



## **Sustainable Consumption: Opportunities and Challenges**

Materials Management through Sustainable  
Consumption Webinar Series  
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# Sustainable Consumption: Opportunities and Challenges



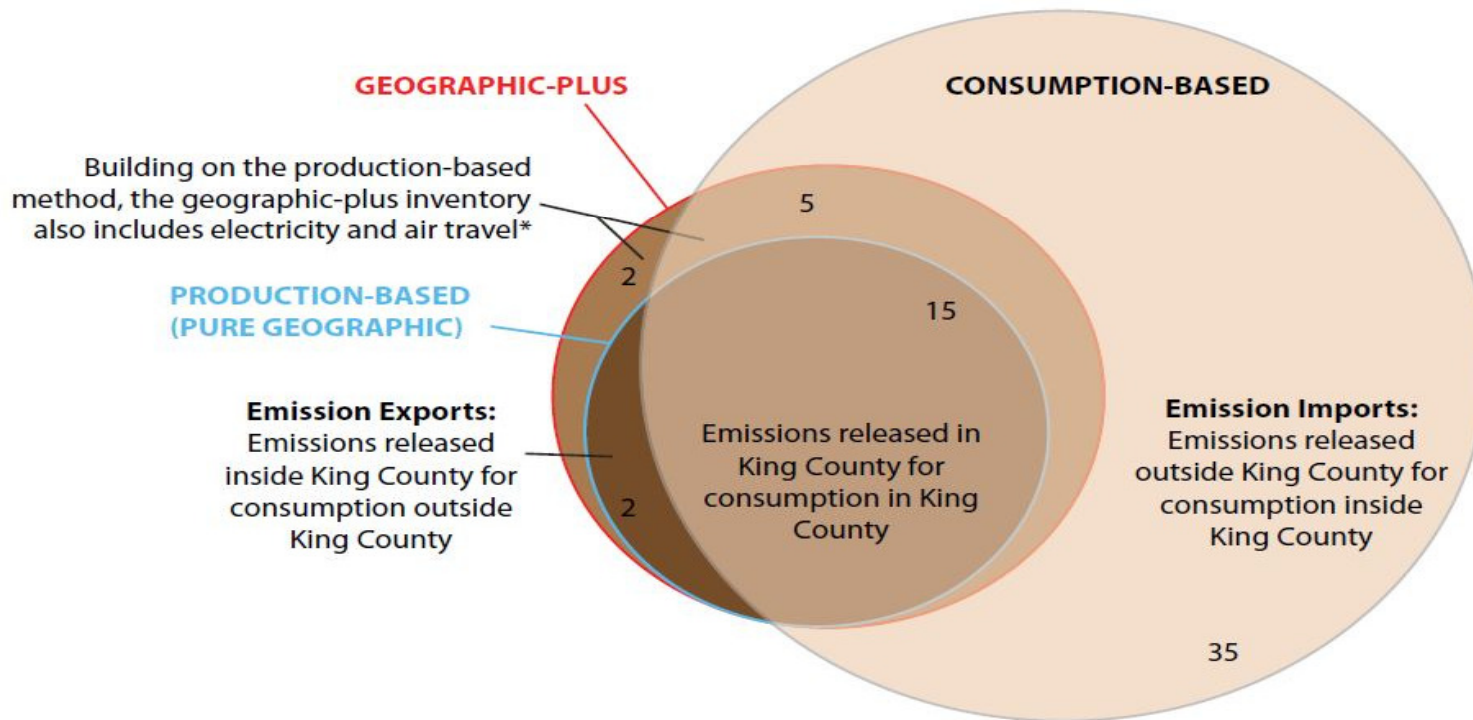
## **Sustainable Consumption: Does Government Have a Role?**



# Sustainable Consumption: Opportunities and Challenges



## Consumption vs. In-Boundary Greenhouse Gas Emissions (MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e, 2008), King County Washington



Source: King County and Stockholm Environment Institute

\* About 2 of the 7 million MTCO<sub>2</sub>e from air travel and from the electricity used in the community are released for consumption outside King County



## Materials Matter

- Use is increasing, both here and abroad
  - Our economy is tied to global materials markets
- We're increasingly dependent on non-renewable materials
  - With dependence comes economic and geopolitical risks
- Rapid rise in material use has led to serious environmental effects

# Sustainable Consumption: Opportunities and Challenges

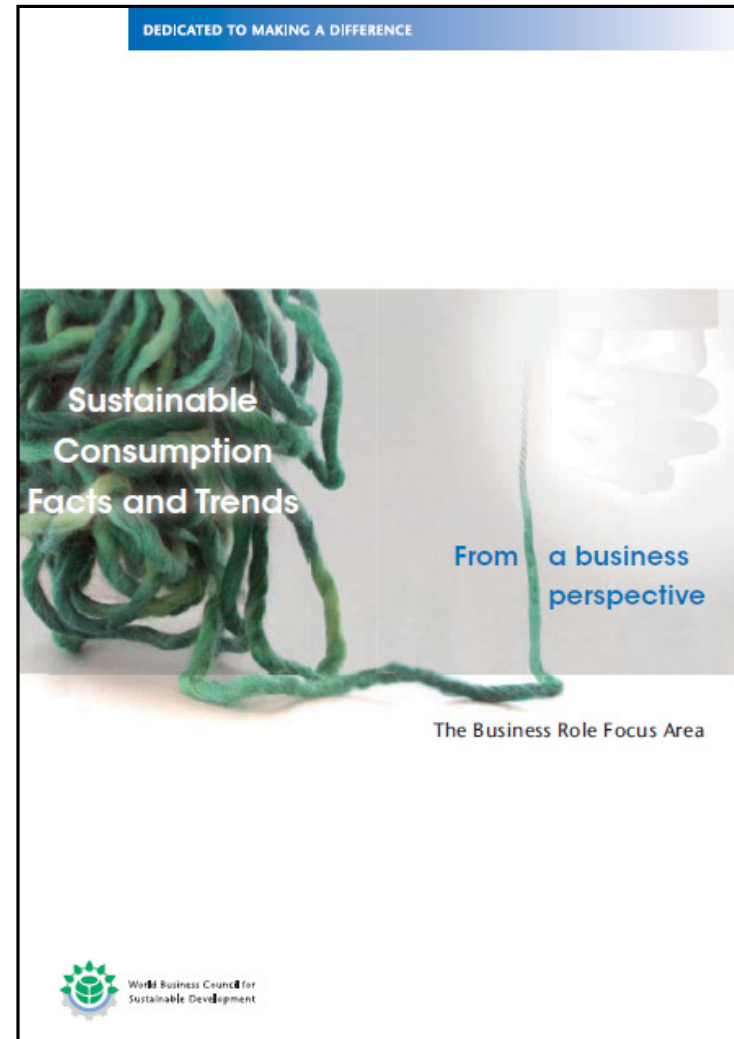


## Sustainable Consumption



wbcasd

business solutions for a sustainable world





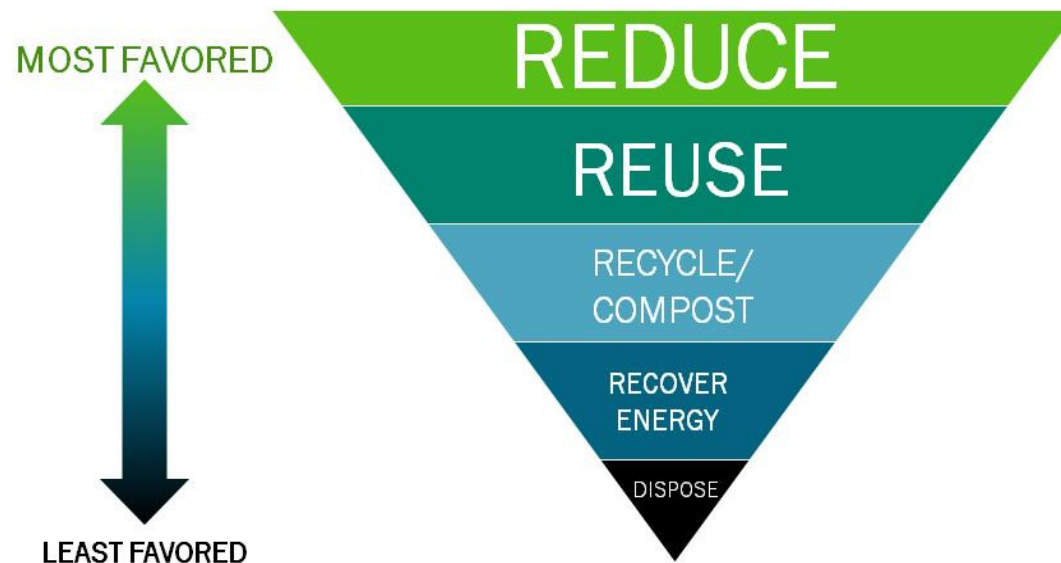
## World Business Council for Sustainable Development

- Current global consumption patterns can't be sustained
  - Efficiency gains and technological advances alone won't be sufficient
  - Changes will be required to consumer lifestyles
- Well-being doesn't rely on high levels of consumption
- Consumers are concerned and willing to act, but external barriers get in their way
- A common understanding of “sustainable product or lifestyle” is needed



## The Solid Waste Hierarchy: Prevent *First*, then Recycle

- California Public Resources Code 40051
- Oregon Revised Statute 459.015(2)(a)
- Revised Code of Washington 70.95.010(8)





## Limitations of the Hierarchy

- Only “consume less”, not “consume better”
  - “Better” can mean *different*, and sometimes even *more*
- Reduce/reuse still framed as a “waste” solution
  - Misleading (most benefits are upstream)
  - Language is confusing to the general public
  - Easy to conflate with other landfill diversion (recycling, composting)
- Prevention has little in common with recycling

The planet faces a crisis of production and consumption, not a crisis of disposal.



# 2050 Vision for Materials Management in Oregon: Oregonians in 2050 produce and use materials responsibly

conserving resources • protecting the environment •  
living well





### **Oregon's 2050 Vision and Framework for Action**

- Update to the statewide “integrated resource and solid waste management plan”
- Awareness of the limitations of the traditional “discards management” framework
- Addresses the full life cycle of materials (including – but not limited to – use/consumption)
- Currently being revised/finalized.
- More details available:  
[www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/materialsmgmtplan.htm](http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/materialsmgmtplan.htm)





## Two Approaches: Adaptation or Mitigation?

- Adaptation (including “resilience planning”) involves preparing for a world where consumption will have changed (whether we want it to or not)
- Mitigation involves efforts to try and shift/change consumption
- Are mitigation and adaptation at odds with each other?

# Sustainable Consumption: Opportunities and Challenges



## How Can Government (or others) Make Consumption More Sustainable?





## Challenges of Sustainable Consumption

- The “rational choice model” doesn’t explain consumer behavior
  - Providing information, financial incentives typically doesn’t change behavior (by much)
  - Behaviors are driven by other factors, limitations
- Small, incremental steps may undermine deeper change
- Rebound effects can undermine programs
- Financial approaches can backfire
- Long time horizons needed
- More collaboration needed
- Don’t rely just on individuals



## Program and Policy Alternatives

- Public procurement
- Collecting and disseminating product impact information
- Eco-labels and information disclosure
- Marketing standards
- Choice editing and product standards
- Building standards and incentives
- Supporting access to sustainable products and services
- Supporting businesses and NGOs



## More Program and Policy Alternatives

- Paradigm-challenging/changing research
- Goals, comprehensive indicators and targets
  - Consumption-based emissions inventories
  - See new ICLEI protocol!
- Public outreach – broad (sustainable consumption, values)
- Public outreach – narrow (targeted behaviors)
- Direct financial incentives to consumers
- Media standards, literacy
- Shift consumption to natural capital
- Changing how we work, share and cooperate



# Sustainable Consumption: Opportunities and Challenges



**Thank You**

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