SWEDEN IS RUNNING OUT OF TRASH

Sweden is now importing trash from surrounding countries in order to sustain its waste-to-energy program. Its recycling program is so successful that only 4% of all trash that the Swedish population produces ends up in landfills. This is very delightful news and sheds light on a brighter future in environmental conservation as well as a cleaner environment overall. However, this recycling-centered mindset has caused a rather peculiar problem: there is now a shortage of trash to power this waste incineration program.

On average the waste-to-energy program handles two million tons of trash annually and heats 810,000 homes.
It began in the earlier half of the 20th century, and has increased in capacity and efficiency throughout the years. The trend goes like this: waste incineration capacity increases, while percent of garbage going in to landfills decreases. According to Public Radio International, Sweden now imports 800,000 tons of trash on an annual basis. Most of the trash thus far has come from Norway. The deal that Sweden gets is nothing short of spectacular. Norway pays Sweden to export the trash from their landfills. What Sweden gets in return is a FREE energy source to provide thousands of homes with electricity and heat.

The flip-side is that the waste byproduct known as dioxin, which comes from the ashes of trash, is an environmental pollutant. Along with the dioxin there are also heavy metals in the ash. These all get exported back to Norway where it gets put back into the landfills. Norway does not seem to mind this as burning waste seems to be more expensive than exporting it.

(One thing I do not understand is why Norway does not implement the same energy-to-waste program as Sweden, that way an even larger part of the Nordic area could become a waste consuming powerhouse. As Norway’s economy continues to thrive, I don’t think that finding money to fund such a program would be much of an issue.)

Countries like Italy and France could benefit from exporting waste to Sweden as well.
Naples, Italy produces more trash per square meter than any other place on the planet. Have you been to Paris recently? If you are traveling from Chicago, you can definitely smell the stench in the air in many areas, especially where trash is left out on the curbs.

How about implementing this kind of system in Africa or Asia? There are numerous countries with waste treatment programs that are not on par with the developed world, posing various health threats.

I hope that one day Sweden will lead the way in other regions of the globe by continuing to handle waste creatively as well as educate individuals and groups on recycling methods.

Source: http://wondergressive.com/sweden-is-running-out-of-trash/