Ireland between €400 and €1000 a year.⁵



After America and China, food waste is the 3rd largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions producing 3.3 billion tonnes of CO₂ a year.⁶

What foods do we throw away in Ireland?



Salad:
Almost 50%



Fruit and Veg:
Almost 25%



Bread and Bakery: 20%



Meat and Fish: 10%



Dairy and Yogurt: 10%



Potatoes: The vegetable we waste most.



Bananas and Apples:
The fruits we waste most.

⁴ Stop Food Waste <https://stopfoodwaste.ie/resource/the-environmental-impact-of-food-waste/>
⁵ RTE News 2018 <https://www.rte.ie/news/newsletters/2018/0820/986248-ugly-fruit-and-veg/>
⁶ FAO.org 2019 <http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/>
⁷ FAO.org 2019 <http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/>
⁸ EPA 2019 http://www.epa.ie/media/epa_factsheet_waste.pdf
⁹ Stop Food Waste <https://stopfoodwaste.ie/resource/the-environmental-impact-of-food-waste/>

ACTIVITY TWO: Food Miles

🕒 20 minutes



Use this activity to explore our food consumption habits and how it impacts on our planet.

Preparation:

Before this activity you will need to collect packaging and labels from food items. You could ask students to each bring in three or four (clean) items of packaging or collect these yourself. Aim to have around three or four items per group.

Need:

- Students in groups of three or four
- An outline of the map of the world printed out for each group and pens
- Three or four items of food packaging per group
- *Access to the internet/phones for research (this could be a follow up or pre-lesson task if there is no access in the classroom)*

Instructions

1. Hand out the resources to each group and tell them that they are going to be finding out more about the food that we often eat in today Ireland is from.

2. Explain that they will be examining where the food that was in the empty packaging was from in front of them.
3. In their groups, students will tackle three questions for each item:
 - a) Does it say where the item was produced (made or processed in a factory)? If so, make a note of this on the paper or on the map
 - b) Looking at the ingredients, choose three of them to find out where these things are actually grown (e.g. what country is cocoa from? Where is sugar grown?) Make a note of these on the paper/map
 - c) Using the above information, estimate the 'food miles' or the distance that this item of food has travelled in total to Ireland

Note: For this task, students could use an online calculator such as foodmiles.com to help them!

4. Ask each group to feedback on their research to the whole group

Discussion:

- How much of the food that we have looked at as a class is imported? Why do we import food in Ireland?
- What is the impact of type of consumption on our planet?

Follow up: Share the information with students about food waste on page five to help them to understand the connection between food miles, food waste, climate change and hunger!

What are food miles?

Many foods travel huge distances by sea, air and road to get to our local supermarket; think of bananas from Ecuador, avocados from Mexico or blueberries from Peru. This transport system and the energy used in the transportation of food contributes to our carbon footprint and global greenhouse gas emissions.

Eating seasonal food produced locally is one of the best ways of reducing the overall environmental impact of what we eat. It reduces the energy used for growing the food and the environmental impact of air and sea transport. Less food is spoiled because it makes a shorter journey from field to shelf and money is put back into the local economy.



Top Tips for Reducing Food Waste

- Plan ahead- write a shopping list and stick to it!
- Only buy what you will use: beware of deals that mean you buy more than you need
- Grow your own if possible
- Buy local and seasonal produce whenever possible
- Only cook what you need/will eat
- Use your freezer to ensure leftovers don't go to waste
- Store food correctly
- Preserve fruit and vegetables –make jam or chutney
- Compost- composting re-uses the food waste in homes instead of sending it to landfill



The equivalent of **75 million cows** are wasted annually or 20% of meat produced



8% of fish caught globally is thrown back into the sea, dead, dying or damaged; that is equal to almost 3 billion Atlantic salmon



In Europe the equivalent of **574 billion eggs** are wasted each year




Food and Plastic Packaging

Fruit and vegetables are often the worst culprits when it comes to plastic packaging that cannot be recycled. Encourage your local supermarket to reduce the amount of plastic packaging on their fruit and vegetables.

Next time you are in the supermarket, have a look around at the packaging used for fresh foods! It would make for a very interesting investigation!



ACTIVITY THREE: Telling the story

-  At least 1.5 hours is needed for this task, so it may work well over a series of lessons



Making videos is a fantastic way to encourage students to research, work in groups with others as well as a great way to take action on an issue by educating others.

Need:

- A camera or phone to record the video. There are a number of free apps available to make videos on a phone very easily
- Paper, pens, playdough, any other props....
- Students in groups of between two and four

Instructions:

1. Explain to students that they are going to be making a video to raise awareness of the amount of food we waste and its link to the Sustainable Development Goals
2. Ask them to brainstorm ideas for their video and create a plan:
 - What is the key message
 - What do they want people to do after listening to it?
 - How long will it be (less than one minute is best!)
 - Who it aimed at?
 - Which other SDGs does food waste link to?
 - How does it link to Concern?
3. Give students time to create their videos and edit them
4. Share these videos as widely as possible to spread the message! Share them with us in Concern via social media or email

Concern, consumption and hunger

Irresponsible consumption and production habits, especially by people living in wealthier countries, are fuelling climate change due to over use of natural resources (water, land) excessive use of fossil fuels and food waste which create large amounts of CO₂.

“After the cyclone hit things here were so bad. The water came up to here [chest-height] and there was nothing we could save.”



Manuele Zivanhane's maize crop in Mozambique was destroyed during Cyclone Idai in March 2019. Photo: April 22nd 2019/Tommy Trenchard

Concern work in the world's poorest communities, many of which are feeling the impacts of man-made climate change – these include an increase in extreme weather events such as more intense storms, flooding, hotter and prolonged heatwaves, and a lack of rain or excessive rainfall. These communities are feeling these impacts due to a combination of geographical location and poverty limiting people's ability to respond and prepare for weather shocks.

Two of the biggest consequences of climate change are hunger and an increase in the intensity of natural disasters. We are working with communities and local organisations to support people in preparing and responding to climate change, as well as supporting with emergency assistance when disasters strike.

Check out this video on our YouTube channel to find out about Concern's work in Malawi to help communities tackle hunger and respond to a changing climate:



“Conservation Agriculture: Changing Lives in Malawi”

Consumption is a **BIG ISSUE** that plays a big part in:

- Contributing to man-made climate change
- Increasing hunger
- Destroying our natural environment
- Making existing inequalities worse



...And as a consequence of these takes away peoples dreams, ambitions and rights.

By taking action on consumption, you are part of taking a stand against the issues above and showing solidarity with all those impacted by this crisis.

SPEAK ACT DO

Speak, Act, Do is a programme to support students and teachers in taking action on important global issues which impact our world!

Choose a topic, do your research, organise two actions (a Concern action and a local action) to address a global justice issue and then share this with other schools at our Agents of Change event!

Visit our website to find our simple guide to Speak Act Do or email schools@concern.net to find out more.

Below are a few ideas about how you can get involved!



Concern actions

- Organise an event (a play, a movie night) to educate and spread awareness about the impact of over consumption on our planet
- Create a piece of art/a sculpture to display in school or your community to help people reflect on how our actions in Ireland are contributing to making people's lives more difficult in other parts of the world
- Contact shops and business who sell and produce food to find out what they do with their food waste. Encourage them to make positive changes on this issue if they throw away their food.
- Over consumption is contributing to the climate crisis and increasing hunger. Find out and share Concern's work tackling hunger and work helping communities adapt to a changing climate.

Local Actions

- Do research in your own school about how much food is wasted. Run a campaign to encourage your school community to reduce food waste and become more aware of food miles
- Organise peer workshops in your school on consumption or hunger and get people thinking differently about it
- Complete activity three and make a video about food waste and how it impacts households in Ireland, as well as communities overseas
- Organise a debate on food waste! One example recently from Concern Primary Debates is "People who waste food should be fined".