Research Project
Sustainable Consumption & Production -
‘The Art of the State’

Recommendations to Comhar
For the 2007 Review of the National Sustainable Development Strategy
by
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“It will be very difficult to define sufficiency and build the concept into economic theory and practice. But I think it will prove far more difficult to continue to operate as if there is no such thing as enough.” (Herman Daly)

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promoting sustainable consumption and production by addressing social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.

- Improving the environmental and social performance for products and processes and encouraging their uptake by business and consumers.

- Aiming to achieve by 2010 an EU average level of Green Public Procurement (GPP) equal to that currently achieved by the best performing Member States.

- The EU should seek to increase its global market share in the field of environmental technologies and eco-innovations.
Comhar Recommendations on Sustainable Production and Consumption

Comhar recommends that the revised NSDS should commit to the adoption, with the participation of stakeholders, of a national action plan for SCP within two years of publication of the revised NSDS.

The national action plan for SCP should address:

Prioritisation

- The case for prioritisation of sustainable consumption and production, in the domestic and international economy, with an examination of available evidence addressing the whole life cycle of goods, services and materials, including the socio-economic impacts both inside and outside Ireland. Also, the contribution of SCP to national priorities e.g. waste reduction, sustainable waste management, and climate change.

- Linking sustainable consumption to national consumer policy and activity, including the identification of a champion such as the new National Consumer Agency.

- International activity: engagement in the work of the Marrakech Task Forces on sustainable consumption and production e.g. tourism, construction, to ensure early adoption of best practice and ensure prospects for benchmarking of our performance with other EU Member States.

Greening Public Procurement

- Intensification and coordination of public sector green procurement capacity and training. A review of existing current Government initiatives on Greening Public Procurement and setting of new targets for Government Departments, Local Authorities and State Agencies; exploring synergies for public procurement, health promotion (schools and hospitals), and rural communities.
Leadership by the public sector in stimulating sustainable consumption and production in the context of climate change and the creation of a low carbon economy; the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Programme; promotion of biomass, energy efficient street lighting, and the conversion of vehicle fleets to biofuel blends.

An increase in levels of public procurement together with capacity building initiatives and staff training.

Greater collaboration between the National Public Procurement Policy Unit and DEHLG to increase the level of GPP.
Sustainability aspects to be a requirement for inclusion in the (mandatory) Corporate Procurement Plans that each public body must produce.
Whole life costing to be implemented and training for this to be put in place.
Government-approved targets for certain products.
Auditing for sustainability to be part of the Comptroller and Auditor General’s and of the Local Government Audit Service’s remit.

Economic Competitiveness

Strategic economic recommendations on improving resource productivity, linking business competitiveness with the embrace of environmental technologies and other initiatives, and decoupling economic growth and environmental degradation.

Improvement in consumer and business awareness of environmental claims, including specific information and awareness campaigns for Irish consumers on environmental claims and labels.

Clean Technology, Innovation, Competitiveness

A review of the implementation of the ETAP Roadmap, coordination mechanisms and resources committed to research, development and roll out, to be conducted immediately after the launch of the
European Action Plan (2007) on Sustainable Consumption and Production. Enhanced cooperation with business and industry representative organisations (e.g. IBEC, ISME etc.)

- Effective integration of ETAP activities into national strategies for innovation, technology development, competitiveness and R&D.

- A review of Environmental Technologies market/financing opportunities at home and overseas e.g. links to opportunities to be pursued under the UNFCCC Clean Development Mechanism.

- Measures to promote improved production and services, including the agri-food sector, that reduce the environmental impacts from the use of energy, resource or hazardous substances; and cleaner more efficient production processes that strengthen competitiveness and shifts in consumption towards goods and services with lower impacts.

- Greening private sector procurement and take up of environmental management systems, notably in the SME sector.

- The factors driving business to take up measures consistent with sustainable consumption and production and identification of additional measures e.g. product re-design, localization, lean manufacturing, clean production, Corporate Social Responsibility, and labelling of products and services.

Information & Awareness

- A review of supports for household and consumer/citizen action in support of SCP Communications, Citizenship and Culture and additional measures required to enhance effective communication and stakeholder participation in sustainable consumption and production.

- The development of an environmental product information strategy. Gaps in non-statutory control, namely section 11 of the ASAI Code of Advertising Standards which specifically excludes on-pack
environmental claims, while an EU guidance document on making and assessing environmental claims appears not be promoted or in use in Ireland.

- Consumer awareness and education in the form of clear and credible environmental information on products and services, and labelling. Attention should be given to the control and regulation of environmental claims.

- Measures to support individual and household decisions to re-articulate the link between consumption and quality of life (e.g. use of the private motor car versus less commuting distance/time).

Delivery

- Leadership and responsibility for sustainable consumption and environmental claims policy within one Government department or agency. The fragmentation of consumer production, sustainable consumption and environmental claims across various Government departments and agencies; and the need to organise overall responsibility and policy initiatives, notably in the area of environmental claims.

- A role for the National Consumer Agency in, inter alia, promoting reliable environmental labelling and information & public education; and a role in monitoring the incidence of complaints regarding misleading environmental claims; ensuring that self-declared factual and qualitative environmental claims meet minimum standards for good environmental claims.

- Development and recommendations by sector (e.g. energy, food, water, mobility, construction etc.), timelines for action (e.g. short-, medium-, and long-term), implementing agencies/delivery mechanisms and opportunities (e.g. enhanced cross-border energy/economic cooperation).

- A review of the adequacy of existing consumer Acts in dealing with certain types of environmental claims.
Measuring Progress

- **In the context of sustainable development in general, and sustainable consumption and production in particular, the CSO should engage with the OECD and related research in exploring the practical application of research into the limitations of GDP as a measure of human welfare, and offer alternative or complementary indicators.**

- **In the context of its work on ‘Measuring Ireland’s Progress’, a programme of work - in cooperation with other SD stakeholders who take an interest in the economics of sustainable development (e.g. Comhar, Feasta, New Economics Foundation), and working closely with the OECD, to explore complementary measures of human welfare in Ireland, commencing with attempts to address the following questions:**

  - What can economic measures such as GDP do best and where other measures of well-being needed?
  - Which other issues (e.g. ecosystems and their goods and services; social and human capital) need to be taken into account for a more complete account of human well-being?
  - What measures could influence decision-making as useful and viable complements to GDP? (For example, Ecological Footprinting\(^3\), the Human Development Index, Happy Planet Index, and the Genuine Savings Approach could be examined)?
  - What would the implications be of a GDP measure corrected for loss of ecological or human capital?

Short-term steps

*As already stated, the revised NSDS should set clear guidance for the integration of sustainable development criteria into all public procurement decisions, focusing initially on energy efficiency. Time-bound targets*
should be established for government departments, semi-state agencies and local authorities.
1.0 Introduction

Climate change, loss of natural resources, extinction of species and environmental damage caused by emissions and waste are the results of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

In the decade since Agenda 21 (UNCED 1992), technological development and innovation have increased resource efficiency at some levels and in some sectors. These developments have not amounted to an adequate response to address critical patterns of unsustainable consumption and production. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (Chapter III) included a call for the development of “a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production.(SCP)”, with a focus on policy responses in the EU and OECD countries. The 10-year framework ii is being developed to strengthen international cooperation and increase exchange of information and best practices to facilitate the implementation of national and regional programmes to promote sustainable consumption and production. In March 2003, the European Council (the EU Heads of State or Government) identified sustainable consumption and production as one of the key priorities of the EU in its follow up to the WSSD.

This report focuses on the key ‘Operational objectives and targets’ for the promotion of sustainable consumption and production in the European Union’s revised sustainable development strategy (2006).

Those objectives and targets are:

- Promoting sustainable consumption and production by addressing social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.
- Improving the environmental and social performance for products and processes and encouraging their uptake by business and consumers.
- Aiming to achieve by 2010 an EU average level of Green Public Procurement (GPP) equal to that currently achieved by the best performing Member States.
• The EU should seek to increase its global market share in the field of environmental technologies and eco-innovations.

In pursuit of these objectives, Ireland will be expected to engage in a dialogue with business and relevant stakeholders aiming at setting environmental and social performance targets for products and processes; adopt best practices; participate in Europe-wide benchmarking of GPP performance; promote and disseminate social and eco-innovations and environmental technologies via the Environmental Technologies Action Plan; adopt performance labelling schemes; and support information campaigns with retailers and other organisations.

**Finland: National Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production (EC 2004)**

The Finnish government appointed a committee in November 2003 with members drawn from a wide range of stakeholder groups and organisations to draft proposals for a National Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production. The programme is to define the additional goals and environmental policy measures that will have to be adopted for Finland to become a truly eco-efficient.

A European Union Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan is to be launched in the form of a Green Paper in the second half of 2007. The Action Plan (Communication) will follow later in 2008.

The Action Plan is expected to contain the following elements:

• Extension of eco-design legislation
• Greening private sector procurement
• Communication strategy
• Environmental targets (ETAP)
• Reinforcement of the Eco-labeling scheme
• Reinforcement of EMAS
• EU-Global initiatives

The revised EU Sustainable Development Strategy (2006) recognises the role of economic development in facilitating the transition to a more sustainable society, and notes the role of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs in making
an essential contribution to the overarching objective of sustainable development.

In Europe, Governments are trying to secure more joined-up policy development at EU level, using the concept of SCP - through influence on the Commission’s thematic strategies on resource productivity and waste/recycling under 6th Environmental Action programme; the next steps on Integrated Product Policy (IPP); the Action Plan on Environmental Technology; and the proper linking of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy with the EU “Lisbon agenda” on competitiveness and innovation. The European Commission’s communication on a renewed Lisbon Strategy includes a focus on eco-innovation. The OECD has published a number of studies focusing on sustainable consumption and production, with useful material on public procurement, the corporate sector, governance dimensions and clarification of SCP concepts. The OECD studies focus on the effects of the public policy framework on firms, households and the public sector.

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<tr>
<th>EU SDS objectives and targets</th>
<th>EUSDS proposed actions</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Address social and economic development within carrying capacity of ecosystems, and</td>
<td>• Propose and EU Sustainable Consumption and production action plan by 2007</td>
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<td>• Decouple economic growth from environmental degradation</td>
<td>• Dialogue with business to set environmental and social performance targets</td>
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<td>• Improving environmental and social performance for products and policies</td>
<td>• Structured process to share best practice on GPP and benchmarking</td>
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<td>• Aim to achieve by 2010 an EU average level of Green Public Procurement (GPP) equal to currently achieved by best performing Member States</td>
<td>• Step up efforts to promote and disseminate social and eco-innovation through effective implementation of the Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP)</td>
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<td>• Increase global market share in field of environmental technologies and eco-innovations.</td>
<td>• Extend performance labelling schemes</td>
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<td>• Support information campaigns with retailers to promote sustainable products (organic farming, fair trade, environmentally sound products)</td>
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European Regional Meetings on SCP

As part of the Marrakech process two regional expert meetings have taken place in Europe. The European Stakeholder Meeting on SCP held in Ostend, Belgium, in November 2004 was the first of these meetings and was jointly organised by UNEP and the European Commission.

The European Conference on Sustainable Energy Consumption was held in Berlin in December 2005. The specific focus of this meeting was on the production and use of energy-using products. The positive impact of small and inexpensive improvement measures was emphasised and intensified promotion of green public procurement was proposed as a positive example to effect much-needed changes in consumer behaviour.

European countries are also organising and coordinating seven voluntary Marrakech Task forces. To date it would appear that Ireland has not formally participated in the work of the Task Forces. These Task Forces have been developing concrete projects for their own specific topics and sectoral issues, and are driven by three primary objectives:

i. Support the implementation of concrete projects for SCP
ii. Focus SCP activities on specific themes or sectors
iii. Strengthen North-South cooperation in the SCP implementation

The Task Forces are organised as follows:

- **Cooperation with Africa** (hosted by Germany)
- **Sustainable Products** (hosted by the UK)
- **Sustainable Lifestyles** (hosted by Sweden)
- **Sustainable Public Procurement** (hosted by Switzerland)
- **Sustainable Tourism** (hosted by France)
- **Sustainable Buildings and Construction** (hosted by Finland)
- **Education for Sustainable Development** (hosted by Italy)

The Irish Policy Context

Pender et al (2007) have surveyed the use and regulation of environmental claims as a means for promoting sustainable consumption in Ireland. The report
sets out the policy and regulatory frameworks for consumer policy, including sustainable consumption and labelling and concludes with a series of relevant recommendations.

The authors observe that general consumer policy in Ireland has been weak to date, with responsibility for consumer issues spread across various Government departments. Responsibility for policy on sustainable consumption, general product labelling and environmental claims is also dispersed and specific action very limited to date. Moreover, there has been limited progress to date on the few specific initiatives on environmental claims identified in the 1997 National Sustainable Development Strategy and the 2003-2005 Sustainable Development Strategy of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Awareness amongst Irish consumers of environmental issues and the impact of their purchasing choices remains quite low:

*More than half of consumers do not pay attention to environmental labels or product information (Drury 2000), and are distrustful of on-pack information. Despite the low levels of awareness, there have been very few initiatives to educate either consumers or businesses about environmental labels and claims and none of a comprehensive, integrated nature as found in the UK and the USA. (Pender et al 2007:7)*

The Sixth Environmental Action Programme 2002-2012 places a particular emphasis on the need for the provision of more accurate product and services information for consumers.\(^4\) A European Commission study found that there were no instruments of control specific to environmental claims in Ireland and no sanctions in place for misleading claims (Leubuscher et al, 1998, cited in Pender et al 2007). The weakness of controls exists alongside evidence of poor performance by those making environmental claims on the Irish market, with 29 per cent of a survey sample (across five product groups) (Pender 2007) failing one or more criteria in the UK’s Green Claims Code.\(^5\)

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\(^4\) European level work to promote sustainable consumption and effective environmental product information spans the EU Consumer Policy Strategy, the Integrated Product policy (IPP), the Sixth Environmental Action Programme 2002-2012, and work to promote the EU Eco-Label and green public procurement.

\(^5\) Pender et al (2007) surveyed 179 self-declared factual and qualitative environmental claims using the twelve criteria contained in the UK’s Green Claims Code and rated as ‘Pass’, ‘Borderline’ or ‘Fail’. A total of 52 percent of the 179 claims were assessed as acceptable, 19 percent as borderline and 29 percent as failing one or more criteria.
Environmental claims, labels or declarations on a product’s environmental attributes can take three forms:
- Self-declared product-related claims and labels;
- Self-declared corporate-related labels and claims; and
- Third Party/Certified environmental labels and claims.

Studies have shown that the issues affecting environmental claims include:
- Credibility of environmental claims;
- Control and regulation of claims, in particular on-pack and vague claims; and
- Need for accompanying consumer education and information programmes.

The UK’s Advisory committee on Consumer Products and the Environment (ACCPE) has collated important research findings and recommendations on eco-labeling. The Committee’s approach offers a useful guide for policy adaptation in the Irish context.

The ACCPE conclusions include:

a. Given that sustainability is made up of many different environmental and social issues, and that the range of products available in the market are so very different, it may have to be accepted that a simple strategy for a catch-all eco-labeling system will also be problematic.

b. Labels have driven change, but only when they are designed specifically for a small number of key issues closely associated with that product. Forests, for example, are clearly linked to wooden garden benches so a bespoke label connecting forest harvesting with a garden bench works (hence the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)).

The ACCPE and UK Roundtable have also concluded that while a label may be seen as a consumer communication, the real user is the retailer and the manufacturer. If you shop at B&Q you do not have to distinguish between wood products on the grounds of sustainability. Consumers can concentrate on the aesthetics and price of a product.

Adapting the ACCPE Toolbox Approach (Annex IV)
The ACCPE has concluded that different environmental issues and different product areas need different solutions, involving different sets of tools. In its first two years, ACCPE has developed a framework or 'tool-box' for deciding which tools work best for which issues and at which point on the supply chain.

Step-changes will only come about if policy for goods and services becomes an integral part of the policy for sustainable development. By making the links between key sustainable development issues and the products which have the most significant impacts in these areas, ACCPE's tool-box approach helps identify where action is required.

ACCPE is convinced that product policy is not a frill. It could be one of the most powerful engines for delivering major long-term improvements in sustainability.

The ACCPE have highlighted the sustainability issues where product policies can make a real difference. They also identified the market measures or ‘tools’ capable of bringing improvements in the product sectors most associated with those issues. Making the links - between the key issues, products and tools - is fundamental to the ACCPE tool-box approach to product policy.

Before proceeding to use the tool-box, however, the ACCPE encourage the development of a simple and practical vision to inform over-arching policy. This strategic move involves making an explicit link between high-level sustainability objectives and the product sectors which have the most potential for improvement. For example, recommendations have been made for the UK about developing a single label for all major items of household expenditure with climate change impacts and on ensuring that carbon offset schemes are offered to consumers in a fair and effective way. (Annex IV)

Consistent with the experience in Ireland, the ACCPE have found that the main problem with communication tools needed to ensure that useable information is passed right along the supply chain - from sellers to buyers to users - is that of far too little information being visible. A secondary problem is that too much of what is visible is of poor information value. Recommendations arising from this work correspond closely to the needs which have also been identified in Ireland:
- The Government should consult formally about the options for a green claims panel, aiming for some form of partnership between all the main interests - manufacturers and retailers, consumer and environment bodies, marketing and advertising bodies, and trading standards.

- Sectoral initiatives should be developed involving either standardized wording for claims, based on the principles of a ‘Green Claims Code’, or organized rating or labeling schemes which can be applied across the product sector.

- Early attention should be given to replacing ‘lead free’ claims about paint with more informative advice for users; developing some standardized wording about the peat content of growing media; and clearer wording to explain the biodegradability properties of cleaning products.

- The regulatory framework for self-declared product information needs to be improved. The Government should strengthen national consumer production law to create the right framework for responsible environmental information to flourish in the market. As well as cleaning up the market in ‘green claims’ new legislation could provide the framework for new initiatives to standardize the declaration of key environmental factors about products.

- The Government should establish a pilot on-line information service about the impacts of products and how to reduce them, making this a major plank in its communication with the public about sustainable development issues.

- The pilot stage should be targeted primarily at professional procurement officers, particularly those in public bodies at national and local level.

On ways of improving the general business framework in which retailers can influence their supply chain towards more sustainable outcomes, recommendations from the ACCPE include:

- Government to take a lead in encouraging a higher profile for greening of the retail supply chain, supported by commitment at company board level. In the context of Corporate Social Responsibility, Government Ministers should convene a high-level seminar for key retail leaders on the subject of greening the supply chain, for food and non-food products alike.

- These themes must be introduced to the curriculum within business schools.

- Government should encourage the retail sector to take forward these and other ‘green supply chain’ issues through a collective forum, bringing together expertise at working level from across the industry.
Consumer Policy and Sustainable Consumption

No single Government department has overall responsibility for the area of sustainable consumption and explicit policy goals and objectives in this area have been limited to date. Pender et al (2007) has observed that sustainable consumption as a specific policy does not currently feature in the work of any department and they could find only two instances where some specific objectives or actions do exist - in the 1997 National Sustainable Development Strategy and in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Sustainable Development Strategy 2003-05. Similarly, responsibility for the critical area of product labelling and information is spread across departments and deeply fragmented.

In the 1997 document the Government undertakes to ask the Director of Consumer Affairs to consider new arrangements for providing full and authoritative environmental information to consumers (p.158). However this work was not initiated. Nor was the National Consumer Agency, established in 2006, mandated to take any responsibility for the sustainable consumption agenda. No references to sustainable consumption or environmental claims appeared in the 2005 Consumer Strategy Group’s report on key national consumer issues (Consumer Strategy Group 2005) The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has taken forward work on ETAP but has not delivered on specific actions on the broader area of green consumption.

Pender et al (2007) concludes that sustainable consumption appears to be a low priority at Central Government level:

*The apparent lack of leadership and specific policy objectives in the area contrasts with considerable progress by some other Member States and the European Union itself.* (Pender et al. 2007:24)

In Sweden, for example, there is a stand-alone ministry for sustainable development, with a specific policy area on sustainable production and consumption that focuses on issues such as integrated product policy, environmental technologies and waste management. Notably, the Swedish national sustainable development strategy (2003) seeks to promote sustainable consumption patterns through actions such as the development of sustainable
consumption action plans and the linking of sustainable development to the national consumer policy strategy.

The Finnish Government appointed a committee in November 2003 with members drawn from a wide range of stakeholder groups and organisations to draft proposals for a National Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

**Sustainable Consumption and Production: National Programmes**

While there is no coordinated national programme for sustainable consumption and production a number of government policies and programmes are in place to support good practice as well as specific initiatives by other key stakeholders, including:

- The Cleaner Greener Production Programme (CGPP) launched by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2001. Grant aid was provided to encourage companies, particularly SMEs, to adopt a high standard of environmental performance by adapting or improving production processes and services in order to minimise negative impact on the environment.
- Enterprise Ireland provides a free and regularly updated environmental information portal, designed specifically to enhance environmental awareness in Irish industry, with particular emphasis on small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- The Environmentally Superior Products (ESP) initiative sponsored by Enterprise Ireland supports manufacturing companies to assess ways to reduce the environmental impact of their products. Enterprise Ireland also provides grant support for companies towards the costs of engaging independent consultants to install, in full or in part, a certified Environmental Management System (EMS).
- Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) was established in 2000 as a business-driven network specialising in corporate responsibility and community involvement.
- IBEC’s Environment Awards for Industry
- Fairtrade Mark Ireland, is operated by the Irish Fair Trade Network (IFTN), a member of the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation International (FLO).
2.0 Decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation

Decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation is a core objective of the European Union in the context of sustainable consumption and production. A number of concepts are current in the debate on sustainable consumption and production. It is useful to clarify these and examine their potential for delivery of policy objectives and green innovation.

Decoupling is achieved when a quantum of economic growth does not cause a similar level of growth in environmental pressure (resource use and/or emissions). Two forms of decoupling are generally acknowledged:

- relative decoupling: the environmental impacts grow at a slower rate than the economy; or
- absolute decoupling: the environmental impact diminishes while economic activity continues to grow.

Some, including the Wuppertal School, place a greater emphasis on the key role of material inputs; while institutions such as the EU also stress emission factors (Tukker 2005). Ehrlich and Holdren (1971) produced an influential formula to describe the relation between production, wealth and environmental impacts known as the IPAT formula:

\[ I = P \times A \times T \]

I = Environmental Impact
P = Population (in capita)
A = Affluence per capita
T = (Technical) eco-efficiency of production

The formula points to the three main drivers of environmental impact: population, affluence and technical efficiency.

A number of decoupling strategies have evolved. These are:

i. Enhancing the impact efficiency of production, typically through end-of-pipe anti-pollution technologies (i.e. reducing emissions factors);
ii. Enhancing the (product) efficiency of production using, for example, renewable energy or more efficient production processes (i.e. creating the same output with less production input);

iii. Enhancing the intensity of use of products by deriving, for example, multiple functions from one product or creating systems for sharing, pooling;

iv. Reducing the product composition of expenditure (i.e. spending with less impact). This is brought about when there is a shift to expenditure on immaterial value components such as brand, experience or intellectual property, or to products with a low life cycle impact such as an electronic music file.

v. Enhancing quality of life per Euro spent. This strategy focuses on the creation of living conditions where less material artefacts are required to realise expected outcomes through, for example, spatial planning policy; and enhancing non-market related quality of life factors.

Larsen (2005) has set out a useful four-field typology based on a cross-tabulation of the decoupling/recoupling and eco-efficiency/eco-effectiveness distinctions. The major difference between decoupling and recoupling is that the former is related to environmental protection while the latter is related to sustainable growth:

*The major difference between eco-efficiency and eco-effectiveness is that the former is characterized by isolated and relative ecological improvement and the latter is related to aggregated, overall ecological improvement. (Larsen 2005)*

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<th>Table 1: Fourfold typology of green innovation (Larsen 2005)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decoupling</strong> (Protection)</td>
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<td>Technical Micro Eco-Efficiency</td>
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<td>(1) Environmental innovation</td>
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<td>Functional Macro Eco-Effectiveness</td>
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<td>(2) Ecological Communalism</td>
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<td><strong>Recoupling</strong> (Sustainable Growth)</td>
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<td>(3) Ecological Modernization</td>
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<td>(4) Innovation for sustainable development</td>
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The upper left corner of the table encompasses what has traditionally been termed environmental technology and end-of-pipe solutions, and represents the most easily achievable approach. The outcome characterizes innovations that are eco-efficient. They aim at reducing resource use and/or environmental
impact from a product or process. They contribute to decoupling by breaking the link between environmental pressure and economic growth, but they are not aiming at recoupling these pressures by finding new more sustainable ways of production and consumption.

**Austria: Eco-efficiency Action Programme**
The Eco-efficiency Action Programme represents a bundle of measures that are dedicated to the improvement of resource productivity i.e. using fewer natural resources per unit of consumption. By 2050, consumption of non-renewable resources and energy sources is to be reduced by one tenth of present consumption while maintaining the same quality of living. Implementation is undertaken by a number of ministries as well as the Federation of Austrian Industry and the Standing Committee of the Presidents of the Austrian Chambers of Agriculture.

Ecological Communalism, as advocated by parts of the environmental and ecological movement, focuses on the aggregate effects of the innovation on production and consumption, casting consideration in a broader framework of eco-systems, the carrying capacity of the Earth and potential rebound effects.

Ecological Modernization probably best characterizes the emerging approach in Ireland. It provides us with some understanding of how the ecological question transforms the modernization process. According to Mol (1996) modern science and technology are central institutions for ecological reform in ecological modernization theory. Importance is given to economic market dynamics in ecological reform, and to the role of innovators, entrepreneurs and other economic agents as social carriers of ecological restructuring alongside state agencies and social partners. The rhetoric of Ecological Modernization typically espouses “win-win” solutions and “green growth” with “eco-efficient” innovations. The model does not necessarily take aggregate environmental impacts or potential rebound effects into consideration.

Innovation for sustainable development, in the bottom right hand corner of the table, is characterized by an emphasis on achieving overall eco-effectiveness in a global context. While following the line of reasoning from ecological modernization, the main difference is that environmental concerns are accorded priority if ecological carrying capacity and systems are threatened. Potential rebound effects are anticipated and taken into account - and avoided. A good example of innovation for sustainable development is
renewable energy technology\textsuperscript{6}. A society fully based on new renewable energy would be capable of accommodating economic growth energy-wise without compromising the carrying capacity of the Earth’s ecological systems. It thus corresponds with both the sustainable growth (recoupling) and eco-effectiveness (functional) axis in the Table.

For Larsen (2005) the four-fold typology of green innovation captures two significant aspects of innovation in the context of governance for sustainable development.

First, the vertical axis signifies that there exists an implied, but not adequately expressed, presumption that decoupling involves recoupling. In other words, it is important to explain the implications of not only disconnecting drivers from pressures on natural resources and eco-systems, but also of finding ways of surplus-generating development. This is the real long-term challenge for the integration of sustainable development into a policy architecture that is also driven by the discipline of competitiveness.

The horizontal axis, differentiating between eco-efficiency and eco-effectiveness, also illuminates the different eco-performance of actual innovations: “Are they merely environmentally sound on a (technical) micro level, or do they actually contribute to an overall (functional) improvement of the state of the environment?” (Larsen 2005:47).

The differentiation is important for policy-makers when it comes to deciding eligibility for State supports and grants to innovation schemes e.g. ETAP activities.

Larsen (2005) concludes that, instead of viewing any kind of innovation as potentially positive for value-creating competition, the typology points out that innovation can serve other ends than increased economic growth through increased market/profit shares:

- Innovations in the mode of “environmental innovation” can contribute significantly to decoupling, without being commercially competitive;

\textsuperscript{6} It is estimated that the energy pay-back of conventional solar panels based on multicrystalline wafers is two years. The energy pay-back time is the amount of time it takes for the solar panel to generate the energy required to produce it.
- Innovation can also contribute to apparent “ecological modernization”, without contributing to sustainable development (due to reduced eco-effectiveness and rebound effects); and
- Innovation can contribute to “ecological communalism” by developing lifestyles, learning mechanisms and organizational forms that seem to point backwards rather than forwards in terms of economic growth and development.

2.1 Sustainable Production

Businesses will not respond to the Sustainable Consumption and Production agenda in isolation. They too must have a policy framework to create the business case for action and the calculated pursuit of a competitive edge. Locally and internationally, businesses are also seeking certainty in areas such as the creation and maintenance of markets, including the carbon market underpinned by consistent approaches to climate change.

In its Communication on a renewed Lisbon Strategy (EC 2005) the European Commission emphasized the need to sustain a strong European industrial base whilst facilitating innovation, notably eco-innovation.

A government-sponsored product body could deliver some of this reassurance and a regulatory framework for business, shaping policy around products that business supplies rather than focusing on business operations themselves. Where effective market incentives are in place, there is less need for government to focus on business operations.

Environmental Technology Action Plan

The EU’s Environmental Technology Action Plan (ETAP) was adopted in January 2004 (COM (2004) 38). For each Member State, an ETAP Roadmap has been drawn up. ETAP consists of:

- a survey of promising technologies that could address the main environmental problems;
- an identification, with stakeholders, of the market and institutional barriers that are holding back development and use of specific technologies; and
- an identification of a targeted package of measures, building on existing instruments, to address these barriers.
The Commission has been implementing the action plan through the establishment of technology platforms and of networks of technology validation centres.

It is now acknowledged that the environmental technologies sector is one of the fastest growing sectors of the European economy and it is considered vital that the EU should take a lead role at the global level both for competitiveness and environmental reasons. ETAP embeds an important aspect of the EU’s response to sustainable consumption and production within the revised Lisbon Strategy on growth and jobs.

Ireland’s National Roadmap for the Implementation of ETAP (April 2005) acknowledges that we must now begin to create the conditions to develop the technological advances that the markets require and, in parallel, prepare the markets to embrace new technology. The achievement of success in Ireland is predicated on the need to increase the focus on promoting the development and uptake of eco-technologies, from R&D through to application and support for Irish companies in achieving a foothold in the European and global market for environmental goods and services. In this way it is possible to fully exploit opportunities to alleviate the existing and future pressures that will be placed on the environment while maintaining and enhancing competitiveness.

The Roadmap (2005) identifies a number of challenges and constraints to the introduction of eco-technologies, including:

- Industry’s reluctance to take up existing technologies or to invest in research and development in new eco-technologies, particularly if there are serious misgivings as to the potential return on their investment.
- Companies may perceive that the cost of accessing R&D work may be overly expensive or simply not available for their needs.
- Companies may not have in-house or other access to expertise to address environmental issues and may not have been subject to either awareness campaigns or potential training.
- Progress may be hampered by the lack of infrastructure development to support new environmentally sound technologies and a fear of change from the more traditional technologies. This situation can be detected in the slow shift towards renewable non-fossil fuel based energy infrastructure.
There are also concerns that companies that may be willing to invest in eco-innovation may be put off by a lack of confidence in future markets coupled with a deficit in available venture capital. The critical role of green public procurement in creating demand is also acknowledged.

The potential opportunities for the national economy, apart from the prospect of combining the replacement of existing systems and operations that have a detrimental environmental impact, include:

- Research on new innovations with a strong focus on commercialisation i.e. bridging the gap between the research institution and the market place;
- The implementation of new technologies that will improve entire production processes and not merely address end-of-pipe issues;
- The development of existing and new initiatives with a view to seizing opportunities in a growing global market in environmental goods and services;
- The conservation of natural resources by addressing long-term solutions to mitigate and avoid the depletion of existing resources and enhance resource efficiencies;
- Finding incentives to motivate sections of industry to respond to changes in the market place now driven by environmental considerations;
- Awareness raising;
- Greater levels of coordination within the public sector and the provision of better-targeted assistance to industry and the education sector for ETAP related activities;
- The opportunity for early action alongside EU partners with a view to breaking into new markets which are currently being exploited by global competitors and the identification of opportunities for ‘first mover’ advantages;
- Realisation of the objectives set out in the Lisbon Strategy and both the EU and National Sustainable Development strategies.

The Irish ETAP Roadmap sets out a call for a “major drive” to improve our existing production processes:

Such an improvement will require changes in the approach of policy makers, industry, the education and research community and
consumers. Many different, but complementary, initiatives will be needed. (DEHLG 2005)

Improved coordination and partnership arrangements will be required to deliver further roll out of ETAP nationally, with joint activities with other European countries anticipated. Clearly, opportunities exist for coordination with the UK ETAP Roadmap and a special effort to find cooperative activities with Northern Ireland ETAP participants.

ETAP Stakeholders have indicated a need for the formalisation of coordination, the creation of collaborative networks and the associated improvement in process efficiencies, the development of a knowledge base, an increase and greater continuity in funding, the stimulation of industry engagement and targeting of specific environmental challenges.

Priority actions for the further elaboration of the ETAP activities will include:

- A National ETAP Steering Group
- The creation of an ETAP Secretariat, to support, *inter alia*, collaborative efforts among researchers, funders and stakeholders
- Clear identification of actors with action points for delivery of ETAP
- A dynamic Roadmap with continuous reviews
- Formal coordination and partnership arrangements for stakeholders and wider interests
- Prioritisation of Action Points identified by the European ETAP
- Identification and removal of existing barriers
- Policy initiatives to stimulate further action

2.2 Cleaner Greener Production Programme (CGPP)

The EPA is implementing the Cleaner Greener Production Programme (CGPP), delivered under the NDP (2000-2006). Now in its third phase, the CGPP is now an element of a broader Environmental Technologies Programme. The CGPP focuses on the prevention and reduction of environmental impacts arising from industrial activities. The long-term goal is to ensure that cleaner production becomes the established norm in Ireland.
Walsh and McCarthy (2005) have drawn a number of conclusions about the future operation of the programme:

- The IPPC is a major influence on companies participating in the programme;
- With typical participating companies registered for the IPPC regime, a multinational and/or employing over one hundred people, smaller companies will need to be targeted and offered financial incentives. The EPA has provide funding of up to 50 percent of the cost of recruiting a graduate to work specifically on CGPP projects.
- Corporate pressure was an important stimulus for action, particularly for multinational companies. This appears to illustrate the significance of getting support at senior levels within the company.
- Participants have reported that the greatest obstacle to the implementation of cleaner production is the difficulty in introducing substantial change in their companies.
- Financial support was effective in inducing companies to take part and financial support was critical in the process of dissemination.
- Some participants have reported difficulties with the reporting requirements, given the level of grant available.
- A number of companies perceived the “hands off “role of outside agencies as a weakness. Some anticipated more hands-on support from both the EPA, possibly via the IPPC inspectorate, and the CTC who manage the programme on behalf of the EPA. The agencies are committed to a facilitative rather than a directive approach so as to ensure internal transformation and capacity building within the participating companies.

2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility

In 2002 the European Commission defined Corporate Social Responsibility as a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.

Corporations, often operating with supply chains across several countries, increasingly see themselves confronted with demands to function in a way that makes a positive contribution not only to the economic development of a host country or region, but also to its social development and environmental protection. (Kundt, Tuncer, Andersen and Liedtke 2004).
Along a single product chain - from the extraction of raw materials to the disposal phase - the number of factors involved with a corporation can cover a wide range of actors ranging from financial institutions to local communities. Issues thrown up by the ‘Rossport Five’ demonstrate the sensitivities and risks facing powerful companies and the power of local communities to assert their will over multinational actors e.g. attendance at shareholder meetings and direct engagement with members of the Shell Board. Interdependencies between societal actors and the transnational companies are increasingly significant. The reputation of large companies and brand management have become a key management concern.

**France: Law on New Economic Regulation**

The Law on New Economic Regulation, which was introduced on 20 February 2002, compels companies that are quoted on the Stock Exchange to report on their actions in the social and environmental fields. The required information falls into three categories: social information (training, hygiene, safety, parity, etc.), the territorial impact of the activity (subsidiary companies, subcontractors etc.), and the third covering the environment (28 headings). Several rating companies have now emerged on this new market. See www.novethic.fr

In their report on responsible corporate governance for the Wuppertal Institute, Kuhndt et al. (2004:13), note: “With innovation becoming more important, economic wealth now seems to shift to the lower points in the life cycle, towards the image and social meaning of the product rather than its production or extraction of raw materials. Intangible assets such as accumulated knowledge and brand value gain particular importance.”

Preserving brand value becomes a task shared by all actors along the product chain. Where the free movement of economic activities was once constrained, for the most part, by national borders, corporations increasingly find that their chief constraints are linked to social and environmental considerations alongside economic considerations.

There is a continuing gap between Corporate Social Responsibility, with internal environmental reporting on impacts, and the requirements of Sustainable Consumption. Core to bringing CSR and SCAP together is a business shift beyond an internal frame of reference, coupled with an engagement with
key stakeholders, to accept responsibility for the impact of the products and services it sells to customers.

The UK Roundtable has outlined a model of Corporate Social Responsibility approach that would demonstrate a company’s commitment to sustainable consumption:

- Explanation of how the principles of sustainable consumption are shaping their business strategy;
- A focus on the company’s products, through an environmental and social analysis of their key lifecycle impacts;
- Proactive engagement with government and NGOs in developing a public policy framework that creates a business case for more sustainable products;
- A research and development strategy that focuses on beating the competition at product sustainability - in terms of supply chains and product use - alongside other consumer priorities;
- Designing features that help consumers use their product or service in a more sustainable way;
- A serious and intelligent justification for any products offered that have the potential to drive consumption practices in highly unsustainable directions (e.g. patio heaters);
- Marketing strategies that would appeal to people’s values and ethics, and a broader sense of well-being, and avoid creating new unnecessary and unsustainable wants or playing on insecurities;
- Partnerships with innovative enterprises developing more sustainable products or service approaches; and
- Partnership enterprises with NGOs and policy-makers, where business expertise and skills can be married with the skills of the others to bring benefit to all parties.

To bring about such an approach to CSR will demand a convincing business case based on a realistic expectation that the business will subsequently:

- Continuously improve shareholder value;
- Build brand value by meeting and exceeding customer expectations;
- Operate efficiently within regulatory boundaries;
- Enthuse investors with a long-term strategy that ensures profitability;
- Build pride and satisfaction into the workforce and attraction for future employees; and
- Demonstrate responsible behavior.

The Government could invite IBEC and Comhar to convene a Sustainable Consumption and Production Business Task Force to take a lead in establishing a partnership approach between government and business to address the issue of high-impact products.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Enterprise Ireland could champion policies that can promote new markets for low-carbon, material light goods and services. These should include product roadmaps and should ensure that sustainable consumption objectives are fully embedded in all government strategies towards business, with application to sponsorship, science and technology, innovation and skills.

3.0 Sustainable Consumption: a preliminary discussion

“Most people are eagerly groping for some medium, some way in which they can bridge the gap between their morals and their practices” (Saul Alinsky)

Amidst the oft-repeated observations that ‘sustainable development’ in general, and climate change in particular, can present individual consumers with an overwhelming set of challenges that fail to connect with their daily routines and practices, the sustainable consumption and production challenge offers a distinctive and potentially empowering path for people to engage with and respond meaningfully. This opportunity is underlined in the latest Working Group report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007), which notes that changes in lifestyle and behaviour can contribute to climate change mitigation across all sectors. Specifically, the IPCC call, inter alia, for:

- Changes in lifestyle and consumption that emphasize resource conservation and contribute to the development of a low carbon economy that is both sustainable and equitable;

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- Education and training measures to help overcome barriers to the market acceptance of energy efficiency; and
- Changes in occupant behaviour, cultural patterns and consumer choice and use of technologies related to energy use in buildings.

While the sustainable development agenda can sometimes fail to translate from an abstract set of ideas and demands for change, policy-makers should note opportunities for practical implementation of sustainable consumption given the evidence that some are growing restive about the promises of consumerism. Given a supportive framework for collective progress towards sustainable consumption (rather than exhorting individuals to go against the grain) people and businesses will respond. One such framework is ‘choice editing’ which ensures that some of the complex choices are made on behalf of consumers and the most damaging products never reach the shelves.

The National Economic and Social Council (2005) has observed that Irish society is undoubtedly now challenged by certain ‘diseases of affluence’ or ‘affluenza’, including obesity, excessive consumption of alcohol and other drugs, and a dramatic rise in the suicide rate. Modern lifestyles are also plagued by the stresses and strains brought about by lagging infrastructural support for public transport, child care, health and well-being.

And the Taoiseach observed at a regional launch of the national consultation on active citizenship, there is a growing sense that “we cannot afford to ignore the pressures brought by modern lifestyles and the consumer culture”. The context for the Taoiseach’s observation - the launch of a national conversation on ‘active citizenship’ - is important because it suggested a useful linkage between our roles as ‘consumers’ and the need to reflect on some of the implications of our consumer lifestyles in the context of a fresh approach to citizenship.

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8 The NESC (2005) emphasizes the need to integrate preventive and curative approaches to health provision, with an enhanced awareness of the health risks associated with individual behavioural choices, increased social pressures to avoid behaviour damaging to one’s own health, and improved access to a wide range of health services.

9 Speech by An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD, at the launch of the first regional workshop convened under the auspices of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship, September 14 2006.
Andrew Dobson of Keele University has recommended that the option of ‘environmental citizenship’ needs to be introduced into the range of policy option considerations.

An environmental citizen’s behaviour will be influenced by an attitude that is - in part, at least - informed by the knowledge that what is good for a person as an individual is not necessarily good for that person as a member of a social collective.

Dobson outlines some elements of ‘environmental citizenship’:

- A recognition that self-interested behaviour will not always protect or sustain public goods such as the environment. Environmental citizens make a commitment to the common good.
- A recognition that environmental responsibilities follow from environmental rights as a matter of natural justice.
- A recognition that rights and responsibilities transcend national and generational boundaries.

Finally, whereas traditional concepts of citizenship have been associated with public spaces (i.e. debating, protesting, demanding), environmental citizenship shares this, but environmental citizens also know that their private actions have public implications. From an environmental point of view all actions are public actions - even those that originate in the home. Seemingly ‘private’ decisions have public environmental implications. So environmental citizenship is a citizenship of the private as well as the public sphere.

Dobson adds: “Overall, the duty of the environmental citizen is to live sustainably so that others may live well.”

*The new sustainable development strategy should tap into popular concerns about the direction that modern life in Ireland has taken together with concerns about climate change, and present ‘sustainable consumption and production’ as one framework for a set of practical responses by citizens, communities and other stakeholders, notably business and industry.*
Whereas public communications about ‘sustainable development’ and ‘climate change’ can often prove overwhelming, messages focusing on quality of life solutions that also address wider ecological issues may find a ready audience.

Research in the UK has shown, for example, that tangible steps taken by households to address energy and climate change issues (e.g. the installation of microgeneration technologies) has the potential to make energy visible. Feedback suggests that microgeneration can have the power to motivate and engage people. Making energy generation part and parcel of people’s homes and schools may hold the key to empowering and engaging energy consumers for the first time.

The meaning of consumption

A substantial evidence base has been built up to inform policy decisions to support a shift towards more sustainable consumption. Three key lessons can inform effective measures. Firstly, there is a considerable gap – the so called ‘value-action gap’ – between people’s attitudes, which are often pro-environmental, and their everyday behaviors. For instance, many people understood the waste disposal issues associated with plastic bags before the levy was introduced; but behavior did not change until a prompt was introduced through regulation. Secondly, consumer goods and services can play more than a functional role in people’s lives. Cars, houses, fashions, gifts, trophies, photographs and music also play vital symbolic roles. Advertising and the associated media-entertainment complex demonstrate this point by promoting lifestyles, celebrity and aspirations that can inform desires and consumption through a range of subtle and none-to-subtle strategies. The Canadian-based Media Foundation, publishers of the magazine Adbusters, are part of a counter-movement, designed to alert citizens across the world to the manifold ways in which corporate-driven consumer culture has gotten under our skin and begun to shape social relations, values, identity, and language. The work of this counter-movement underlines, perhaps above all, the need for greater attention to media literacy in the school curriculum. Thirdly, far from being able to exercise free choice about what to consume and what not to consume, people often find themselves ‘locked in’ to consumption patterns that are unsustainable. This goes some way towards explaining the ‘value-action gap’. Lock-in occurs in part through ‘perverse’ incentive structures -

10 See www.adbusters.com
economic constraints, institutional barriers, or inequalities in access that actively encourage unsustainable behaviors. Sometimes lock-in arises from habitual practices or because ‘everybody else is doing’ it.

Offer (2006) has set out a number of theses on the challenges of affluence, with policy implications that could usefully be pursued in the new sustainable development strategy.

In summary, the theses are:

Alternative measures of welfare provide a great variety of indicators, in cross-section and over time, international, intra-national, and individual. One reason why we need so many different indicators is that no single one maps very precisely on to human welfare. Many measures suggest a curvilinear (non-linear) relationship. Using extended accounting and social indicators, international comparisons suggest a historical cycle of two periods. In the first, economic growth provides high welfare payoffs, as basic deprivations are remedied and basic needs are satisfied.

In the second phase, GDP goods provide diminishing, steady, or even negative returns, depending on the measure used. In the words of Thomas Princen (2005:14), there is a need for a language consonant with “enoughness” and “too muchness,” not just words, but concepts and organizing principles. In an ecologically constrained world, people need the rhetorical and political means for turning a silencing hand to the marketers and spin meisters who tell us that the good life comes from purchasing goods, and that because goods are good more goods must be better.

If it is true that GDP goods and services have delivered and are delivering diminishing welfare returns, the question, posits Offer (2006) is ‘why?’ . He offers a couple of observations. Both ecological and psychological approaches have one notion in common, namely that affluence produces congestion. In both cases, the affluent economy produces more than it can absorb. The ecology cannot absorb the extra energy, the extra traffic, the extra pollution, without incurring costs that equal or exceed the benefits. Likewise, the abundance of psychic reward under affluence leads to satiation and

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11 Xenophon Zolotas (1981) described three phases in the relation of income and welfare – of privation, steady improvements and declining ones, respectively. (Zolotas 1981, Economic Growth)
habituation. These observations are supported by Amarach’s findings in Ireland.\textsuperscript{12}

Alternative accounting of welfare is pragmatically motivated (i.e. no single indicator maps precisely on to human welfare). Two policy implications can be drawn:

(a) In the most advanced economies, the increased supply of GDP goods and services is not the highest priority.
(b) For policy to find a coherent focus, it requires a better understanding of hedonic\textsuperscript{13} dynamics.

Where high levels of well-being are already pervasive, it is difficult to improve them much further by raising incomes overall. What is needed, according to Offer (2006) is a more systematic targeting of \textit{ill-being}, its determinants, and the economic costs of its amelioration. Dimensions of ill-being include life expectation, material deprivation, the prevalence of crime and the severity of punishment, ethnic, social, and political exclusion and repression, family structure and breakdown, mental health, suicide, morbidity, education, quality of working life, job security, access to health care, urban congestion and sprawl, and possibly the quality of interpersonal and social interaction.

In other words, it might be more useful to shift the focus of measurement from happiness to unhappiness.\textsuperscript{14} This focus was also advocated at a Comhar-sponsored stakeholder consultation in Dublin (18 April 2007), when Fr. Sean Healy called for a clearer spelling out of the complementary relationship that exists between economic, social and environmental sustainability. For too long, he suggested, Irish policy makers had sought to maximize GDP and income

\textsuperscript{12} See the Quality of Life Report, 2004: http://www.amarach.com/uploadedfiles/studies\%20and\%20reports/Quality\%20of\%20Life\%20in\%20Ireland\%20Report\%202004.pdf

\textsuperscript{13} Definition of Hedonic: Hedonic means of or relating to utility. (Literally, pleasure-related.) A hedonic econometric model is one where the independent variables are related to quality; e.g. the quality of a product that one might buy or the quality of a job one might take.

\textsuperscript{14} Ill-being is not necessarily the flipside of happiness. Prospect Theory posits that losses are more acutely experienced than gains. Unemployment and discrimination have a more powerful effect on well-being than material gains. It may also be easier to reach a consensus on what counts as welfare ‘bads’ than about welfare ‘goods’.
levels while failing to recognize that these do not lead directly to an increase in happiness, well being and fairness, which are central to the achievement of a sustainable society. The overall purpose of policy-making should be the construction of a society for the good life of all. The problem is that while there is an implicit link between economic growth and elements of well-being such as employment and levels of consumption, the relationship between GDP and other dimensions of sustainable development is problematic. The relationship between economic growth as measured by GDP and dimensions of sustainable development is not straightforward. For example GDP does not show the sustainability of a country’s growth and a country may achieve economic growth by over-exploiting its natural resources or mis-allocating investment e.g. a useful element for future-proofing economic development measurements would take account of our dependence on oil and gas, and the need to integrate an expectation of a wholesale transition to a more secure foundation for economic activity.

Fr. Healy called attention, in particular, to the indicators work undertaken by the OECD\textsuperscript{15} and the CSO, and invited Comhar to integrate this work into its recommendations to Government. Given that Ireland remains in a substantial cluster of OECD countries with a relatively high level of income inequality (Nolan 2006)\textsuperscript{16} inequality might feature in future measures of societal well being. At an OECD conference\textsuperscript{17} in April this year, Claudia Biancotti and Giovanni D’Alessio from the Bank of Italy delivered a presentation on inequality and happiness. They reviewed theoretical, field work and surveys showing that inequality impacts on happiness in a number of ways e.g. relative position concerns (e.g. benchmarking, competitive consumption) and interpretive frames (e.g. luck versus effort; poverty traps versus social mobility).

\textit{In the context of sustainable development in general, and sustainable consumption and production in particular, the CSO should engage with the}

\textsuperscript{15} In June 2007, 900 people will gather in Istanbul to attend the second OECD World Forum on “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy”. The Istanbul World Forum will provide a unique opportunity for in-depth discussions about the measurement of progress, as well as some of the most important concerns facing the world, such as climate change, health and economic globalisation.

\textsuperscript{16} Brian Nolan, ESRI, Presentation to Combat Poverty Agency Research Seminar Presentation on March 2006.

\textsuperscript{17} International Conference, ‘Is happiness measurable and what do those measures mean for policy?’, Rome, 2-3 April 2007, University of Rome “Tor Vergata”.
OECD in exploring the practical application of research into the limitations of GDP as a measure of human welfare, and offer alternative or complimentary indicators e.g. linking inequality to levels of societal.

In the context of its work on ‘Measuring Ireland’s Progress’, The CSO should prepare a programme of work - in cooperation with other SD stakeholders who take an interest in the economics of sustainable development (e.g. Comhar, Feasta, New Economics Foundation), and working closely with the OECD, to explore complementary measures of human welfare in Ireland, commencing with attempts to address the following questions:

- What can economic measures such as GDP do best and where other measures of well-being needed?
- Which other issues (e.g. ecosystems and their goods and services; social and human capital) need to be taken into account for a more complete account of human well-being?
- What measures could influence decision-making as useful and viable complements to GDP? (For example, Ecological Footprinting\(^\text{18}\), the Human Development Index, Happy Planet Index, and the Genuine Savings Approach could be examined).
- What would the implications be of a GDP measure corrected for loss of ecological or human capital.

Self-control and well being

Modern consumption theory assumes that rational consumers make choices that are well informed, far-sighted, and prudent. Consumers reveal their preferences by means of market choices, and market choices correspond to their well-being (‘welfare’). Taking account of the expected value of lifetime wealth, consumers maximize welfare by smoothing consumption over the life cycle. An ‘invisible hand’ then acts to aggregate individual choices to maximize the economic welfare of society.

Offer (2006) reminds us that a great deal is at stake in the model of ‘revealed preferences’ as the source of well-being. It is nothing less than the conceptual underpinning of liberal society. The doctrine regards the free exercise of

\(^{18}\) An ecological footprint and mass balance study has recently been undertaken for the Republic of Ireland by Robin Curry at Enviros.
market choice as not only economically efficient, but also as a vital human aspiration. It is, in part, for this reason that political leaders have been slow to pursue the ‘sustainable consumption’ agenda since the UN Conference on Environment and Development. The sustainable consumption agenda can appear to conflict with the implicit contract between politician and voter, insofar as that contract is regarded as an understanding that a primary responsibility of political representatives is to guarantee economic conditions conducive to the maintenance of consumer confidence.

A key assumption is that choice is both voluntary and informed. As the pension coverage experience in Ireland demonstrates\(^1\), the model is far from perfect. As in other affluent societies, most people might not have saved if they had not been forced to. Offer (2006) argues that choice - in reality - can be time inconsistent and myopic. Priorities for the present (consumption) can conflict with priorities for the future (saving). Time inconsistency raises the possibility that individual choice may not be sufficiently reliable as the source of personal well-being, and that freedom of choice is not a secure foundation for social well-being.\(^2\) In the context of sustainable consumption, there is a compelling argument for a mediating process, to assist consumers in the choices they may (or may not) wish to make for themselves. Choice editing of goods and services, a process that ensures that only sustainable products reach the shelves in the first place, provides an ideal solution. In the absence of choice editing, even interested consumers can be frustrated by the effort required to assess competing claims and, in Ireland, unreliable product labeling.

Tried-and-tested commitment strategies, whether psychic or social, might be described as ‘commitment technologies’, or ‘commitment devices’. Numbers, the calendar, time - are all commitment devices. The Sabbath rest day controls the compulsion to work. Commitment technologies underpin the capacity to undertake a sustained task. They arise in history, evolve, do useful work, and decline.

\(^1\) Pension coverage in some rural areas of Ireland can be as low as 45 per cent.
\(^2\) Examples of self-defeating choices: truancy; drink-driving/drug addiction; overeating; gambling; marital discord; marital infidelity; crime; suburban sprawl; politicians’ campaign promises; chronic budget deficits; under saving; and war. Solutions to time-consistency problems include: punctuality; temperance; saving and investment; insurance; education; urban parks and green belts; liveable and vibrant cities; abiding friendship, enduring love; stable families; balanced budgets; truthful politicians; secure old age; rule of law; and peace.
For Offer (2006) well-being is the consequence of a succession of inter-temporal compromises. The task is not always to defer gratification, but to devise a cycle in which self-control in the present is rewarded with the payoffs from self-denial in the past, combined with controlled concessions to current cravings. Under the sway of consumption, this social equilibrium has been mostly swept away, so that every day can now be a working day - but in terms of consumption, every day is now a feast day as well. Princen (2005) has called for social organizing (sufficiency) principles attentive to risks, especially those risks that are displaced in time and place. He believes that sufficiency principles such as restraint, respite, precaution, polluter pays, zero, and reverse onus have the virtue of partially resurrecting well-established notions like moderation and thrift, ideas that have never completely disappeared.

Faith Communities, and spiritual/therapeutic centres promoting reflection on ethics, well-being, and techniques in meditation, are repositories of knowledge and expertise where citizens can recover and foster ‘commitment technologies’ and strategies supportive of lifestyle changes and the adoption of a more critical awareness of the role of consumerism in our lives.

**Myopic and rational choice**

In economics, it is implicitly assumed that the unfettered choice of individuals adds up to maximize the welfare of society the welfare of society. This ‘invisible hand’ assumption is the core doctrine of the economics discipline, but has always been, essentially, an article of faith. As some have suggested, the ‘invisible hand’ is - most likely - invisible because it isn’t there!

For Offer (2006) the notion of a rational, consistent consumer has always been at the core of the belief in the ‘invisible hand’. Rather, the ubiquity of inconsistent preferences has placed many of the underlying assumptions about social equilibrium in doubt. The thrust of empirical research since the 1960s in a variety of approaches is that the rational consumer is a fiction, and that choice is often fallible. The choices people make do not always accord with what, from a different temporal viewpoint they would judge as being good for themselves.

Market competition promotes myopic bias. It promotes hedonism over other forms of satisfaction, since hedonic reward is easier to identify, package, and
sell. It promotes individualism, since that reduces the costly and time-consuming need to negotiate and compromise with others, and to contract with the future.

Popular culture is not bad; nor is high culture necessarily better. But the proliferation of cheap rewards makes those rewards that need an investment of patience and time that much more difficult and expensive to achieve.

**Active Citizenship and Consumerism**

A central paradox of affluence (an increased flow of novel goods and services and the ability to acquire them) is that the flow of new rewards can undermine the capacity to enjoy them. They all demand “attention” and “time”. Attention can be taken as the universal currency of well-being. (Offer 2006:2)

At any given moment, we can ‘consume’ it (time, attention), by focusing on one or more pleasant or enjoyable activities. Or we can ‘invest’ in some activity which holds out the promise of more satisfaction in the future.

This is one way of characterizing the difference between the consumer and the active citizen. The appeal to the modern consumer is - essentially - an appeal to the desire for an immediate, passive experience of gratification. Affluence and the ability to consume breeds impatience, and impatience can undermine well-being.

The appeal to active citizenship is an appeal to a restoration of the individual’s willingness to ‘invest’ time rather than consume it; to seek a reward in an ‘active’ rather than a ‘passive’ expenditure of time.

**The UK Sustainable Consumption Roundtable**

In the UK’s Sustainable Consumption Roundtable published an influential report, *I will If You Will* (2006), a number of important criteria for an effective approach to SCAP were set out. The key is to make sustainable habits and choices easier to take up, by drawing on what we know about consumer behaviour and people’s preferences for purchasing shortcuts e.g. choice editing. The report also clearly addresses recommendations at three distinctive target groups:
- people,
- business, and
- government.

A range of interventions is identified, commencing at the near end with measures that require less in terms of intervention and active change, sometimes described as ‘low hanging fruit’. Such measures might include simple technological interventions such as the purchase of a mini wind turbine. In the centre of the spectrum are more deep-seated changes to habits and routines such as restoring a sense of seasonality to what we eat, and making more conscientious choices about our modes of transport. At the far end of the spectrum lie more ambitious options and measures designed, for example, to bring about change in our air transport use. The UK Roundtable propose that the purpose of public policy on sustainable consumption should be to enable government, business and all of us to move progressively along this spectrum, tackling the right issues at the right points (2006:2).

This section of the report and its recommendations are loosely based on a number of key observations drawn from the UK Roundtable publication, I Will If You Will (May 2006).

**Government: Walking the Talk:** Government can be bolder about driving markets, as there are win-win outcomes. Many people are ready and willing (Kelly 2003) to see new policies introduced that will help them change their behaviour in the face of climate change and global poverty. The Irish Fair Trade movement and the fair trade designation of a number of towns and cities - North and South - is ample evidence. Citizens need to know that the Government is ready to set an example and make it easier for them to do the right thing.

*In Northern Ireland the civil service has been set a target for going carbon neutral. The target date is 2015. This target could be adopted as an all-island objective with the Government in the Republic of Ireland also agreeing to make all central buildings and transport carbon neutral. Targets should also be set for energy efficiency and on-site renewable energy in public settings across the public sector, including schools and hospitals. The public sector in the Republic of Ireland has already committed to a significant energy efficiency programme.*
**Starting from Here:** Four areas of our lives generate four-fifths of our overall impact on the environment: -

- how we run our homes;
- the food we eat;
- how we get around; and
- how we travel.

The UK Roundtable recommends that the way to connect with people’s aspirations in these areas is to promote symbolic and effective action that touches their everyday lives. Examples in Ireland would include:

*Providing Aer Lingus with a clear incentive to introduce carbon offset opportunities for passengers on an opt-out basis, so as to alert people to the impact of flying.*

*Making on-site energy generation a common sight in new homes and public buildings, to connect people with climate change, and rolling out smart meters (with carbon calculators) to alert people to their carbon footprints.*

*Enabling schools to serve balanced, seasonal, quality food, to get children into good and environmentally sustainable eating habits.*

*Providing serious incentives for low-carbon vehicles and introducing low-carbon ministerial cars for Ministers in the Government.*

**Don’t put the burden solely on green consumers:** In Ireland and the UK the sustainable consumption agenda has tended to become associated with value added niche products and ‘green’ consumers. There must be an increasing focus on mainstream consumers, rather than relying on a highly visible heroic minority.

Choice editing by manufacturers, retailers and regulators already has a track record in getting high-impact products off shelves and low-impact products onto them. Choice editing for sustainability is about shifting the field of choice for mainstream consumers: cutting out unnecessarily damaging products and getting real sustainable choices on the shelves. In the context of high consumer
concern, but low levels of action, the idea of integrating the most compelling issues of sustainable development through choice editing makes sense. Consumers benefit from the assurance that the issues they care about are considered, rather than facing the demand that they grapple with those complexities themselves.

*Comhar could launch a collaborative effort with business champions to identify and plot ten sustainability ‘product roadmaps’ by 2009 for rapid change in priority high-impact products.*

### Show people they are part of something bigger:

The UK Roundtable suggest that people are willing to change, but they need to see others acting around them to feel their efforts are worthwhile. Fairness matters.

A combination of incentives and local feedback is recommended to reassure people that they are part of a collective movement that is making a real difference. Measures such as rewards for households for careful use of energy and water via taxes and tariffs, and penalties for excessive consumption are proposed.

### Develop the tools and momentum to tackle more difficult issues:

Even in areas where sustainability imperatives collide with contemporary consumer aspirations, particularly when it comes to foreign travel and car culture, the Roundtable suggest that, with the right deliberative processes, government can effectively engage citizens and business in dialogue.

The key to effective engagement is the deliberative nature of the tools used by government. Just as the Government has explored conflicting stakeholder perspectives on Europe at the National Forum of Europe, it may be useful to consider a number of deliberative fora to build a consensus around issues of sustainable consumption.

The UK Sustainable Development Commission has been experimenting with an online panel of nominated stakeholders to provide inputs to reports on a number of issues, including redefining progress. This technique can be a cost-effective way of building a consensus around issues of sustainable consumption.

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21 This process could be conducted in collaboration with the UK Government to ensure consistency in the priority products identified across the island, and to provide access to a larger number of potential manufacturers and business partners for consultation.
effective means of ensuring that a wide range of expert and lay experience is reflected in policy recommendations.

*If progress on sustainable consumption is to be measured, the Department of Finance must be in a position to track links between national income and resource consumption. Work should be undertaken to complete this work by 2009, underpinned by comprehensive accounts for high-impact resource flows such as those used in the construction industry.*

*The Good Friday Agreement’s North-South and East-West institutions could be used to draw on the UK’s leadership in developing SCAP policy frameworks to enable government, business and citizens to embrace change.*

*The United Kingdom has produced exceptional research and policy documents on SCAP and, in the context of greening public procurement, has established ambitious targets for the Civil Service, including a ‘zero carbon’ target for the Northern Ireland Civil Service.*

**Key consumption choices**

1. There are four areas of life where consumers have aspirations for an improved quality of life that can coincide with sustainable consumption choices where these choices are supported by appropriate infrastructure and incentives:

   - how we run our homes;
   - the food we eat;
   - how we get around (e.g. commuting); and
   - holiday travel.

These add up to four-fifths of our impact as households on the local and global environment. People no longer respond to persuasion alone. They expect government to set an example and to make its interventions tangible and fair. This can be summed up by the three ‘E’ s: Exemplify, Enable, Encourage.
Table 2. Examples of actions to be encouraged in the four areas of activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How we run our homes</th>
<th>The food we eat</th>
<th>How we get around</th>
<th>Holiday travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a green tariff to allow households to opt for an all-renewable green energy tariff.</td>
<td>Increase the consumption of more in-season produce.</td>
<td>Raise the market share of fuel-efficient and low carbon vehicles</td>
<td>Raise the number of people opting to holiday on the island of Ireland rather than overseas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support ‘choice editing’ to promote the use of high-efficiency, energy-using household products.</td>
<td>Launch a children’s food campaign to promote healthy, informed eating and tackle obesity.</td>
<td>Commencing with employees in the public sector, increase the percentage of commuters that work from home, care share or opt for cycling, the bus or train.</td>
<td>Raise the number of people and organizations offsetting carbon emissions e.g. invite Aer Lingus to set up an offsetting scheme for all passengers on an opt-out basis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Choice Editing**

One of the features of shopping today is the immense range of options available. A typical supermarket will have some 26,000 products on offer. Shoppers are unable to assess the merits of each product individually but rely on ‘shortcuts’ such as price, branding, promotions, shelf position and packaging to aid their choice. In the context of our earlier discussion on the consumer versus citizenship, we might posit that choice editing provides for a bridging of the ‘value-action gap’, where the pro-environmental values espoused by the citizen are enabled and integrated by the citizen-as-consumer in need of direction and support in the exercise of choice.

Where environmental information and labeling is unreliable or scarce, the Government is delegating to the consumer much of the responsibility of
choosing society’s way out of unsustainability. As a result, citizens’ concerns are not always reflected in their choices as consumers.

One solution is ‘choice editing’. This is a process that ensures that important decisions about what should appear on the shelves of our stores is taken further up the supply chain on behalf of the consumer. In the words of the psychologist, Aric Sigman, “Choice is beneficial up to a point. But limitations, restrictions and boundaries can have a strangely liberating effect.”

An outstanding example of choice editing has involved the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), launched in 1993 with a forest certification and labeling scheme. The giant retailer B&Q played a significant role in championing the certification and labeling scheme by ensuring that all products in their stores conformed with the FSC’s criteria. Other examples include paint products containing Volatile Organic Compounds, ozone depleting chemicals, energy rated white goods, light bulbs, free range eggs, ‘Dolphin friendly’ tuna, fair-trade coffee, and organic products.

Research has demonstrated that green niche consumers on their own are unable to change mainstream product markets. Choice editing for quality and sustainability by regulators, retailers and manufacturers has been the critical driver. Merely providing information has failed to get more than a minority of people buying the most energy efficient dishwashers, fridges and washing machines, when it pointed to savings on running costs.

Only when labeling has been combined with action on the part of regulators, retailers and manufacturers, has a real shift taken place in the take up of goods characterized by quality and sustainability.

Early announcement of intention to legislate to set minimum standards drives a virtuous cycle of rapid innovation and further choice editing by retailers and manufacturers.

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22 Sigman, A, (2004), The Explosion of Choice: Tyranny or Freedom?
Product road mapping

Product road maps represent a policy approach for addressing high-impact products. The steps in the process include:

1. Understanding the issues and range of possible solutions;
2. Clear deadlines for achieving the desired level of change;
3. Labeling products as a basis for incentives and standard-setting;
4. Robust incentives tied to product sustainability;
5. Supportive public procurement specifications; and
6. Raising the bar through progressive regulation.

In the context of new homes, for example, reducing VAT on loft insulation will not in itself prompt people to go looking for it. However, linking property-related taxes such as stamp duty to home energy ratings could transform the market for energy-saving measures and microgeneration.

The key point here is that labeling starts working when it is the basis for real incentives and standard-setting.

Recommendations:

*The Government could consider online consumer information service to deal with information exchange in support of sustainable consumption. This service could play a number of roles:*
- Choice editing: provision of bold and credible advice on product sustainability, to help galvanize companies into more active choice editing;
- Market research: demonstrate to government and business that a significant section of people are actively interested in the issues;
- Provide feedback on outcomes, and uniting many disparate actions into a more coherent ‘army’ of consumers, thus helping people to feel that their actions are more worthwhile and part of the bigger picture; and
- By converting interest into action, provide clear and credible guidance that may help some people take action, especially among more affluent individuals who have both high levels of environmental concerns and high impacts.

4.0 Greening Public Procurement

Green public procurement (GPP) takes place when contracting authorities use environmental criteria when making choices on who to buy goods or services from e.g. energy-efficient PCs or hydrogen buses for public transport.

Green public procurement got onto the political agenda because of the growing concern about sustainable development. As public procurement spending is worth about 16% of EU GDP, greening the public procurement rules at EU and national level could help to substantially reduce unsustainable production and consumption patterns. It can also pull new environmental technologies (ETAP) into the market place.

On the basis of an interpretative communication from the Commission in July 2001, and two important cases before the Court of Justice (the "Helsinki Bus case" and the "Wienstrom case"), it came to be accepted that ecological criteria would be used for public procurements;

In March 2004, the Council and the Parliament adopted two new public procurement directives, which included provisions as regards integration of environmental considerations into public procurement.

A 2005 study on Green Public Procurement undertaken for DG environment has highlighted that there are seven countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and the UK) that are using more green criteria in their public procurements.

The study also identified several barriers to green public procurement:
- perception that green products are more expensive;
- lack of knowledge about the environment and how to develop green criteria;
- lack of management support;
- lack of practical tools and information;
- lack of training for officers dealing with these public purchases.

One of the biggest obstacles for public purchasers is the lack of clear and reliable environmental criteria.

As green public procurement could contribute to more energy-efficiency, the issue also shows up in the Commission’s Green paper on energy efficiency as one of the main policy options (public authorities could buy more energy-efficient, less polluting vehicles for their public transport.

**The Irish Experience**

The National Public Procurement Unit of the Department of Finance has responsibility for public procurement policy and issues. Information on all aspects of the process is supplied on the Unit’s website etenders.gov.ie, including guidance on green procurement.

Pender et al (2007) has noted that there have been only limited attempts to harness the potential of green procurement in Ireland despite the EU’s publication of guidelines to assist those involved in public procurement and the integration of environmental considerations.

Decisions were environmental factors have been central to procurement decisions include:

- **Drawdown contract for electricity from renewable sources**
- In 2006 the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government purchased 25 new vehicles capable of running on biofuel products, for use by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- **The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government purchases recycled paper.**
- **The Office of Public Works Sustainable Design and Universal Access Workgroup provides assistance and advice in the development of the generic output specification to be used in the Government Decentralisation Programme and other PPP projects.**
The DEHLG has an active Green Team, supportive of green procurement and the Department has retained ISO 14001 for its Custom House HQ.

While overall responsibility lies with the Finance Department, the procurement process in the public sector remains highly decentralized across and within units of government. Policy and guidelines are laid down but are not applied with any consistency, and sustainable procurement is regarded “as good in theory but difficult to translate into practice.”

Alongside the issue of decentralization, it appears that procurement can often be undertaken on an ‘ad hoc’ basis. Those involved will not always appreciate that sustainable development is remotely relevant to what can be a ‘one off’ task of purchasing equipment for an office or agency.

Reports from the field

A small number of procurement practitioners were interviewed by telephone and e-mail to establish current practice.

Asked what mechanisms are currently in place across Government Departments and agencies to ensure that environmental factors are taken into account in procurement procedures, one senior practitioner responded that “it is difficult to specify mechanisms that ‘ensure’ environmental factors are taken into account”. Although the EU Public Procurement Directives (17 and 18 of 2004) allow for environmental and social sustainability factors to be taken into account, in practice such factors as price and fitness for purpose are the main criteria used in procurement decision-making.

However, the following developments increased the scope for Green Public Procurement in Ireland:

- Section 9 Section 9 of the Planning And Development Act 2000 obliges each Planning Authority to make a development plan every six years that "shall in so far as is practicable be consistent with such national plans, policies or strategies as the Minister [for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government] determines relate to proper planning and sustainable development" Section 10.1 stipulates that "a development plan shall set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the development plan".
• Delivering Change (2002) committed the Government to, inter alia, “promote, in particular, the use of recycled and recyclable materials in public procurement policies, including ensuring that within two years, all public authorities routinely use recycled paper”.

• *Sustaining Progress* the Social Partnership Agreement 2003 - 2005, states that the objectives of policy on the environment are to promote sustainable development through ensuring the necessary balance between environmental, economic and social aspects of development and to maintain a high quality environment as a source of competitive advantage.

• *Towards 2016* (Actions to be taken): “A public expenditure profile that reflects the growth in the economy, provides for investment in a sustainable way in public services, and a public expenditure allocation and management system that optimises value for money, including implementation of public procurement reforms”.

• *Towards 2016* (Part III, Section 20): “The parties are agreed on the importance of public procurement policy as a mechanism for contributing to the maintenance of employment standards and norms, including in respect of wage levels, while also ensuring competitive tendering and value for money in public expenditure.”

• The National Public Procurement Policy Framework states that Value for Money (VfM) entails “‘whole-of-life and transaction costs associated with acquiring, using, holding, maintaining and disposing of the goods and services... VfM in procurement is the optimum combination of whole-of-life costs and/ or price, and quality (or fitness for purpose) to meet the user’s requirements.”

In addition, the central procurement website ([www.etenders.ie](http://www.etenders.ie)) run by the National Procurement Policy Unit of the Department of Finance, includes information on GPP and links to relevant sites, including the EU Buying Green Handbook.

Other influences on GPP include:

• National Climate Change Strategy
• Market Development Programme for recycled products
• Energy Efficiency Action Plan (Dept Communications, Marine & Natural Resources in partnership with Sustainable Energy Ireland)
Green Public Procurement Action Plan

Practitioners within the public sector continue to struggle with basic issues, including a lack of reliable information about energy and environmental standards associated with categories of equipment. There’s a lack of expertise in methodologies for the calculation of lifecycle costs. This is not surprising, given the absence of training in sustainable procurement.

Key obstacles identified by practitioners include:

- Of an estimated public purchasing spend of over €10 billion, Government Departments spend directly only a small fraction. The vast bulk is spent by agencies etc, making information gathering, coordination, aggregation etc difficult.
- Lack of awareness and training (e.g. in whole of life costing) so that factors other than up-front costs can be robustly included in evaluations of tenders.
- Division of responsibilities across different Departments. The National Public Procurement Policy Unit (D/Finance) is responsible for Public Purchasing Directives and legal compliance. DEHLG is perceived as being responsible for greening public procurement process across the public sector.

In addition, there is some agreement that insufficient understanding of green procurement exists in large parts of the public sector. Moreover, there is little evidence reported of an effective or consistent approach to GPP being taken across Departments.

Sustainable Procurement does not appear to figure in the training provision for procurement staff provided by private training organisations and by the Centre for Management, Organization and Development.

The greening of public procurement can act as an important trigger for activity in the private sector where procurement is also an issue. Too often, green procurement within the private sector can be limited to the purchase of recyclable consumables.
The UK Example

The UK Government recognizes that it has a crucial role in furthering sustainable development through its procurement of goods, services and buildings. With a budget of some £150bn, the public sector can transform markets so that the private sector can join forces in pursuing sustainable purchasing policies. The UK Sustainable Procurement Task Force was established in May 2005, charged with drawing up an action plan to bring about a step-change in sustainable public procurement so that the UK is among the leaders in the EU by 2009.

The action plan was launched on 12 June 2006.

The Task Force was chaired of Sir Neville Simms, who is a leading private sector exponent of sustainable development. In addition to the action plan, Task Force members joined specialist working groups. The reports from these working groups can be downloaded from the links below.

A substantial body of research was commissioned to supplement Task Force members’ own experience and provide a robust evidence base for the recommendations. The full Task Force met five times during 2005 to consider the output from the working groups and the research, and to help shape the National Action Plan.

The main recommendations of the UK National Action Plan are:

- **Lead by Example**: a lack of leadership in procurement practice has been consistently identified as a barrier to progress. Many public sector procurers lack clear direction from the top of their organizations on the priority to be given to achieving sustainable development objectives through sustainable procurement.

- **Set Clear Priorities**: the need for a single integrated procurement framework.

Unfinished business

The Forum on Public Procurement (FPP) in Ireland, is a body for procurement professionals in the North and South. The Forum has identified green procurement as a subject area for work to be undertaken by a Panel. Some work has been commenced on the drawing up of a green public procurement
The unfinished and incomplete nature of the ‘4th draft’ is, perhaps, symbolic of the approach across the public sector in the Republic of Ireland.

The documents and guides are in place, and the rhetoric is taking hold. However, institutionalisation of the green procurement agenda remains far behind the requirements for effective implementation.

The FPP’s draft charter addresses a number of weaknesses, including the need to develop training mechanisms, the use of whole life cycle analysis in purchasing criteria.

5.0 International Work on SCP

Just as the Fair Trade Movement is, ultimately, based on a preparedness by producers, retailers and consumers to adopt a global perspective, deeply informed by an ethical orientation, long-term sustainable consumption and production choices will also require a global view e.g. understanding of the global implications of climate change in other parts of the world.

The Second International Expert Meeting on the Ten-year Framework process (Costa Rica) emphasised the importance of linking the work on SCP to poverty reduction, including the attainment of the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Recommendations included dialogue between SCP experts and development cooperation agencies in order to identify funding opportunities for SCP activities.

Given the success of the Fair Trade Movement in Ireland, some consideration could be given to a more explicit linkage between Fair Trade principles and consumer responses to sustainable consumption and production opportunities.

The international perspective is also relevant in terms of building capacity for local policy actors. If benchmarking against best practice is to inform local policy making and delivery, there is no more effective approach than proactive participation in European and other international processes such as the Marrakech Taskforces.
As part of the Marrakech Process a number of Government-led Task Forces have been established with a focus on specific SCP issues. Ireland has not formally participated in these Task Forces, led by a number of European Member States. Participation could afford access for Irish policy makers to best practices in critical areas such as tourism and construction.

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Annex I: Draft Green Public Procurement Charter prepared by a subgroup of the Forum on Public Procurement Ireland

CHARTER ON GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

1 PROCUREMENT

DRAFT 4

Definition:
Green Public Procurement is the method by which Public Bodies integrate environmental criteria into all phases of their procurement process, thus encouraging the development and dissemination of environmentally friendly products, services and technologies. Green Public Procurement promotes the consideration of processes and solutions that minimise the impact on the environment throughout their whole life-cycle.

Purpose:
This Charter aims to set appropriate guidelines for considering the environment that may be followed by all those involved in the procurement process. Agree with HW, guidelines to be followed, boundaries adhered to!

Public Bodies are major purchasers of works, supplies and services. The increased emphasis on green procurement requires public bodies, to comprehensively evaluate the environmental impacts of its procurement programmes to ensure they are consistent with achieving environmentally friendly purchasing. By using their purchasing power to opt for goods and services that respect the environment they can make an important contribution towards sustainable development. Bearing in mind the scale and value of expenditure involved in the public procurement market, the Forum on Public Procurement, in consultation with representatives of the public agencies and suppliers engaged in the marketplace, recommends that Public Bodies should adopt a Green Public Procurement Policy based on this charter. This should be disseminated at every level within the body and particularly to those staff members directly or indirectly engaged in the procurement process.

Green Public Procurement policies should address the following as a
minimum:

- The environmental impact of their procurement strategy, **including usage and disposal (i.e. whole life cycle)**
- The promotion of the use of green options in their procurement procedures
- The development of a mechanism for the implementation of the Green Public Procurement Policy
- The development of a training strategy to promote the Green Public Procurement Policy
- The need to regularly review the impact of the Green Public Procurement Policy

1.3.1 SPONSORS

Government as ‘choice editor’

If more sustainable products are to be mainstreamed, they need to be a close equivalent to the norm in price, quality or availability. Where the market is not able achieve this product parity spontaneously, then government intervention is needed. The conclusion for government is that there is a broad range of regulatory options available to make more sustainable products the accepted norm.

Standards can be set to phase out the worst performing products, as in the case of EU legislation on fridge freezers......But regulation needs to be signaled clearly in advance, over timescales that correspond to business design and investment cycles. Timing is critical, as is working with forward-thinking businesses. And having the confidence at times not to be influenced by the entire sector is important. This clearly supports the logic of having a dedicated product body tasked with developing clear road maps for rapid product change.

Such action can also drive innovation, by setting performance criteria beyond the reach of today’s products. California’ zero emission vehicles mandate unleashed serious investment in hybrid and hydrogen vehicles for the first time. It signaled 13 years in advance that by 2003 zero-emission vehicles should comprise ten per cent of all new car sales (sales of hybrids can offset this obligation).
Annex III: ACCPE Recommendations (UK Advisory Committee on Consumer Products and the Environment)

41.1 SUMMARY OF THE MESSAGES IN THE REPORT AND ITS MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1.4.1 Embedding product policy in the drive for sustainable development

i. All the major threats now facing our environment are manifested, in one form or another, in the products we buy to support our basic needs and our life-style expectations. Changes in the way we produce, use and dispose of these goods could make massive reductions in the major environmental impacts.

ii. The kind of step-change improvements which are needed in environmental performance over the next 50 years will only occur if there is much better interaction between the different links in the supply chain. This may take the form of direct pressure on suppliers from their customers, or more indirect inspirational influences on the market. Different environmental issues and different product areas need different solutions, involving different sets of tools. In its first two years, ACCPE has developed a framework or ‘tool-box’ for deciding which tools work best for which issues.

iii. We also believe that step-changes will only come about if policy for goods and services becomes an integral part of the policy for sustainable development. By making the links between key sustainable development issues and the products which have the most significant impacts in these areas, ACCPE’s tool-box approach helps identify where action is required.

iv. There is a tendency to see product-related policy as ‘interesting’ but not commanding real priority. It is becoming clearer that the role of products is central to many of the environmental challenges now recognised as priorities at national and international level. But for some reason - perhaps the inertia behind governments’ long-standing policy focus on the supply side of the market - there is not yet a culture of looking at issues in the round, developing responses which try to weigh up the life-cycle and market issues.
• **Our firm view is that product policy is not a frill. It could be one of the most powerful engines for delivering major long-term improvements in sustainability.**
  
  o *In this report we suggest more ways in which product policy can be given practical shape.*
  
  o *We also recommend that it be given an explicit place in the machinery for delivering the UK and EU strategies for sustainable development.*

1.4.2 The 'tool-box' for turning strategy into action

v. Much of our work since we were appointed by Ministers two years ago has been to build a better platform of knowledge and experience about the potential tools for delivering change and their different strengths for different jobs. In our first report we highlighted the sustainability issues where product policies can make a real difference. We also identified the market measures or 'tools' capable of bringing improvements in the product sectors most associated with those issues. Making these links - between the key issues, products and tools - is fundamental to our 'tool box' approach to product policy and has continued to provide the framework for our work over the last year.

vi. Our refinement of a policy 'tool-box' has continued over the last year, as we have considered the issues of further product examples and the lessons they suggest for improving and applying particular policy tools.

vii. We believe that work to develop the practical 'tool-box' will be increasingly valuable to policy-makers at national and international level, as they look for the most effective ways of putting 'product policy' into action. This assumes of course that there is first the essential vision of what needs to be achieved and the essential commitment to address it. Hence our call for a clear over-arching strategy.

viii. The European Commission's Green Paper on integrated product policy (IPP) has helped to stimulate a wider debate over the last year. However, there is still far from being a clear high-level vision about what an IPP approach should be able to deliver and how it might be applied to policy-making in practice.

• *We consider that there is a very simple and practical vision which should inform this whole area.*
The strategic part is in making quite explicit the link between high-level sustainability objectives and the product sectors which have the most potential for improvement.

The pragmatic part is in identifying and using the particular combination of tools that will stimulate action among the relevant players in each of those product streams.

1.4.3 Areas where the 'tool-box' approach has been further tested during the year

1.4.3.1 Climate change - action through product tools

ix. A common label for the main products that cause climate change. Last year we made recommendations about developing a single label for all major items of household expenditure with climate change impacts. Our vision was for a ‘family’ of graded labels, based on the design of the EU energy label, to make the climate change effects of homes, cars and domestic equipment, transparent to everyone. We saw this as a quick-win opportunity for the Government to get carbon efficiency ‘mainstreamed’ in the market. Although our recommendations were broadly welcomed by Ministers and discussed in the Government's Climate Change Programme, little has actually happened to bring them about. In our view the Government is missing a clear opportunity by not acting with more urgency.

- In the case of homes, there should be early consultation on a scheme for headline 'A to G' ratings for new properties (under the building regulations system) and for existing properties (under the future statutory framework the Government has proposed for sellers' packs).
- In the case of cars, the UK line to date has looked timid. The Government should quickly follow the example of countries like the Netherlands in introducing comparative ratings for new vehicles, preferably using a clear 'A to G' type scale.
- In the case of other domestic plant and equipment, where the UK has a stronger record, the Government should be active in shaping progress on a new energy labelling framework directive for products.

x. We have explored the role that could be played by 'carbon offset' projects linked to consumer goods or services. We were asked by Defra to advise on this issue and, in particular, on the principles involved in promoting such projects
and the type of help that might be needed to make them work in the UK market.

- The Government should draw up formal guidance, in consultation with business and other stakeholders, to ensure that offset schemes are offered to consumers in a fair and effective way, to contribute to levels of public awareness and avoid misleading messages. A sub-group set up by the Committee has outlined some principles and definitions to help get this guidance under way.

- The area where we think that carbon offsets could most likely be presented to consumers in a fair and effective way is that of car fuel, where consumers could relate to emissions arising directly from their consumption and to the 'offsetting' action being promised by the supplier, (as opposed to offsets linked to products where the carbon emissions are produced elsewhere in the supply chain such as during the manufacturing process).

- The Government should help get the market moving in this area, by holding discussions with petrol suppliers to explore the feasibility of introducing offset schemes, based on the principles identified by the Committee's sub-group.

- The Government should promote awareness of what 'offset labels' mean, in its official information and education campaigns.

- Good practice guidance about offset schemes, and how to market them fairly, should be included in environmental campaigns aimed at business.

- If the market take-up of such schemes were to warrant it, the Government should help to establish a suitable 'quality assurance' framework, so that stakeholders can be satisfied that schemes meet certain common standards.

xi. The Government's Market Transformation Programme has demonstrated (chiefly in the field of electrical and electronic products) how an integrated approach, towards analysing the product issues and identifying the most cost-effective tools, can deliver tangible results.

- The Market Transformation Programme should be relaunched in 2002 with a higher level of resources and a more integral place in the energy efficiency 'establishment', so that the full potential of its contribution
to climate change targets can be realised. We will meanwhile aim to strengthen the Programme’s links with our own Committee.

- The aim should be to produce action plans for cost-effective measures in all the significant product sectors where there is scope for reducing carbon emissions, with as much stakeholder buy-in as possible. Relevant Government programmes should actively work with their agencies and partners to roll out the action measures identified.
- The same approach, using well-researched ‘sector reviews’, active stakeholder dialogue and openly available action plans, should be rolled out to other key environmental impacts associated with other types of consumer product. Good analysis and consultation of this kind will be essential for the success of future strategies for ‘product policy’.
- The Government should promote the lessons of this programme at EU level, as a demonstration of how ‘integrated product policy’ can be carried through into practice.
- The European Commission should be urged to develop the capacity to initiate and undertake product-specific sector dialogues, on a similar scale of intensity and resources as indicated by this UK work on energy-consuming products.

1.4.3.2 Voluntary information tools

xii. We have continued over the last year to consider the communication tools needed to ensure that useable information is passed right along the supply chain - from sellers to buyers to users. The main problem remains that of far too little information being visible. A secondary problem is that too much of what is visible is of poor information value.

xiii. We have therefore looked again at some of the drivers for getting more information into the marketplace and raising its quality and usefulness.

- The Government should consult formally about the options for a green claims panel, aiming for some form of partnership between all the main interests - manufacturers and retailers, consumer and environment bodies, marketing and advertising bodies, and trading standards
- More sectoral initiatives should be developed, on the lines of what has been agreed in the case of ‘CFC’ claims - involving either standardised wording for claims, based on the principles of the Green Claims Code,
or organised rating or labelling schemes which can be applied across the product sector.

- Early attention should be given to replacing 'lead-free' claims about paint with more informative advice for users; developing some standardised wording about the peat content of growing media; and clearer wording to explain the biodegradability properties of cleaning products.

- The regulatory framework for self-declared product information needs to be improved. As we have already recommended, the Government should strengthen national consumer protection law to create the right framework for responsible environmental information to flourish in the market. As well as cleaning up the market in 'green claims', new legislation could provide the framework for new initiatives to standardise the declaration of key environmental factors about products.

- We recognise there is unlikely to be an early opportunity for changes to national legislation, so the Government should in the meantime support the development of an approach suggested by the European Commission - i.e., to issue good practice guidelines (very similar to the UK's voluntary 'Green Claims Code') accompanied by an EU-level recommendation, so that courts of law will actually take the guidelines into account.

1.4.3.3 A new Internet-based information tool

xiv. We have remained involved in the feasibility work carried out by Defra on the setting up of an on-line information service about the impacts of products and how to reduce them, following our initial recommendations last year.

- The Government should now take this project forward to a pilot stage, with a view to making it a major plank in its communication with the public about sustainable development issues.

- The pilot stage should be targeted primarily on professional procurement officers, particularly those in public bodies at national and local level. This would offer a focused target audience for a manageable 'pilot', while also supporting efforts to boost the role of green procurement as a product policy tool.
1.4.3.4 **Resources for better product information tools**

xv. As well as the information tools now in development, others are likely to follow quite soon at the national level - such as developments in the management of ‘Energy Star’ and ‘Type III’ product declarations; a planned expansion of the EU ecolabel; and the need for off-the-shelf specifications for greener public procurement. The Government will need to decide whether this body of related work should be run in-house or by some arm’s-length organisation.

- The Government should review the organisational options and their resource implications during the coming year. This would entail looking at the future role of the Advisory Committee itself.
- ‘Information’ is a crucial element within product policy and one where the likely volume of executive work and the benefits of synergy point towards a role for a dedicated executive body.
- We consider that the role of this Advisory Committee should remain distinct from executive activity. Its added value is in forming an overview of the policy scene as a whole and identifying where the executive action on a range of ‘tools’, including information tools, is needed.

1.4.3.5 **Supply chain tools - for retail-led change**

xvi. We have identified several ways of improving the general business framework in which retailers can influence their supply chain towards more sustainable outcomes.

- The Government should take a lead in encouraging a higher profile for greening of the retail supply chain, supported by commitment at company board level. As one of the themes in their policy for promoting corporate social responsibility, Ministers should hold a high-level seminar for key retail leaders on the subject of greening the supply chain, for food and non-food products alike.
- Better business tools are needed to help managers in the retail sector reach effective solutions. We have suggested an initial model for developing the decision-making process within retail businesses.
• The Government should encourage the retail sector to take forward these and other 'green supply chain' issues through a collective forum, bringing together expertise at working level from across the industry.

1.4.3.6 Supply chain tools - the example of palm oil in consumer products

xvii. In looking at how supply chain influences could be brought to bear in the food product industry, we took the example of palm oil - an international commodity used in a wide range of food and other consumer products, and one which raises some serious sustainable development issues. There are lessons here which could read across to other everyday materials and foodstuffs.

• Initial discussions with some of the key players have identified scope for exchange of information leading to the development of formal best practice standards. This kind of approach to a complex market issue is something we would like to see taken forward with help from a collective forum of retail practitioners, able to work constructively with their supply chain.

• The Government should consider stimulating supply chain initiatives to address the sustainable development issues associated with other international commodities used in everyday products, where action begun in the UK and European market could have a real effect. Possible candidates for attention include those where there are major biodiversity and social issues, such as tea, coffee, soya and shrimp.

1.4.3.7 Applying product policy tools to the wider food supply chain - food is a product too!

xviii. The production, consumption and waste streams associated with food have very significant environmental impacts, as well as the obvious implications for the social, economic and ethical aspects of sustainable development. To a great extent these impacts arise from the way that consumers' needs for nutrition are currently met, through a supply chain of food products in which environmental values are only poorly integrated.

xix. We believe there needs to be more thorough analysis of the environmental impacts of everyday food products across their life cycle, from their production, transport, processing and distribution, through to their use and
disposal by the end-consumer. This perspective seems to have been largely missed by the recently published report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, which in our view focuses more on the economic and social issues affecting the farming industry than on the achievement of environmental improvement right along the food supply chain. By not looking at all of the major 'downstream' issues, the report does not seem to us to have given equal weight to the three pillars of sustainable development.

xx. The reorganisation of Government departments in June 2001 has brought responsibilities for environmental protection and food much closer together. A key objective for the new Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is to promote a 'sustainable food supply chain'.

- The Government should seize the opportunity created by the formation of Defra to look at the sustainability of food products alongside other everyday consumer products.
- It should apply an analysis of life-cycle impacts to identify:
  - the most problematic food products, in terms of the UK's sustainable development indicators; and
  - the most effective tools for influencing change at the relevant points of the life cycle for those products.
- The Government should examine and develop the lessons drawn from our retailer study and our work on palm oil, and should actively use these approaches in its drive to make the UK food chain more sustainable.
- It should support the new 'Race to the Top' project (for benchmarking the performance of large food retailers) and use the results to further its sustainable development objectives.
- Jointly with the Sustainable Development Commission, we will be supporting a study to analyse in depth the environmental impacts of some typical examples of everyday food products.

1.4.3.8 Public procurement tools - for leading market change

xxi. Last year the European Commission's Communication on interpretation of the public procurement rules, in relation to green purchasing, gave some encouraging signals. For the most part it offers a clear path for public bodies to pursue environmental objectives through the criteria they set for the products they buy.
xxii. However, the situation on the ground in the UK seems to have advanced little over the last year.

- For example, there is no sign that recommendations in our first report - for what, after all, are easy and 'quick-win' actions - have passed into procurement practice.
- More surprising is the apparent failure, even when a policy direction is formally decided and announced, for it to be carried through into action. The most striking example of this is the direction given by the Prime Minister that the Government would in future only buy timber from sustainable sources. There is little hard evidence of this having been implemented in practice, even though there are established criteria and verification systems which could readily be exploited for the purpose.

xxiii. Because the Government in the past has not been used to joining up policies and machinery for 'environment' and 'procurement', there are disjunctions which prevent the achievement of results on the ground. For joined-up and effective action to happen, there needs to be:

- **a high-level policy commitment**, with some inspirational leadership, to pursue sustainable development objectives by using public purchasing power to push markets forward in the desired direction;
- **a base of information and intelligence** to identify where influence can be applied to best effect, what standards to set, and when to move them forward;
- **a set of institutional arrangements** to ensure that resources are effectively applied throughout the organisation of government - in order to use the information and intelligence and deliver the high-level objectives. Moving to more effective systems for green procurement requires a formal *change management* process, professionally executed and properly resourced.

If any of these elements is missing, effective action on green public procurement is unlikely to happen. Experience in the UK shows that currently there are deficiencies in all three elements.

xxiv. We therefore very much welcome the recent announcement by Margaret Beckett that there is to be a high-level review of the way the Government
recognises sustainable development policy in its procurement activities. This is
an excellent opportunity to address the present deficiencies and to realise the
potential which the Government has to influence market change. We believe
that the new review of ‘sustainable procurement’ should aim to deliver the
following:

- **Adoption of an explicit Government policy to use its purchasing power
  in active pursuit of its sustainable development objectives, in particular
to reduce environmental impacts and promote more efficient use of
resources.**
- **A strengthening of the information and intelligence resources the
  Government needs to implement this policy. Existing programmes
should be adapted or expanded to fill the gaps.**
- **A strengthening of the institutional arrangements for coordinating
  green procurement activities across Government. The aim should be to
have structures in place to ensure that high-level direction can be given
and that it will be carried through in all Government organisations -
with adequate smart resources for the job and a clear chain of
accountability for results. This implies a major ‘change management’
process, actively steered from the centre of Government.**

1.4.4 Setting a course for new policy thinking

xxv. The challenges of sustainable development in the 21st century will only be
met if there is a radical shift in the approach towards policy making. The
thinking that has fashioned policy for the last 50 years is simply unable to
deliver the dramatic results that will be needed.

xxvi. Policy thinking in this area is edging forward, but at a disappointingly slow
pace. Nor is it noticeably feeding through into action.

- Most of the relevant policy activity both at UK and European level
remains focused on the ‘point-source’ impacts of production and end-of-
life waste. Relative to that, the effort being devoted to developing
integrated strategies, which look at impacts and solutions across the life
cycle of goods and services, is still very small indeed. Even smaller is the
effort going into concrete programmes to bring forward step-change
reductions in resource use and other priority impacts.
Where tangible product policies do exist, they are more likely to be dealing in damage limitation. For example, UK consumers' take-up of digital TV in the next few years will mean a significant increase in electricity consumption - in effect wiping out the benefit of a major energy-saving programme like the Energy Efficiency Commitment. In this case the product policy tools currently available will only be able to make the projected increase somewhat smaller.

xxvii. We believe that the Government should be radical and ambitious about developing a new policy framework. There is scope and opportunity for the UK to place itself at the leading edge of action to address consumer products and the environment.

- The Government should work up a statement of policy towards the pursuit of relevant sustainable development objectives through measures which specifically focus on the production and consumption of products.
- This statement should outline an explicit approach for pursuing the relevant objectives through the product streams which are most significant.
- It should signal the broad range of tools which will be considered to steer product markets towards step-change improvements in environmental performance.

xxviii. The spirit of what is required fits well with what the Government is aiming to achieve, in other policy streams, to deliver its goals for sustainable social and economic progress. It ties in well with its Performance and Innovation Unit's recent report on resource productivity - requiring, as it does, a vigorous modernising approach, in which resource efficiency and market frameworks are harnessed to deliver high-level environmental goals.

xxix. However, it can only come about if levels of administrative and programme support are adjusted to reflect these priorities.

- The Government should look carefully at the allocation of its own resources - both for policy development and supporting programmes - in order to start meeting the new challenges in policy making and delivery. This particularly applies to Defra, but is also relevant to DTI and other Government Departments.
Annex IV: Detailed conclusions from the Environmental Impact of Products (EIPRO): Analysis of the life-cycle environmental impact related to the final consumption of the EU-25, May 2006

Food and drink cause 20-30 per cent of the various environmental impacts of private consumption, and this increases to more than 50 per cent for eutrophication. This includes the full food production and distribution chain ‘from farm to fork’. Within this consumption area, meat and meat products are the most important, followed by dairy products.

The contribution of passenger transport to the total environmental impacts of private consumptions ranges from 15-35 per cent, depending on the category. Based on data used for the EC study, the greatest impact is from cars, despite major improvements in the environmental performance in recent years, especially on air emissions.

Products under the heading of housing include buildings, furniture, domestic appliances, and energy for purposes such as room and water heating. Together they make up 20-35 per cent of the impacts of all products for most impact categories. Energy use is the single most important factor, mainly for room and water heating, followed by structural work (new construction, maintenance, repair, and demolition). The next important products are energy-using domestic appliances e.g. refrigerators and washing machines.

All other areas of private consumption together (i.e. excluding food, drink, transport and housing) account for no more than 20-30 per cent of most environmental impacts.
Sustainable products taskforce: The International Task Force for Sustainable Products (ITFSP) aims at increasing the product performance in terms of energy, waste and other aspects of eco-design. The Task Force is coordinated in the UK and participants from 13 other countries are participating. At its first meeting the Task Force (November 2005) decided that it should concentrate initially on globally traded products, energy, and increasing collaboration between developing and developed nations. The topics addressed in the Task force will be three areas: science, policy, and mechanisms to develop standardised test procedures to measure energy performance and to introduce harmonised energy efficient labels and standards.

At the second meeting (June 2006), Task Force members developed the concept of creating Global Sustainable Products Networks (GSPNs) in key products and related subjects.

Sustainable Lifestyles Taskforce: The International Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles focuses on exploring actions that individuals can take to modify their lifestyles to fit a more sustainable pattern of consumption. Coordinated by Sweden, there are five additional governments participating: Argentina, Brazil, Czech Republic, Italy and the UK). Its main objectives are:

- Develop and support tools, policies and initiatives that enable the adoption of sustainable lifestyles; and
- Strengthening the Marrakech Process by building North-South global cooperation on demonstration projects supporting sustainable lifestyles.

The Task Force is planning to support the implementation of five demonstration projects, including:
- Sister classrooms between USA, Mexico and Costa Rica on life-cycle based sustainable consumption and global citizenship;
- Workshops to develop creative communities for sustainable lifestyles in emerging urban economies;
- Website expansion and regional workshops of the UNEP/ENESCO YouthXchange programme;
- Development of the UNEP Creative Gallery on Sustainability Communications.

**Sustainable Public Procurement Task Force:** The overall objective of this Task Force is to promote and support the implementation of sustainable public procurement (SPP), by developing tools and supporting capacity. Switzerland is coordinating the effort, with the participation of twelve other countries.

The main activities are:

- Developing a practical toolkit to give an easy start to implement the concept of SPP to the different stakeholders in the procurement process;
- Carrying out research and preparing policy papers on SPP;
- Promoting the implementation of SPP through pilot projects; and
- Facilitating the dialogue and work among different countries and stakeholders interested in SPP.

**Sustainable Tourism Task Force:** France is the primary coordinator of this Task Force with the participation of fourteen other countries. Its main activities have focused on the collection of good practices, a review of existing labels, standards and certification systems, capacity building, the promotion of corporate social and environmentally responsible tourism and partnership with the private sector.

**Sustainable Buildings and Construction Task Force:** Coordinated by Finland, the main objective of this Task Force is to develop national and local policies and legislation to secure the sustainability of construction, use and maintenance of the built environment. The first focus is energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in buildings and construction. Activities include mapping out the baseline condition for sustainable buildings and construction, initiating research projects and publication of best practices.
Identify specific activities tools, policies, measures and monitoring and assessment mechanisms, including, where appropriate, life-cycle analysis and national indicators.

- Adopt and implement policies and measures aimed at promoting SCP patterns, applying, inter alia, the polluter-pays principle.
- Develop production and consumption policies to improve products and services.
- Develop awareness-raising programmes on the importance of sustainable consumption and production patterns, particularly among youth and relevant segments in all countries, through inter alia, education, public and consumer information, advertising and other media.
- Develop and adopt consumer information tools to provide the information related to SCP.
- Increase eco-efficiency, with financial support from all sources, where mutually agreed, for capacity-building and technology transfer.

The “Marrakech Process” was launched at the first international expert meeting on the 10-year framework held in Marrakech, Morocco, 16-19 June 2003, organized by DESA’s Division for Sustainable Development and UNEP. The “Marrakech Process”, includes regular global and regional meetings, informal expert task forces and other activities to promote progress on the 10-year framework on sustainable consumption and production. UNEP and DESA’s Division for Sustainable Development, have been identified as the leading agencies in promoting and developing the 10-year Framework of Programmes at the global and regional level. The CSD will consider the 10-Year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns as one of the themes in the 2010/2011 cycle of its multiyear programme of work.