

GLOBAL FORUM TO COLLATE RESEARCH ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION, PRODUCTION

A new global forum, meeting for the first time this week (1315 June), will gather scattered research on sustainable consumption and production from countries across the world, as well as from journals, reports and grey literature, to consolidate existing findings and discuss the agenda for future research.

The Global Research Forum on Sustainable Consumption and Production also hopes to forge new research partnerships to help tackle difficult issues relating to consumption and production.

There's a lot of science, technology and innovation to be researched on sustainable production and consumption, said Philip Vergragt, professor emeritus of technology assessment at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands.

Vergragt was chairing a session at the Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development in Brazil this week (12-15 June), ahead of next week's UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

This article is part of our coverage of the Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development the ICSU-led conference that is taking place on 11-15 June 2012, and looking at science and policy before Rio+20

We need to take stock of what we know in terms of research. The research is splintered among different disciplines and different networks, he said.

We are only beginning to scratch the surface of the systemic nature of the problem. There's a lot of research necessary.

Priority areas include newer materials and material flows (how materials are made, used and thrown away), energy systems, and waste management, Vergragt told *SciDev.Net*.

His comments came just days after the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) published a report saying that unsustainable consumption is driving the planet towards unprecedented environmental destruction.

If current patterns of production and consumption of natural resources prevail governments will preside over unprecedented levels of damage and degradation, said Achim Steiner, UNEP's executive director.

Other areas that will also be drawn into the network include: social science research to study attitudes towards changing consumption patterns; drivers of societal consumption patterns; and values attached to behaviour and lifestyles that in turn impact consumption patterns.

Technologies capable of reducing human impact on natural resources to a fifth of current levels already exist, according to Ashok Khosla, director of Development Alternatives, a Delhi-based non-governmental organisation, and co-chair of the International Resource Panel, which was established by the UN in 2007.

These include shared use of under-utilised resources, such as public transport or washing machines, and increasing the durability of products.

Consumption could be further reduced by a factor of ten if technological interventions were combined with changes in attitudes and behaviour, Khosla told the meeting.

Source: <http://www.scidev.net/global/policy/news/global-forum-to-collate-research-on-sustainable-consumption-production.html>