



Goal 12:

# RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 is about how we can consume and produce goods in a way that ensures the continued availability of resources for future generations. Each and every one of us can help us achieve that goal.

The goods we buy are part of a global market where people and the environment are affected throughout the chain of production. Think about all the things that need to happen for you to buy a T-shirt. Someone cultivated, picked and processed the cotton. Then, the cotton became a garment in a factory where someone made and packed it for shipment. Furthermore, the T-shirt must be transported to a store. We must focus on sustainability at all levels if we are to succeed in reducing the use of resources. If we, as consumers, choose products that take this into account, in addition to choosing second-hand items and products with a long shelf life whenever we can, we will have taken important steps towards achieving this goal.

At the same time, consumers cannot take full responsibility for ensuring that the chain of production is sustainable. Authorities and businesses need to make sure that consumers are actually able to choose products that are produced in an environmentally friendly way. Waste must be handled in a responsible manner, and there must be environmental requirements for production and management. If we really are to achieve this goal, simply having the option of choosing a sustainable alternative may not be enough – all alternatives will need to be sustainable.

## Biblical reflection

When God created man and woman, he told them to subdue the earth and “have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Some interpret this saying as a divine green light to exploit nature and consume its resources. This is obviously a misinterpretation; the right of disposal is given as integral part of the mandate to be good stewards of creation.

The second narrative of creation, the one about the Garden of Eden, clearly affirms this view. God gives Adam the task to “till and keep” the garden (Genesis 2:15). To be created in God’s image implies communicating with God: God speaks to men and women and commissions them to take care of the gifts of creation; they respond through responsible action.

However, humans are easily lured to self-centred consumption and irresponsible stewardship, as tells the story about the two in the Garden of Eden. The Bible contains many similar narratives, such as the one Jesus told about the rich farmer who thought that wealth and consumption was the certain way to a good life (Luke 12:13-21). That is a delusion, Jesus states, and he warns: “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

## Challenge

Is there anything you can do in your local community to help each other live more sustainably?

## Questions

- When the people of Israel received bread from the Lord in the desert, they were told to gather enough for that day (Exodus 16:15-20). Can this story teach us something about responsible consumption?
- Discuss what is meant by responsible production.

## Prayer

*Lord, our good shepherd,  
Let us not want for anything, and show us what we have.  
Teach us to value our resources,  
Reuse and make what is old new again.  
We thank you for all your generous gifts.*

*We commit everything and everyone, into your hands, Lord. Amen.*