

PART II, SECTION V

CHANGING CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Introduction

In Chapter 4 of Agenda 21, governments pledge to improve their understanding of the role of consumption in sustainable development and how consumption patterns could be changed. They also undertake to develop national policies and strategies that encourage changes in consumption patterns.

This section describes only a small portion of the actions and initiatives that Canadian individuals, organizations, and governments have undertaken to deal with consumption issues. Other examples relevant to the objectives of this chapter are mentioned in other sections of this report, particularly the section devoted to environmentally sound technology. A number of other examples were mentioned in the consumption section of the Report of Canada to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development that was tabled in 1994.

Improving Understanding of Production and Consumption

Canadians are now taking a variety of steps to improve their understanding of the role and impact of consumption on sustainable development. Many of these are focused on establishing databases, indicators, and approaches to national accounts that track various aspects of production and consumption.

For example, the National Energy Use Database compiles data on energy consumption in different sectors, enabling improvements in energy efficiency to be evaluated. The National Packaging Monitoring System, developed under the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment's National Packaging Protocol, tracks progress toward achieving our national goals of reducing packaging waste disposal by 50 percent by the year 2000. As well, the federal government, the Canadian Standards Association, and a number of Canadian raw material producers are developing a Canadian Raw Material Database. This database will provide industry-averaged data on energy and raw material inputs and environmental releases during raw material acquisition and manufacturing.

Statistics Canada is developing a set of natural resource and environmental accounts that will serve as satellite accounts to the System of National Accounts. They will record natural resource stock, natural resource use, and waste output in Canada and current and capital spending intended to conserve or protect natural resources and the environment.