



Swiss Working Paper on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Post-2015 Agenda

1 Introduction

1.1 Sustainable Consumption and Production

Economic development in the last decades has helped to lift millions of people out of poverty, with an increasing number of countries reaching middle-income status. However, it has also been accompanied by raising income inequalities and increased consumption of natural resources, having also negative environmental impacts.¹ The latter is aggravated by population growth, resulting in a decreasing amount of natural resources potentially available per person.²

Sustainable consumption and production aims at improving economic development and human welfare while conserving and sustainably managing natural resources (decoupling). A commonly accepted definition of sustainable consumption and production is the following: „The use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimising the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations.”³

Heads of States and Governments discussed the challenges of unsustainable consumption and production already in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio. They decided, as outlined in Agenda 21, that action is needed “to promote patterns of consumption and production that reduce environmental stress and will meet the basic needs of humanity”. They also identified differences not only between certain parts of the world but also within countries.⁴

1.2 SCP and Sustainable Development

Sustainable consumption and production patterns are central to sustainable development. This has been internationally recognized already in 1992 in Principle 8 of the Rio Declaration that states: “To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies.”

Subsequently, Heads of States and Governments identified SCP as one of the overarching objectives of sustainable development. Paragraph 2 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and Paragraph 4 of „The Future We Want“ of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012 recognized that “poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development.”

¹ UNEP (2012): Global Outlook on Sustainable consumption and Production Policies, Executive Summary, p. 10, <http://www.unep.fr/shared/publications/pdf/DTIx1498xPA-GlobalOutlookonSCPPolicies.pdf>

² FOEN: Green Economy, <http://www.bafu.admin.ch/wirtschaft/11350/index.html?lang=en> [5 Dec 13]

³ UNEP (2010): ABC of SCP, Clarifying Concepts on Sustainable Consumption and Production, http://www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/Portals/24147/scp/go/pdf/ABC_ENGLISH.pdf

⁴ Agenda 21 (1992), Paragraph 4.5 and 4.7:

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

2 International Processes

As outlined above, the importance of sustainable consumption and production for sustainable development has been recognized and reiterated several times since 1992.

At WSSD in 2002, it was also decided to develop “a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production to promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems by addressing, and where appropriate, delinking economic growth and environmental degradation through improving efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources and production processes and reducing resource degradation, pollution and waste.”

An informal process (Marrakech Process) was launched in order to develop the 10 Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) on Sustainable Consumption and Production. The text negotiated at the 19th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was finally adopted at the Rio+20 Conference in June 2012. The 10YFP text contains the following initial programs: Consumer information, Sustainable lifestyles and education, Sustainable public procurement, Sustainable buildings and construction, Sustainable tourism, including ecotourism.

Interest in developing further programs has been indicated for the following themes⁵: sustainable food systems, sustainable waste management, sustainable cities and land use, SMEs, sustainable innovation for products and services, resource efficient manufacturing.

At the Rio+20 Conference, Heads of States and Governments have also affirmed that green economy policies should promote sustainable consumption and production patterns (paragraph 58(o)).

3 Swiss Commitment

Switzerland's national strategy on sustainable development was introduced in 1997 and has since then provided the basis for domestic efforts related to sustainable consumption and production. The current strategy (2012-2015) contains concrete measures, amongst others, on consumer information, environmental performance evaluation (life cycle assessment, LCA), sustainable public procurement, and promotion of sustainable production and consumption along the agri-food chain.

In 2010, the Federal Council adopted the first action plan on green economy. In March 2013, a new action plan on green economy⁶, strongly focused on improving the sustainability of consumption and production patterns. It contains the following measures on sustainable consumption and production:

- Resource efficient information and communication technology
- Reducing food waste; Resource conscious and healthy nutrition
- Improved information on environmental impacts of products Assessing case-by-case the environmental impacts of free trade agreements
- Voluntary agreements with the private sector on production; Internationally recognized minimum standards to introduce products in the market; Assessing the effectiveness of standards and labels
- Center of competence for resource efficiency; Private sector network to improve resource efficiency

In addition, the action plan contains measures on resource efficiency, waste reduction and recycling as well as measures on the international level.

In 2013, the Federal Council decided to provide an indirect counterproposal to the popular initiative “For a sustainable and resource-efficient economy (green economy)” through a revision of the

⁵ Criteria and Process for New 10YFP Programmes Areas (First Draft of 30 October 2013)

⁶ Action Plan on Green Economy (2013):

<http://www.bafu.admin.ch/wirtschaft/11350/12928/index.html?lang=de>

Environmental Protection Act (EPA).⁷ The proposed adaptations include improvements in resource efficiency, amongst others by information about the environmental impacts of products.

In 2000, the Federal Council issued a Label Policy in which private voluntary standard systems and labels are considered as market based instruments to influence consumption and production patterns. In addition, several international platforms and multi-stakeholder dialogues have been supported to create, promote and facilitate the implementation of voluntary standards (e.g. fair-trade).

Switzerland has been promoting sustainable consumption and production at the international level for many years. Switzerland has been committed to the 10YFP since WSSD in Johannesburg 2002, when the decision to develop such a framework was taken. Switzerland has initiated and led the Task Force on Sustainable Public Procurement. In 2013, Switzerland has been elected as one of the 10 board members of the 10YFP.

In 2010, Switzerland supported the launch of the FAO/UNEP Sustainable Food Systems Programme (SFSP). The SFSP is implemented through a multi-stakeholder Agri-food Task Force on SCP. The goal of this Task Force is to facilitate the transition to more sustainable and resource efficient production and consumption patterns in the agri-food sector. In 2013, the Task Force agreed that it will submit an application for the SFSP to become a program of the 10YFP.

Switzerland is a member of the Steering Committee of the International Resource Panel. The Panel produces assessments, information and reports on the use of natural resources and the environmental impacts of resource use over the full life cycle. Based on this information, it provides input for policy framing and planning. Through its engagement in the Panel, Switzerland underlines the importance of resource efficiency and absolute decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation.

In 2013, Switzerland became a member of the Group of Friends of paragraph 47, a group of countries committed to the promotion of sustainability reporting, as reflected in paragraph 47 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document.⁸

Switzerland has been supporting SCP in developing countries through additional activities of its economic development cooperation, on both the consumption and production side. These include the promotion of sustainable value chains for renewable, mineral and secondary commodities, the development of biotrade, the creation of Cleaner Production Centres since 1997 and support to initiatives on energy efficiency, on Natural Capital Accounting, the Global Reporting Initiative, as well as projects on sustainable public procurement, sustainable tourism, or consumer information. These activities are implemented in close cooperation with international experts, especially UNIDO and UNEP.

4 Sustainable Consumption and Production in the SDGs

4.1 SCP in the MDGs

SCP was not explicitly included in the Millennium Development goals (MDGs). According to the High Level Panel on the post-2015 Agenda this is one of the most serious shortfalls of the MDGs (see Executive Summary).

4.2 Existing Proposals

In his report "A life of dignity for all", the UN SG Ban Ki-moon mentions SCP as one of the key elements of the emerging vision for the post-2015 agenda.

⁷ Green Economy Popular Initiative: Federal Council Passes Indirect Counterproposal (27.2.2013): <http://www.bafu.admin.ch/dokumentation/medieninformation/00962/index.html?lang=en&msg-id=47945>

⁸ Group of friends of paragraph 47: www.unep.org/GoFPParagraph47

In his report, the High-Level Panel on the post-2015 agenda has not addressed SCP in any specific goal, but has treated it in some of the other goals. SCP was specifically integrated in the goals on water, food and energy. In addition, a target on sustainable public procurement is integrated as part of a goal on natural resource management. While the panel considers SCP an important issue for the discussion on the growth agenda, they do not deal with it in the proposed goal on growth. The panel also recognizes the importance of, inter alia corporate sustainability reporting, innovation, education and behavioral change within the context of SCP. Finally, the panel proposed that national accounting for social and environmental effects should be mainstreamed by 2013.

In the report of the UN Global Compact, it is proposed to integrate SCP in goals on food, water and energy. Corporate sustainability is also mentioned as an important contribution to SCP. In addition, the report sees an important role for governments to phase out consumption subsidies on fossil fuels. Finally, the report makes a concrete proposal for a target on public procurement under a goal on good governance and realization of human rights: "Achieve competitive and transparent procurement processes through public advertising of all government procurement cases."

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network SDSN sees SCP as part of the priority challenges that need to be addressed in a new post-2015 agenda. SCP is therefore the "essence" – as they call it – of the proposed Goal 2 Achieve Development Within Planetary Boundaries: "All countries have a right to development that respects planetary boundaries, ensures sustainable production and consumption patterns, and helps to stabilize the global population by mid-century." The focus is on absolute decoupling of economic growth and rising living standards from pollution and environmental resource use. One of the three targets is an expanded GDP measure.

The TST Issue Brief on Sustainable Consumption and Production, including Chemicals and Waste clearly states that the theme needs to be addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals. The Issue Brief notably states that goals should address the drivers of unsustainable consumption and production patterns and adopt a life-cycle approach. The 10YFP on SCP as well as internationally agreed goals of MEAs can provide a basis for elaborating the elements to be included in the goals. The paper makes an explicit link to goals on food security and energy, but also underlines interlinkages with education, cities, climate change, disaster risk reduction and inequalities.

5 Proposals of how to integrate SCP into the SDGs

As outlined above, fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are essential to achieving sustainable development. A shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is needed in order to promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems, to raise resource efficiency and to ensure sustainability in the use of resources and production processes and reduce resource degradation, pollution and waste. Sustainable consumption and production therefore has to be well integrated in a future set of Sustainable Development Goals. The integration shall be achieved through a set of different but combined approaches:

- As SCP is one of the overarching objectives of sustainable development, alongside poverty eradication and the protection and management of the natural resource base, it needs to be integrated in an overarching narrative of the goals.⁹
- Because of its crosscutting nature, SCP should be integrated in the form of targets in relevant SDG, especially in goals covering thematic areas such as food security, nutrition and agriculture, water, sustainable energy, education, governance and sustainable/green growth.
- The elaboration of specific targets in each SDG must be based on a solid scientific basis, including the work of the UNEP International Resource Panel. In addition, the targets should also be based on Agenda 21, JPOI and the 10YFP on SCP.

⁹ See JPOI paragraph 2 and „The Future We Want“ paragraph 4.

- The following elements or target areas should be integrated in a future set of goals, possibly jointly as a standalone goal:
 - Integrate SCP in national policies, poverty reduction strategies and sustainable development strategies (see Agenda 21, para 4.15-4.27, JPOI para 17). It is important that a mix of policies is used, including economic instruments, internalization of external costs as well as the polluter pays principle.
MDG 7 Target A is on integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs. Such a target could be expanded based on language from paragraph 17 of the JPOI: "Integrate the issue of production and consumption patterns into sustainable development policies, programmes and strategies, including, where applicable, into poverty reduction strategies."
 - Achieve good and sustainable public procurement through competitive and transparent procurement processes and application of sustainability criteria.
Public procurement represents between 15 and 25 per cent of GDP and offers a tremendous opportunity towards innovation and sustainable development. SPP is not only for governments to lead by example. Experience shows that sustainable public procurement has the potential to transform markets, boost the competitiveness of eco industries, save money, conserve natural resources and foster job creation.
 - Promote corporate sustainability practices at government level to provide incentives and a conducive regulatory framework for the private sector to engage and collaborate in implementing sustainable production and consumption patterns, including through the promotion of voluntary standards initiatives and extended producer responsibilities.
 - Enhance corporate environmental and social responsibility and accountability through voluntary sustainability reporting (see Rio+20 paragraph 47 as well as JPOI paragraph 18). Sustainability reports should be made publicly available on an annual basis and be guided by reporting initiatives, guidelines and standards, including the framework provided by the Global Reporting Initiative.
 - Consumers should be enabled to take informed decisions, through the provision of relevant consumer information, product information, standards and labels, as well as education and awareness raising.
It is crucial that consumers are sensitized and have the relevant information so that they are aware not only of the economic, but also of the social and environmental consequences of their decisions. It is also important that producers have the relevant information in order to adapt their product range. Standards and labels should be elaborated and implemented in a multi-stakeholder process.
 - Introduce a life-cycle approach (including products that are easier to re-use and recycle) and policies for resource efficiency as well as sound waste management.
Based on Agenda 21 paragraph 4.20, governments and international organizations, together with the private sector, should develop criteria and methodologies for the assessment of environmental and social impacts and resource requirements throughout the full life cycle of products and processes.
 - Unsustainable consumption and production patterns are increasing waste generation and the use of harmful chemical substances. Thus, the two themes are closely interlinked. For concrete elements and targets to be included in a future set of goals, see the separate paper on Chemicals and Waste.

Activities related to and support for e.g. the 10YFP as well as the UNEP International Resource Panel, or National Cleaner Production Centres NCPs, will provide an important contribution to the achievement of the targets and goals proposed above. In addition, it will be crucial to develop a core set of indicators that allows to measure sustainable consumption and production.