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Europe**

# **Using the world's resources: Do we know what we're doing?**

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## It's not just climate

- The threat of dangerous climate change is – finally – receiving attention from the public, politicians and companies
  - Many years after scientists first raised the alarm
- But the climate is not the only resource under threat
  - There are also oceans, forests, biodiversity, minerals – and land – to mention just a few
- Are we paying enough attention to these other resources?
  - And are we considering them properly in our climate policies?



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### **Rainforest clearance in Indonesia**

**- cleared to produce palm oil for food – or biofuel**

*How much land will Europe use around the world if we achieve a 10% biofuel target by 2020??*

*How much biodiversity will be lost?*

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## **Resource use is increasing rapidly**

- Despite efforts to increase resource efficiency in Europe, our resource use continues to increase
  - Increases in efficiency are outweighed by increases in consumption
  - Other developed economies are showing similar patterns
- Resource use is increasing rapidly in several less developed economies – notably India and China
- Future improvements in quality of life in other developing economies – something we should be aiming for – will also increase resource use
- Global population has not yet stabilised



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## **An important issue for Friends of the Earth International**

- Friends of the Earth is the world's largest grassroots environmental network
  - Uniting 77 national member groups
  - In both developed and developing economies
  - All groups have originated in their countries, then applied to join the democratically-controlled Friends of the Earth International network.
- Resource use is an important issue for the network:
  - Its social and environmental impacts; but also,
  - The massive inequality in the distribution of the use of resources
- Friends of the Earth Europe - the European branch of FOEI - has decided that it is part of our responsibility as Europeans to start to address our resource use.



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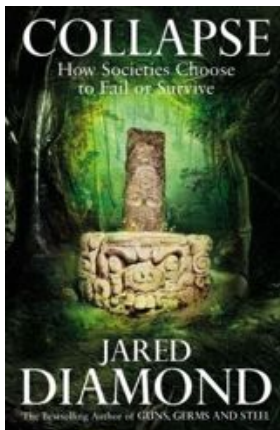
## Why is resource use important?

- It is the foundation of our economy
- Resource extraction (and disposal) leads to major environmental and social impacts
- The use of resources is currently very unequally distributed around the world
- We only have one earth – we depend on it, so we should treat it with care...



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## “How societies choose to Fail or Survive”



- **Jared Diamond's book “Collapse”**
  - Looking at the history of societies who collapsed – or survived
- **Why do societies collapse?**
  - They fail to anticipate a problem that is heading towards them
  - They fail to realise that the problem has actually arrived
  - They know there is a problem, but don't try to solve it – e.g. the '*principle consumer has no long-term stake in preserving the resource but society as a whole does*'
  - They try to solve the problem, but fail
- **How can we avoid such failures?**



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## The first step – measurement

- How can we know what we are doing if we don't even try to measure it?
- Friends of the Earth Europe has been working with Sustainable Europe Research Institute in Vienna to design an effective measurement system.
- Remembering:
  - Measuring isn't a substitute for doing something
  - Resource use is complex – establishing impacts is even more complex
    - No measurement system will be perfect
  - Dealing with global impacts is complex but necessary...



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### A container ship arrives in Felixstowe, UK

Should we just estimate the weight of these goods?

Or calculate the 'rucksack' of resources – materials, land, water, greenhouse gas emissions-that went into making them?

(Courtesy of the Port of Felixstowe)



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## What we propose

- Following months of discussion, including with other stakeholders, we have come up with four indicators, see:
  - [http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/2009/seri\\_foee\\_measuring\\_eu\\_resource\\_use\\_final.pdf](http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/2009/seri_foee_measuring_eu_resource_use_final.pdf)
- All the indicators include the 'rucksack', and are usable at product or country level:
  - Total resource use (tonnes), which can be subdivided into biogenic/non biogenic and down into individual materials
  - Water use for nations, water footprint for products
  - Land use for nations, land footprint for products
  - Greenhouse emissions - both Kyoto and the GHG rucksack of imported products for nations, carbon footprint for products
- These indicators all exist, but need to be broadened



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## How to use the indicators

- How could these indicators be used?
  - In impact assessment of policies and decisions
    - E.g. the impact of biofuels targets on land use
  - To measure progress – and set targets
  - To identify and investigate potential limits
- Who could use them?
  - Governments – and the EU
  - Companies – to assess their activities and their products
- The indicators are (of course) not perfect, e.g.
  - They don't directly measure impacts on biodiversity
    - Though they do highlight issues to be investigated
  - They don't address chemical or pollution issues
    - Some things are better dealt with by sectoral legislation



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## What next?

- Friends of the Earth Europe is aiming to get resource use measurement into the European policy process.
- We will also be pushing for Europe to adopt the 'easy wins' to improve resource efficiency, e.g. increasing reuse and recycling.
- We need to start thinking about how to make the leap to a society which is both decarbonised and very resource efficient.....