



capacity global

living in a clean and healthy environment is everyone's right

One Planet Culture

This month's edition of One Planet Culture features the acclaimed film *Black Gold* and the topic of shopping ethically. This provocative documentary on the truth behind each cup of coffee we drink will challenge your ideas of how we buy this everyday product. This factsheet is just an introduction to the issue of ethical shopping and consumption; to find out more, visit the Capacity Global website and the links included below.

Introduction to climate change

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing the world today. Rising temperatures will bring hotter summers and milder winters, more winter rainfall and more frequent storms, rising sea levels and storm surge heights.

The rise in temperature is due mainly to the increase of several gases in our atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. Similar to the glass of a greenhouse, these gases trap heat from the sun, creating the conditions for life on Earth. Nature has always been able to keep the right balance of these 'greenhouse gases' in the atmosphere – until now.

Modern human activity such as deforestation and industrial agriculture emit much more quantities of these gases than natural processes can handle. And just as double-glazed windows trap more heat in the greenhouse, the accumulation of these gases makes the Earth hotter.

Why we all need to shop ethically

Unfortunately, almost everything we do will cause some amount of greenhouse gas emissions – the energy we use, the way we travel, even the coffee we drink. The key is to keep the emissions we're responsible for down to a sustainable level. One way we can reduce the amount of greenhouse gases (or 'carbon emissions') we create is by shopping ethically.

Part of the challenge is the consumerist society we live in. Every year, the holiday season is preceded by a frenzy of shopping activity. Everyone scrambles for the latest must-have item, looking for the perfect present, hoping not to forget anyone. But according to some estimates, if everyone in the world were to consume like we do here in the UK, we would need 8 extra planets by 2050. We only have this one!

Everything that is produced, transported, bought, and consumed creates emissions and pollution that our climate can't handle. Deforestation, flooding, heavy rains, changes in climate patterns, and mountains of rubbish collecting in landfills are just some of the environmental consequences of our shopping behaviour. So it's not just about buying more sustainable products, but also about buying less.

How to shop ethically

As an individual and as part of your community, you can change your behaviour and make choices for a more sustainable lifestyle. You can start by changing your holiday shopping habits. Here are a few ideas on how to shop more ethically:

- **Buy seasonal, locally-produced food, or better yet, grow your own!** The fresh seasonal food available at local farmers' markets is not only more flavourful and healthy, but is often better for the environment than what is available at the supermarket.
- **Buy fair-trade products.** Goods produced through cheap labour are usually made in poor countries not subject to the same legal obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as industrialised countries. www.fairtrade.org.uk
- **Only buy as much as you'll eat.** The Stockholm Environment Institute calculated that a typical Christmas dinner creates about 26kg of carbon emissions per person. Eating an organic, vegetarian dinner and composting peelings and leftovers could reduce that by 8kg per person.
- **Send e-cards.** The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs estimates that 1 billion Christmas cards – 17 for every woman, man and child – end up in bins across the UK each year.
- **If you buy new cards, make sure they're made from recycled paper.** Converting timber into paper is a very energy-intensive process, but recycling paper and card conserves resources and saves energy. And make sure to recycle them afterwards!
- **Make your own presents.** It's less stressful than roaming crowded streets and shops, and it's a good opportunity to spend time with people you love most.
- **Purchase ethical gifts.** Instead of buying the latest gadget, consider gifts that are environmentally-friendly and will help environmental charities to save the planet. www.foe.co.uk/shop or shop.wwf.org.uk
- **Get a real Christmas tree.** Real trees are carbon neutral, so they're more eco-friendly than even the best artificial tree. You can also make your own decorations!

For more information

If you're interested in learning more about shopping ethically or other actions you can do to save the environment, Capacity Global and the Every Actions Counts (EAC) programme can help. We provide advice and support to individuals and voluntary and community organisations who are looking to reduce their impact on the environment and tackle climate change.

Visit the Capacity Global and Every Action Counts websites:

www.capacity.org.uk

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk

To find an EAC Community Champion in your area, or to learn more about becoming one, contact Claire Lyon at BTCV on 01302 388 841 or email c.lyon@btcv.org.uk.