

Sustainable Consumption and Production: Learning to Live Together

WRJ 48th Assembly Resolution, December 2011

The land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.
Throughout the country that you hold as a possession,
you must provide for the redemption of the land. (Lev. 25:23-24)

Issue

Climate change, resource scarcity, and conflict over resources have the real potential to harm the world's population and affect global security.

Background

The [UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection publication](#) states that "Sustainable consumption includes meeting the needs of present and future generations for goods [including food and water, ed.] and services in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable." Production and consumption are inextricably interwoven. All production consumes resources and energy: to produce something requires that something must be consumed.

Resources are the backbone of every economy. However, the dimensions of our current resource use are such that the chances of future generations and developing countries having access to their fair share of scarce resources are endangered. Moreover, the consequences of our resource use in terms of impacts on the environment are causing serious damage that goes beyond our shared but finite planet's ability to sustain its growing population. These effects risk being exacerbated once the developing world takes up growth and resource use similar to the industrialized countries. There is a growing understanding and concern that global security depends on sustainable practices and development.

According to [Trends in Sustainable Development](#), the 2010-2011 report issued by the UN's Division for Sustainable Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the unsustainable and inequitable use of resources is already pushing many of the world's ecosystems beyond the "tipping points" from which they cannot recover. Current examples of resource crises include devastating droughts and famines, climate change, and the use of oil and its future depletion.

Attention to sustainability and improving people's lives while minimizing harm to nature ties together many interconnecting goals such as: addressing climate change; global health; women and children's issues; and food, water, and energy shortages. Of immediate concern is the lack of available of food caused by unsustainable production, inefficient transportation, and inequitable distribution of food. Attention also must be focused on the harm caused by industrial pollution and improper waste management as well as on the destructive practices and socio-political impacts of mining industries in the developing world.

Women of Reform Judaism, formerly the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, has long demonstrated its
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concern about the effects of the environment on people and nations having previously adopted resolutions on environmental pollution (1969, 1983, 1992), on energy conservation (1973, 1977, 1979), on children's health and the environment (2001, 2003), and on global warming (2007). In 2006, WRJ endorsed the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, which, in seeking to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, address concerns of equitable distribution, sustainability, and global development.¹

In 1992, the "Earth Summit," the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, adopted a blueprint for sustainable development. In advance of that conference, Women of Reform Judaism issued a policy statement recognizing the need to support and advocate for the repair and protection of the environment. Now, two decades later, in advance of the 2012 Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Women of Reform Judaism reaffirms its commitment to developing sustainable models of consumption and production that are environmentally sound, socially equitable, culturally sensitive, and economically just.

Women of Reform Judaism has made specific changes in its operations to shift to sustainable consumption whenever possible, including the use of electronic mailings in place of paper, reduction in size and amount of printed materials, and use of biodegradable and recycled products. WRJ districts and affiliates are also transitioning to the use of sustainable resources when they can. For example, WRJ Pacific District's project, "Sew Green," provided hand sewn convention bags made from recycled materials and Congregation Beth Israel Sisterhood's (Austin, Texas) "Sisterhood Goes Green" included recycling and setting up a garden for the temple with native, low maintenance, low water use plants.

Resolution

Women of Reform Judaism calls on decision makers, as members of the global community, to take responsibility and action to create and support a culture and economic system based on sustainable policies and practices for consumption and production of goods and services. Moreover, Women of Reform Judaism calls upon its affiliates to:

1. Mobilize their members and congregational members to improve knowledge and understanding of the environmental and social impacts of our consumption and production choices, practices and policies, and to make them more sustainable and socially responsible.
2. Encourage religious and public schools to include information about sustainable and responsible living in their established curricula.
3. Form partnerships with other like-minded organizations to identify and develop coordinated actions and grassroots initiatives to build public support for government and business policies and practices that protect and promote human and environmental health and well-being, encourage sustainable livelihoods and lifestyles, and reduce the ecological footprint.
4. Support changes in government and business policies at all levels that move us toward a more sustainable economy.
5. Encourage individuals and organizations in the fields of science, research, and education to define, develop, and disseminate the innovative solutions needed to transition to sustainable economies.
6. Continue to support the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the upcoming UN review of the Earth Summit during the Rio+ 20 meeting with an emphasis on promoting and ensuring environmental sustainability.

¹ See *In Pursuit of Justice: Resolutions and Policy Statements*, WRJ, 1997 for all WRJ Resolutions & Statements prior to 1970. Those adopted subsequent to 1970 can be found on the [WRJ website](http://www.wrj.org).

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Resources and References:

UN: Department of Economic and Social Affairs

[UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection \(as amended 1999\)](#)

UN: Division for Sustainable Development

[Trends in Sustainable Development, Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production](#)

[UN: Millennium Development Goals: Ensure Environmental Sustainability](#)

[UN: Sustainable Consumption](#)

[UN: Education for Sustainable Lifestyles](#)

[Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living](#)

[World Watch Institute: Vision for a Sustainable World,](#)

<http://www.worldwatch.org/node/6096>, and

<http://www.meettheauthor.co.uk/bookbites/1897.html>

[The North American Sustainable Consumption Alliance \(NASCA\)](#)