



IFHE Statement on UN Sustainable Development Goal 12 With input from the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW)



ENSURE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

In September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They represent a “comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centered set of universal and transformative goals and targets” (United Nations 2015, paragraph 2).

The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) supports in principle the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In its 110 years of existence as a profession, Home Economics has focused on involving and educating people to be able to achieve well-being for all. A number of the SDG are of specific relevance to Home Economics and thus the IFHE intends to specifically contribute to the achievement of these goals.

Home Economics is concerned with individuals, families and households and how their behaviour is linked to their economic, social and ecological surrounding. Some of the most important questions are on the one hand in which way a household member's behaviour can serve sustainable development and with which support they can help to develop their full potential to serve sustainable development – and on the other hand in which way sustainable development serves households members. In addition, a major question in this context is, which economic, social and ecological preconditions support and enable sustainable consumption of individuals and families.

Background

Goal 12 is pivotal to transitioning to a green economy, ensuring sustainable development for all, eradicating poverty, and reducing ecological footprints. Including Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) (Goal 12) in the SDGs supports countries to achieve their poverty reduction goals by addressing the problem of consuming and producing without undermining the basis of human development (UNEP 2015). A better quality of life for all hinges on the achievement of SDG Goal 12.

Goal 12 has 11 targets (UN 2015). Collectively, they focus on reducing waste while increasing efficiencies, capacities, and accountability. They are concerned with global food waste, chemical and toxic wastes, global energy (especially fossil fuels), tourism, and natural resources. The UN appeals to governments, corporations, consumers, and especially those in developed countries, to adopt sustainable practices. These practices include becoming more discerning when producing, procuring and consuming, as well as reviewing, managing, monitoring, and reporting their practices. Goal 12 highlights that a systemic approach and cooperation among users/producers operating across the supply chain to include the consumer is necessary. Policy makers on all levels can support this approach through legal conditions and infrastructures. Awareness-raising, education and empowerment on sustainable consumption and lifestyles are essential for reaching the targets of SDG 12 (UN 2015).

a) Target 12.1 highlights the need for all countries (with developing countries taking the lead) to implement the **10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns** (10YFP/One Planet Network). Adopted by the United Nations in 2012, 10YFP “is a global framework for action to enhance international cooperation to accelerate the shift towards SCP in both developed and developing countries” (10YFP Secretariat 2012, p. 1) a necessary strategy for implementing Goal 12. The 10YFP focus on resource efficiency initiatives, support capacity building, encourages innovation and cooperation among all stakeholders facilitates consumer information programs as well as programs focused on sustainable lifestyles and related education. One of the SCP key concepts and objectives is application of lifecycle thinking. This is “about increasing the sustainable management of resources and achieving resource efficiency along both production and consumption phases of the lifecycle of the resources such as water, minerals, wood including resource extraction, the production of intermediate inputs, distribution, marketing, use, waste disposal and re-use of products and services” (UNEP 2016).

b) Target 12.8 strives for everyone everywhere to have necessary information and awareness. The hope is to ensure sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature. The fundamental concept is transitioning, respecting that some people are consuming too much and some are consuming too little, with both practices affecting people’s prosperity, well-being, quality of life, and chances to survive and thrive.

Both national and household economies need to transition to efficient and sustainable resource management with view to the financial, social and ecological effects of decisions and related processes. All stakeholders need to become engaged and vested in the notion of sustainability (UN 2015, 2016).

Sustainability has economic, societal and environmental dimensions. The societal dimension refers to the role social institutions play in change and development, with a focus on full, informed participation in these institutions leading to sustainable development. In addition, it aims to reach well-being and living conditions for all without poverty and hunger, access to health care and prevention, decent work, social security and basic housing. The economic dimension touches on people's sensitivity to the potential but also the limits of economic growth (especially consumption), and its impact on the other two dimensions. To reach the transformation to a sustainable consumption and production different economic concepts are considered "Developing an Ecological Macroeconomics", "Green Economy" including a new understanding of prosperity, "Sharing Economy" and "Solidarity Economy", "Steady State Economy" and "Degrowth Economy". The question how the different economic concepts impact sustainable lifestyles, is not yet fully addressed, these are concepts that warrant further consideration. The environmental dimension involves people's awareness of the fragility and finiteness of the physical environment, respecting the limits and leading to a commitment to favour environmental concerns in social institutions, and economic policy.

"The basis and foundation for inter linkages of these three areas and sustainable development is provided through the dimension of Culture. Culture – ways of being, relating, behaving, believing and acting that differ according to context, history and tradition, and within which human beings live out their lives. This is to recognise that practices, identity and values – the software of human development – play a big role in setting directions and building common commitments" (UNESCO 2005). Thus, sustainable consumption and production is key to establishing the fundamentals for increasing quality of life for all (UNEP 2015, p. 8).

Relation to Home Economics, IFHE and IFHE Members

Home Economics draws from its own knowledge base as well as a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities. This coalescing of multidisciplinary knowledge is essential because the phenomena and challenges of everyday life are not typically one-dimensional.

In fact, there is an emergent movement within Home Economics to examining the power of transdisciplinarity as it pertains to sustainable consumption and production.

Transdisciplinarity respects the synergy and emergent potential that are inherent in actions between a wide range of stakeholders as they address unacceptable issues such as climate change, global energy, food waste, pollution, and unsustainable consumption. This aligns with the call for integrated approaches articulated in Goal 12.

Holistic and integrated perspectives are the core of Home Economics thinking and practice for over a century. They are also essential aspects for education for sustainable development. Within Home Economics, environmentally sustainable action can be brought to the everyday life context. Home Economists support holistic approaches while being concerned with the empowerment and well-being of individuals, families and communities. Its historical origins place Home Economics in the context of the home and household and includes the wider living environments as we better understand that the capacities, choices and priorities of individuals and families impact at all levels, ranging from the household, to the local and also the global (glocal) community.

The household and its members are intimately connected with the economic, social and ecological surroundings to meet their needs. For example, for the daily meals families and individuals have to decide, what they want to eat, what they have to buy and how they cook the meals and how many persons will eat the meals. All these decisions have an impact on the economic, social and ecological surroundings. They interact with the market system to purchase food and household supplies, they use infrastructure to get to shops, the working places and to travel, and they are dependent on social institutions, like kindergartens, neighborhood or as members of labor unions. But they do not only use or consume services and goods. It is rather a transformation in other outcomes and other goods than a finale erasing of products. Individuals and household members search for information about products and services, they take decisions on which products they buy, which means of transport they use, if they live in urban or rural areas and how they interact with their neighborhood.

If household members buy too much food, there will be more food waste. If infrastructure development focuses on the car in traffic planning, then public transport systems is reduced with a negative impact on the environment. In addition, if only chicken breast is demanded in European markets the rest of the chicken will probably be exported to African countries, which may destroy local hen production and markets and in turn lead to poverty for poultry farmers.

In turn, many decisions about the sustainability or unsustainability of a product are made along the product chain already before consumers decide on it on the shelf. Thus, the importance of the 10YFP and its aims to apply the lifecycle thinking to production patterns as well as consumer decisions and household member's behaviour and their reuse of products and waste management.

Individuals are more than final consumers. They are the decision makers and have to share responsibility for conducting sustainable lifestyles. Their purchase decisions impacts production and supply chains worldwide, that includes textile production and therefore the working conditions for Bangladeshi or Indian women. Individuals often do not think about or know about the context or impact of their decisions together with the complexity of the consequences.

Home Economics can contribute to creating integrated solutions to societal challenges. Home Economists are uniquely positioned to address policy, sustainable production, sustainable retail and sustainable consumption.

Home Economics can be identified by its four main dimensions of practice. First, it is an academic discipline that educates new scholars into the profession, conducts research, and creates new knowledge and ways of thinking. Through discovery and delivery of research-based knowledge, Home Economists empower individuals, families and communities to develop skills and make informed choices to live, work, and thrive in an evolving world. In the last years, research was conducted i.e. about food waste, sustainable production of textiles and energy efficient cooking and last but not least education for sustainable development.

Second, it focuses on the arena of everyday living where people's basic human needs are met and where people develop human growth and potential. For several years, individuals and groups of members undertake measures to contribute to sustainable consumption and production. New models of consumption such as car sharing, urban gardening, second hand clothes or sewing clothes, and shared refrigerator, ecological residences are underway.

Third, Home Economics is a curriculum area that teaches students how to discover and develop their capabilities by preparing them for life. Education for sustainable consumption - as well as sustainable production in a context of sustainable livelihoods - are key aspects of Home Economics practice. The growing tendency to perceive everyone as a consumer – at least in the global consumer society - does not mean people know how to consume in a sustainable way. They need to be educated about how their behaviours affect others around the world, themselves, the economy and environment.

General consumer education is often guided by market interests and tends to focus on how to help people make decisions in the marketplace so their self-interest is served through buying and owning things (European Commission, 2008). If this is done without a fellow-citizen, fellow-species, relationship-with-earth and a future perspective, non-sustainable consumption patterns will be the result.

Instead, education for sustainable consumption in the sense of education for responsible living is (a) focused on human and social development, potential, progression and security as well as economics; (b) views people as consumers and citizens; (c) emphasis that the economy and market has to serve the people and society, not the other way around; and (d) is focused on mutual interests and on citizen/human responsibilities to others and the planet while consuming. Finally, Home Economics manifests in the societal arena where it influences and develops policy to enable families and individuals to achieve empowerment, well-being, transformation and sustainable futures.

The International Federation for Home Economics supports individuals, families, communities, corporations, professionals and policy makers through research publications, pedagogy, practice and advocacy. IFHE collaborates with allied groups and organisations in serving the needs of individuals and families and in meeting its core objectives. The ultimate goal of the Federation is the improvement in the quality of everyday life through activities for sustainable production and education in resource management and sustainable consumption.

Examples of Accomplishments and Remaining Challenges

IFHE has held a number of global conferences devoted to SCP, published many documents such as press releases, statements, postcards related to sustainable development in general and specifically to education for sustainable development and contributed to related UN discussions. Many IFHE Members and Home Economists from different regions have worked in projects and networks for research and education in sustainable consumption and production patterns. The list attached is a short excerpt of activities around the world demonstrate the commitment of IFHE and its members (see list attached).

Sustainable consumption and production examples include (a) Sustainability: Considering the pillars of sustainability as a theoretical paradigm; (b) Consumers and future consumption; Patterns, advocacy, traits, projections and sustainability of Home Economics; (c) Meet the Dutch downshifter: How people adjust consumption expenditure, experience downsizing and contribute to sustainability; (d) Sustainable Fashion and the older Consumer: Attitudes towards organic Cotton; and, (e) Craft Cooperatives Using the Internet While Supporting Sustainability and Globalisation.

A Way forward: Expectations and Recommendations for Policymakers

Home Economics is a Future Profession. The profession embraces future thinking and does so within an integrated body of knowledge. This foundation ensures that IFHE and its members hold a sustainable vision for the world. We have morally committed ourselves to a promising and sustainable future which means policy makers and stakeholders can count on our ethics and integrity.

Policy makers need to strengthen their efforts on all levels to support the SDG 12.

- Basic structures and measures, which support sustainable lifestyles, have to be established.
- The social, political and economic framework conditions for households start in the planning of cities, rural areas, traffic, public traffic and infrastructures for example waste management, free-time activities, supply of energy and need to be set up to support household members, who are dependent on their surroundings, to conduct sustainable lifestyles.
- Policy Makers are called upon to strengthen their efforts to inform and motivate citizens including children, individuals, families and communities in relation to the significance of sustainable consumption and to enable them to consume in a sustainable manner.
- An important impact on the aim to steadily improve sustainable lifestyles can be reached through Home Economics Education integrated in all school levels and education systems. Home Economics literacy based on Home Economics competences and skills enable children, women and men as citizens to contribute to the processes of transforming our societies.
- Guidelines and rules for industry and businesses should be issued to implement sustainable production chains.
- Policy Makers and stakeholders are encouraged to avail themselves of Home Economists in any efforts to analyse, formulate, implement and evaluate policy initiatives respective to sustainable consumption and production on household level.

- Policy makers and stakeholders on all levels should take of the lead in the transformation and implement role models of sustainable consumption and production in their national or regional institutions and organisations, such as ministries, administrative institutions, universities, hospitals, schools. All these organisations are institutional consumers when they decide about purchases such as technical equipment, furniture or clothes for example for the military, police, for staff or students, firemen or when they order food and drinks for their staff, crews and employee or when they decide about cleaning services. Governments, cities, communities and stakeholders are responsible for many institutional households in their area of responsibility and should start to develop guidelines for sustainable consumption and production, so that all responsible staff members are aware of their responsibility and duty to support sustainable development.

IFHE is convinced that Home Economists have a key role to play – for improving and ensuring sustainable consumption and production now and in future.

Home Economists are trained and socialised to see patterns, respect divergent and disparate connections, and create synergy while addressing complex problems. The inclusion of IFHE Members in any policy work related to Goal 12 will serve to enhance achieving the 11 targets and move the world closer to sustainable consumption and production patterns through innovation, empowerment and development.

Recommendations for Home Economists

IFHE encourages all Home Economists to see themselves as being in the vanguard of change. They have the solid starting base to be part of a creative group that is active in the innovation and application of new concepts, theories, principles, approaches, and techniques relevant for SDG Goal 12 improving sustainable consumption and production. In this vanguard, Home Economists can embrace transdisciplinary while respecting interdisciplinarity, this means moving beyond integrated practice to draw on integral thinking. Thus, Home Economics can expand its reach by focusing on the larger issue of the human condition, which so powerfully affects well-being, quality of life, and basic human needs.

In all Home Economics areas academic, daily life, education and advocacy are many open questions and challenges, which need Home Economists' expertise and knowledge to find suitable answers and solutions that aim to improve sustainable lifestyles around the world.

Such issues are:

- How can the goals “prosperity for all” and “sustainable consumption” complement each other?
- Which economy will be the best to promote and support sustainable consumption?
- Which legal regulations should be changed or established to support sustainable consumption and production?
- In which way can local markets serve the needs of households and the environment?
- In which way can community-based participation processes support the transformation to sustainable production?
- How can the principle of efficiency be implemented in all production and consumption processes?
- Can a consumer/producer dialogue improve sustainable production?
- Which public transport system might convince household members to go without a car?
- How can consumption patterns be changed?
- In which way can labeling support citizens to make the best decision?
- Which methodologies and tools can improve education for sustainable development, so that students, pupils and adults not only know what sustainable consumption means but also act and behave in a sustainable manner?

A good quality of life for all hinges on the SDG Goal 12. To that end, IFHE encourages all Home Economists to endorse the idea that people should not only change their personal lifestyles, but also come to practice activities in their communities, and furthermore develop the knowledge and conviction to suggest and support bigger reform of the social system for the purpose of creating a sustainable, global society.

Closing

As identified herein, Home Economics is a multi-disciplinary field (embracing interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives), which focuses on the fundamental concerns of individuals and families at societal and global levels. The ability to draw from such disciplinary diversity is a strength of the Home Economics profession and subject. This strength allows for an integrated and holistic approach with potential for direct impact on the quality of life for all. In order to address current consumption patterns and to create and promote a healthy and sustainable world, Home Economists through IFHE can and will contribute to develop future-oriented global citizens who will address the impact their actions have on the planet.

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Appendix:

List - a short excerpt - of activities conducted by IFHE, IFHE Representatives and IFHE Members related to SDG 12

- Presentation at the UN CSD site event 1999 on “**Indicators for Sustainable Consumption**”, IFHE Representative Sylvia LOREK.
- Member of the CSD NGO Caucus on Sustainable Production and Consumption (SPAC) from 1995 to 2002; IFHE Representative, Sylvia LOREK.
- Participation in the Second meeting of the Marrakesh Process in Costa Rica in 2005, IFHE Representative Sylvia LOREK.
- Member of the Task Force on “Lifestyles” within the Marrakesh Process; IFHE Representative.
- The theme and activities to the World Home Economics Day 2002 was “**Consumption risks related to health and welfare**”.
- IFHE published a position paper on Poverty Eradication in 2003, “**Home Economics Education as a key for a better life**”.
- The Press Release to the World Home Economics Day 2003 stated “Lacking knowledge about health and nutrition can easily lead to overweight and illness. And consumers decisions without ecological and ethic responsibility cause social and ecological problems all over the world”.
- The IFHE Council 2004 approved the theme of the World Home Economics Day 2005 - 2008 “**Home Economics Supporting Sustainable Development and Quality of Life for All**”.
- At the IFHE Congress 2004 to the theme “**Co-operation and Interdependence – Fostering Leadership in Home Economics for Healthy Communities**”.
- IFHE Symposium “**Sustainable Development and Quality of Life – A Challenge for Consumer Education**”, 5th February 2005, 9.00 am - 1.00 pm Gustav-Stresemann-Institut (GSI), Bonn; Germany <https://www.ifhe.org/563/>.
- IFHE Conference 2006 at St. Angela’s College, Sligo, Ireland, “**Vision 2020: Home Economics, Changing Perspectives in a Changing Environment**”. This conference provided an opportunity for international dialogue on Home Economics education, sustainability, globalisation and interculturalism.
- In 2008 IFHE established the IFHE Programme Committee Household Technology and Sustainability. In the meantime the experts of this committee developed eight Best Practice Posters for different household areas with the aim to save water and energy. These posters are translated in six different languages. (<http://he.ifhe.org/857/>).

- The IFHE Programme Committee Consumers and Sustainable Development has developed a web-based platform for an e-book on sustainability “**Global sustainable development: A challenge for consumer citizens**”. This book now has three volumes (2008, 2010, 2012) and is used by educators all over the world to teach and lobby for sustainability.
<http://www.educationforsustainabledevelopment.org/index.html>.
- Brochure 2011: IFHE Position Statements relating to the eight MDGs, demonstrates ways in which Home Economists and the IFHE as a world organisation of like-minded professionals can support the United Nations Millennium Campaign in reaching its aims!
- On all levels in the society Home Economics knowledge and its related expertise are relevant and needed to effectively reach the UN MDGs.
- IFHE Workshop at the DPI/NGO Conference 2011 in Bonn, Germany, to the theme “**Realising sustainable lifestyles: Families and households as sustainable consumers and producers**” (5th September 2011, 11.45 -13.15).
- One of the key aspects mentioned in the workshop was that politics and economics have the responsibility to build preconditions for families and households so that they are able to act as sustainable consumers. It was highlighted that families and households are basic actors of societies and economies, determining sustainable consumption and manage resources on individual alike community level. It was demonstrated that education, involvement and empowerment of families and households are important to enable them to fulfill this role. Moreover, the contribution to the UN MDGs by empowering individuals and families as producers in all areas of daily life was shown.
- IFHE World Congress 2012, Melbourne, Australia August 2012. Keynote speech, workshops and symposium related to sustainable consumption, education for sustainable development at the (<https://www.ifhe.org/1041/>).
- IFHE publishes the ***International Journal of Home Economics*** (2008 onward). It is an e-journal and the official organ of the association, <https://www.ifhe.org/publications/e-journal-ijhe-volumes-1-11-2008-2018/>. IFHE Members often publish research related to sustainability in the IJHE.
- Presentation at the 2011 UN Commission on Sustainable Development Conference (CSD-19) in New York City. IFHE Representative Sue McGREGOR was part of a three-member panel discussing schools as agents of change for education for sustainable consumption (McGregor, 2011). This CSD-19 Side Event was organised by the Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living (PERL).

- IFHE, through various individual members participated in the PERL-Network. It was a network of about 100 higher education institutions from 40 countries. Its main focus was sustainability, especially as it is impacted by consumption. It was active at the United Nations (UN decade on ESD, UNEP and UNESCO) and worked closely with Marrakech Process Task Force on Education for Sustainable Consumption. PERL was instrumental in developing the Task Force's leading edge, capacity building tool called "**Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption**". <https://eng.hihm.no/project-sites/living-responsibly>
<http://hihm.no/perl/resources-and-publications/resources/active-learning-methodologies>.
- IFHE acknowledges the importance of Home Economics as an academic discipline and curriculum area. Home Economics Teachers in the field at all levels therefore have the scope to be "significant cultural multipliers who are influential in forming attitudes and values. E.g. IFHE Members in Ireland have undertaken significant research in "**Building Education for Sustainable Development Capacity**" amongst pre-service Home Economics teachers in order to promote integration of positive SCP practices and values in future professional practice. This research was widely published and presented internationally.
- In Africa region, the book titled "**Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities: Stories of Change**" was published. This publication includes no less than 27 chapters produced by 50 authors from countries across the African continent including: South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Swaziland, Botswana, Malawi, Uganda, Malawi, Nigeria, Morocco, Egypt, Zambia, Mozambique and Rwanda. The publication is available at <https://www.ifhe.org/95/>.
- Many IFHE Members in education area have been working on ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) in many countries. For example, in Japan, in Home Economics, a compulsory subject in elementary, junior high, and senior high school, the goal is that students not only come to change their personal lifestyles, but also come to practice activities in their communities, and furthermore develop the knowledge and conviction to suggest and support bigger reform of the social system for the purpose of creating a sustainable, global society.

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