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RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION: WHY IT MATTERS

What is the goal here?

To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Why?

More people globally are expected to join the middle class over the next two

decades. This is good for individual prosperity but it will increase demand for already constrained natural resources. If we don't act to change our consumption and production patterns, we will cause irreversible damage to our environment.

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CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



If the global population reaches 9.6 billion by 2050, the equivalent of almost **three planets** will be required to sustain current lifestyles

What are some of the current consumption and production patterns that need to change?

There are many aspects of consumption that with simple changes can have a big impact on society as a whole. For example, each year about one third of all food produced—equivalent to 1.3 billion tonnes worth around \$1 trillion—ends up rotting in the bins of consumers and retailers, or spoiling due to poor transportation and harvesting practices, something that businesses need to address.

When it comes to consumers, households consume 29 per cent of global energy and contribute to 21 per cent of resultant CO2 emissions. However, if people worldwide switched to energy efficient lightbulbs the world would save US\$120 billion annually. Water pollution is also a pressing issue that needs a sustainable solution. We are polluting water faster than nature can recycle and purify water in rivers and lakes.

How can I help as a business?

It's in businesses' interest to find new solutions that enable sustainable consumption and production patterns. A better understanding of environmental and social impacts of products and services is needed, both of product life cycles and how these are affected by use within lifestyles. Identifying "hot spots" within the value chain where interventions have the greatest potential to improve the environmental and social impact of the system as a whole is a crucial first step. Businesses can also use their innovative power to design solutions that can both enable and inspire individuals to lead more sustainable lifestyles, reducing impacts and improving well-being.

How can I help as a consumer?

There are two main ways to help: **1.** Reducing your waste and **2.** Being thoughtful about what

you buy and choosing a sustainable option whenever possible.

Reducing our waste can be done in many ways, from ensuring you don't throw away food to reducing your consumption of plastic—one of the main pollutants of the ocean. Carrying a reusable bag, refusing to use plastic straws, and recycling plastic bottles are good ways to do your part every day. Making informed purchases about what we're buying also helps. For example, the textile industry today is the second largest polluter of clean water after agriculture, and many fashion companies exploit textile workers in the developing world. If you can buy from sustainable and local sources you can make a difference as well as exercising pressure on businesses to adopt sustainable practices.

For more suggestions on what you can do please visit:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction>