

CUTS International's Comments/Views on Consumers International's Recommendations to Rio+20 Conference

Consumers International, an apex body of international consumer movement, has made a set of recommendations to the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development which will be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. As a member of Consumers International, CUTS International reacted to CI's recommendations with its comments/views.

Sl. No.	CI Recommendation	CUTS Comment/View
A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication		
	<p><i>Meet consumers' basic needs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments should commit to facilitate technology, expertise and funds transfers to those countries that require these resources to tackle poverty and secure the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Governments should also commit to address the needs of those consumers within their own country that do not have access to basic needs. • Initiate mechanisms to reach the goal of universal access to energy services, following the principles of affordability, fairness and sustainability. 	<p><i>Government should also make efforts to ensure that promising new green technologies that can deliver products in a cleaner and safer way using less materials and energy are not ignored or side-lined by vested commercial interests.</i></p>
	<p><i>Act as role models in their own consumption choices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and national governments should adopt policies that support sustainability so that consumers can see their actions in the context of a wider movement towards sustainability. • Similarly, governments should avoid contradictory or damaging policies that negate action taken by the consumers. 	<p><i>By integrating green consumption with public procurement policies and practices, governments can act as a role model for the private sectors to imitate. Probably it is time for all governments to commit that at least 25 per cent of their procurement be green. If needed, the percentage level can be kept different for developed and developing countries.</i></p>

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	<p><i>Act as facilitators - By ensuring regulation and fiscal incentives support sustainable consumption</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support sustainable lifestyles through their own national strategies, procurement, planning and operating practices. • Ensure financial incentives support sustainable outcomes (for example, taxes and subsidies should support environmental and social goals). • Apply appropriate market interventions to ensure fair and transparent markets working for sustainable consumption and production. • Develop choice reduction policies and legislation that removes from the market the worst performing products or services according to economic, social or environmental impact. 	<p><i>Three foremost ways to promote sustainable consumption are by increasing consumer awareness, making sustainable consumption easy, and greening markets. If the relevant government policies and practices can take into consideration these three important dimensions of sustainable consumption then larger will be their overall impact.</i></p> <p><i>Also applying higher tax for products with lower environmental performance is a right move.</i></p>
	<p><i>Hold businesses to account</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments should develop rigorous and transparent standards through accountable processes of multi-sector engagement, and on the basis of scientific consensus, which offer consumers a trusted basis on which to make product and lifestyle choices. • Governments should ensure that consumers have <i>independent assurance</i> of product information so that they have confidence that product information is correct and is not misleading. • Governments should enact right-to-know legislation, and ensure that companies report on their environmental and social impacts using internationally agreed standards such as ISO 26000. 	<p><i>Government should slowly but carefully engage in technology forcing, whereby a product efficiency requirement is set beyond the current technological feasibility and announcing that the efficiency requirement will come into effect after a specified stipulated period following the announcement.</i></p>

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	<p><i>Act as facilitators - By informing consumers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments should fund research and produce information to inform consumers about how to consume more sustainably, and assist them in identifying the material changes they could make. • Run targeted information campaigns to raise consumer awareness and empower consumers in relation to the environmental and social impact of consumption patterns, particularly in the areas of food, housing and transport. Information should use tools and insights from branding, psychology, communications and social marketing to engage with consumers effectively • Adopt an ambitious Minimum Energy Efficiency Performance Standards and labelling schemes • Include education for sustainable consumption in their national curricula as well as promote consumer education more generally 	<p><i>Informing and raising awareness on how to consume more sustainably is not enough. Policy-makers will have to directly engage with consumers to change their consumption behaviour. Specialised trainings for low impact product use should be carried out by governments in partnerships with business and consumer organisations.</i></p>
	<p><i>Inclusive policy-making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer voices must be heard and listened to in relation to sustainability. At a governmental level, this means government engagement with consumers in policymaking and full recognition of consumers' rights and interests. • Consumers should be recruited as active supporters in valid and transparent whole economy approaches, driving innovation, and supporting calls for progressive and smart regulation. 	<p><i>Governments should ensure that consumers are engaged in policy-making process and they are given adequate time for active participation – not just as a policy-taker.</i></p> <p><i>In partnership with business and consumer organisations, governments should develop and implement policies that promote sustainable consumption. And there should be periodic social, economic and environmental impact assessment of such policies.</i></p>

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Institutional framework for sustainable development		
	<p data-bbox="381 289 854 422"><i>Support and endorse an ambitious, 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production</i></p> <ul data-bbox="381 428 854 1117" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="381 428 854 701">• This 10-Year FYP on SCP should be a coordinated global framework of programmes that in a systematic and integrated manner provides countries with the real opportunity of decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and increasing the wellbeing of all. <li data-bbox="381 707 854 1117">• If the Rio+20 summit is capable of delivering and ensuring the structural changes needed for a global transition to a green economy, it is clear that all countries will need to take coordinated international action; isolated initiatives will not be able to achieve the required changes. The 10YFP on SCP offers a concrete pathway for this coordinated action. 	<p data-bbox="876 289 1372 457"><i>The 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production should have specific components for regional, national and sub-national programmes of actions.</i></p> <p data-bbox="876 493 1372 697"><i>The 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production should be coherent with flanking macroeconomic policies at international, regional and national level.</i></p>

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	<p data-bbox="380 254 797 485"><i>Deliver, promote and facilitate an institutional change in the current structures of governance that will ensure a framework for a real transition to sustainability at all levels: international, regional, national and local</i></p> <ul data-bbox="380 495 849 1318" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="380 495 849 764">• Rio+20 must result in sustained, collaborative action that will change the course of unsustainable growth, generate the required bases for a transition to a green economy and improve the wellbeing of millions of poor and vulnerable communities. <li data-bbox="380 774 849 1318">• While the Rio+20 outcomes must allow for a diversity of institutional approaches and commitments, particularly at the national and local levels, it is critical that all are integrated in a systemic framework flexible enough to accommodate different types of commitments, and reciprocal enough to achieve a strong sustained level of effort. By linking actions and negotiating them as a package, nations are likely to undertake a higher level of effort than they would if acting on their own. 	<p data-bbox="875 254 1377 558"><i>Rio+20 should address critical issues of development such as poverty eradication, human well-being, economic prosperity, social equity and environmental sustainability. To be precise, Rio+20 outcomes must be people-centred and inclusive that should take into account, above all, the needs of the most vulnerable.</i></p> <p data-bbox="875 596 1377 764"><i>There should be an institutional mechanism at national level (along with sub-national components) to monitor macro-micro gaps in the implementation of Rio+20 commitments and outcomes.</i></p>