

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rationale for the report

National governments and regional policy platforms are increasingly taking action to achieve the objective of sustainable consumption and production as an “essential requirement” of sustainable development, as recognized at both the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, and Rio+20 in 2012. This report, a result of a systematic analysis of national policies and initiatives, suggests that while more policies are being put in place many governments still need to develop policies and frameworks on sustainable consumption and production. More sharing of experience and technical assistance will be required for developing the necessary policy mixes, national indicators and coordination mechanisms for effective implementation. There is also a need to draw effectively on the support offered by the 10-Year Framework of Programmes for SCP to achieve key targets in the sustainable development goals, especially Goal 12, and enhanced the contribution of shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns to the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Regional policy platforms will also require support to guide mutually supportive implementation of sustainable consumption and production policies by their member states, and generally to extend the benefits of policy research, capacity development and international cooperation to the majority of developing countries that are expressing such needs.

Despite the longstanding recognition of the need for a shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns, human society is placing increasing pressure on the planet’s life-supporting systems, undermining the natural resource base and ecosystem functions that our society depends on. The opportunities to consume goods and services also remain highly unequal, at the global level as well as within most nations and regions.

Growing affluence is closely linked with increasing consumption of natural resources and associated environmental impacts. This means that more affluent countries and regions, with higher average material standards, impact more strongly on the planet. Data shows that accelerating economic development over the last three decades has driven up resource demand, most notably in certain parts of Europe and in the Asia Pacific region. Material consumption in North America has been stable over this period, but at a higher per-capita level than any other region. In Africa material consumption has not been much changed - remaining at a very low level.

It is clear that what has been done to advance sustainable consumption and production so far has been insufficient to safeguard the natural resource base and ecosystems required for lasting and shared human prosperity. There is thus a strong and urgent need for more effective policy implementation, international cooperation and capacity building to achieve the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Purpose and Structure of the report

This report presents the main findings of a survey of national policies on sustainable consumption and production, which was conducted by the 10YFP Secretariat in 2015. It also draws on five regional assessments, based on data from the survey as well as complementary desktop research and interviews. In total, **46 countries** plus the European Union participated in the pilot survey, reporting on **287 policies and initiatives**. This data, collected in the period from April to July in 2015, provides a broad review of the “state of the art” on sustainable consumption and production policies worldwide, shortly before the implementation of Agenda 2030 was initiated.

The first chapter of the report reviews trends and patterns in resource consumption globally, regionally and for selected countries. It presents a rationale for more vigorous efforts to realize the objective of sustainable consumption and production. The second chapter introduces sustainable consumption and production as an approach to governance and policy making. It explains how governments can use this approach effectively. The third and final chapter summarises the findings of the survey and the regional assessments, ending with priorities for capacity building and next steps.

Key highlights about the progress of national policy-making

The pilot survey indicates notable progress compared to the 2012 global stocktaking of sustainable consumption and production policies, undertaken at the end of the Marrakech Process – *The Global Outlook on SCP Policies* (UNEP 2012). A large number of national governments now recognise sustainable consumption and production as an important policy objective. Frameworks for sustainable consumption and production policy-making at the national level have become more established and many countries have taken steps towards integration of this objective across a range of sectoral, economic and development policies. This increased emphasis on sustainable consumption and production can be seen in all regions, although many government initiatives remain at early stages of implementation or initial establishment of national policy frameworks.

The survey results show how the crosscutting nature of the sustainable consumption and production approach is both an opportunity and a challenge for governments. On the one hand, the relevance of the sustainable consumption and production approach to a range of sectors and issues is increasingly recognised. Governments are using this approach for promoting diverse objectives, including economic development, resilient livelihoods and employment, energy security, and innovation and competitiveness. On the other hand, governments are finding it hard to establish effective governance arrangements for this cross-cutting approach, including establishing natural coordination nodes within their administrations. Effectively integrating and pursuing the objective of sustainable consumption and production across sectoral, planning and economic ministries and other government bodies is also a challenge.

The survey also shows that a number of low- and middle-income countries are moving beyond conventional end-of-pipe approaches and seeking to adopt more systemic approaches to achieving sustainable consumption and production, increasingly also addressing the demand side. The growing challenges of providing energy, food, water, and mobility – especially in rapidly expanding cities – are making governments interested in demand management as a complementary strategy to boosting supply.

Key challenges and opportunities

- **Cross-cutting nature of sustainable consumption and production.** On the one hand, the relevance of the sustainable consumption and production approach to a range of sectors and issues is increasingly recognised. Governments are thus using SCP policies and tools for promoting diverse objectives, including economic development, resilient livelihoods and employment, energy security, and innovation and competitiveness. The global survey revealed that the majority of governments who responded to the survey address and mainstream sustainable consumption and production into the energy sector, environmental protection, public procurement, food and agriculture, economic development. There are fewer cases where this objective is made central to urban planning, tourism, and building and construction. On the other hand, governments are struggling to establish effective governance arrangements for this cross-cutting approach, including finding natural coordination nodes within their

administrations and to effectively integrate and pursue the objective of sustainable consumption and production across sectoral, planning and economic ministries and other government bodies.

- **Platform to facilitate policy dialogues.** Most countries cooperate internationally to facilitate their domestic efforts to achieve a shift to sustainable consumption and production (or green economy or similar objective), and to support others. Each world region has established at least one platform for policy dialogue and experience sharing, specifically aimed at promoting the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns. Many of these regional platforms have existed for more than a decade and now play important roles in the implementation of the 10-Year Framework. The regional processes for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, led by the UN regional commissions, offer new venues for international collaboration on sustainable consumption and production. Good coordination between these regional efforts is considered essential. Opportunities to reflect the sustainable consumption and production approach in other regional processes, such as on trade and economic cooperation and integration, should also be explored and given high priority where appropriate.
- **Governance, institutional arrangements and capacity building.** At the national level governments are facing a number of challenges, especially with regards to the following:
 - *Leadership* – Where the responsibility for sustainable consumption and production strategy making and coordination should be placed within the government;
 - *Mainstreaming and coherence* – How policies and actions of various line ministries with different and often conflicting mandates and missions can be aligned with sustainable consumption and production objectives;
 - *Policy entry-points* – What economic sectors, specific issues or problems, and actor groups can serve as effective entry-points for engaging with and transforming complex systems of consumption and production.

Reflecting the cross-cutting nature of the sustainable consumption and production approach, most countries involve several ministries responsible for relevant sectors and different stakeholder groups in SCP policy planning. This can be helpful for raising awareness and aligning priorities, but it is essential to ensure continuous and well-balanced participation. This is required for the time-limited effort for establishing a national plan and also as a key contribution to implementation and other stages of the policy cycle. Involvement of sub-national government entities seems to be limited and yet offers much potential to contribute to making the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The private sector is involved in SCP policy processes in many countries, but this participation is not consistent nor often broad. When strengthening business involvement, efforts should be made to include both large and multinational companies, which have access to key technologies, and small and medium sized enterprises, which provide livelihood opportunities for many people. Participation of the research community is still somewhat limited. Involving experts from multiple disciplines and providing funding for sustainable consumption and production research are recommended.

Weak stakeholder engagement and lack of a long-term systemic perspective were the most commonly mentioned challenges, followed by low levels of awareness, lack of appropriate legal frameworks, and inadequate technical capacities. Efforts to promote a shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns are also encountering difficulties due to

weak governance and to poor law enforcement in general. Priority areas for capacity-building include: policy design and strengthening, stakeholder participation/inter-ministerial cooperation, communications and awareness raising, knowledge transfer, learning and information sharing, and strengthening of institutional capacities. Several respondents also identified monitoring and indicators, strengthening technical capacities, standards and guidelines, and supply chain management as key requirements or challenges.

• **Operationalising sustainable consumption and production.** Implementing SCP policies can have multiple benefits. Pursuing the objectives of SCP can ensure improving well-being and quality of life of the population while reducing long-term risk of running into environmental and resource constraints. Operationalising SCP can create an opportunity for the collaboration between government and various stakeholders, which can lead to the creation of new business models, increasing competitiveness, and the generation of green and decent jobs. Incorporation of SCP objectives into various sectors can also address the coherence of national policies directed towards sustainable development. The 2015 survey shows that governments are taking different approaches to integrating sustainable consumption and production, but two main models can be found:

1. Develop a specific national action plan and/or policy framework for sustainable consumption and production. Among the participating countries, 43 percent reported that they take this approach..
2. Mainstream sustainable consumption and production into other national sectoral sustainability and development policies

Developing a specific national action plan is often a first step towards addressing sustainable consumption and production. The process of developing such a strategy creates opportunities to take stock and assess strengths and weaknesses, to raise awareness within the government and to start engaging various stakeholders. Based on such efforts, it can be easier to identify ways to integrate sustainable consumption and production objectives into high-level national strategies. While separate strategies can be beneficial in their own right, it is useful to regard them as stepping-stones to the objective of having sustainable consumption and production reflected at the core of government policymaking.

Having a national strategy in place, however, does not ensure implementation. What matters is not whether separate plans exist or if sustainable consumption and production is mentioned in other policy documents, but to what extent the SCP approach is truly reflected across national policies. This implies the commitment of resources, and other effective engagement by major line ministries and stakeholders.

The 2015 survey and regional assessments confirm that many governments take broad and systemic views of sustainable consumption and production. These include aiming at transition of the economy, new business models, and changing consumption patterns rather than initiatives in a specific sector or a narrow focus on traditional pollution control or conservation issues. Governments also recognize the potential of SCP to contribute to a range of socio-economic objectives including long-term economic benefits, quality of life, and social justice. A strategic approach to sustainable consumption and production can benefit from being underpinned by a long-term vision of enhanced well-being with footprints-based environmental impacts at sustainable levels. Realising such visions requires integration across policy domains and sectors, to avoid or reduce trade-offs and to create synergies.

• **Funding for sustainable consumption and production.** Funding for SCP initiatives was recognized as a key challenge by many governments responding to the survey. There is a need to reinforce international support as well as mobilisation of domestic resources, including

both from government budgets and private sector investments. In the survey, almost 60% reported that they had received international financial support. Clarifying the benefits of a shift to SCP, including job creation, resource and energy security, enhanced well-being and improved international competitiveness, can be helpful. The use of specific instruments, such as sustainable public procurement and fiscal policies, could be expanded. The landscape of international funding relevant to sustainable consumption and production is complex and fragmented. Capacity building for identifying and benefiting from such funding opportunities, including seed-funding and assistance for project design and proposal writing, should also be given more attention. However, to fully reflect sustainable consumption and production aspirations in policy-making, to establish coordination mechanisms, and to employ policy tools towards for change, is a long-term process that requires sustained commitment. This need for long-term commitment and engagement has to be reflected in the way funding support and technical assistance is provided.

- **Monitoring and measuring progress** towards sustainable consumption and production. A number of countries have developed indicators for monitoring progress towards sustainable consumption and production. For example, various indicators related to environment and resources, society and economy, organization and policies, and implementation processes were used in no less than 186 policies and initiatives reported in the survey. These experiences show that it is challenging to integrate basic needs, well-being, and lifestyles, and to include major aspects of natural resource use and socio-economic conditions. Establishing indicator systems also tends to take considerable time and effort. However, the potential learning outcomes of such processes, from deliberations among actors with different perspectives, are important. Working effectively with indicators is not just a matter of having a list of metrics but of seeking broad agreement on what really matters for development and sustainability. New indicator initiatives on SCP should seek alignment with the indicators currently being developed to assess progress towards targets in the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The way forward

The result of this study provides baselining information on national SCP policy-making in 2015-2016. This coincides the starting point for the implementation of Agenda 2030 as well as the end of the first quarter of the implementation of the 10YFP. The second round of reporting based on the 10YFP indicators of success will be available prior to the HLPF in 2018, at which implementation of SDG 12 on “ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns” will be under review. The information provided in this report can contribute to the monitoring of the SDG indicator 12.1.1 (establishment of SCP-NAPs or mainstreaming SCP objectives into other policies) as well as several of the 10YFP outcome indicators such as those on SCP policy instruments (indicator 3.1), monitoring and reporting (3.2), and coordination (3.6).

The report covers various key dimensions of SCP policy design such as overarching strategic frameworks, sectoral implementation, organizational coordination, stakeholder participation, funding, regional and international cooperation, monitoring, and capacity building needs. Through the analysis of the survey results and regional assessments, we recommend the following actions to countries, international organizations and donors, and other stakeholders to promote the shift to SCP patterns;

- **Enhancing regional platforms and frameworks:** having a regional strategy does not always ensure its effective implementation. To strengthen regional coordination and implementation of SCP, it is recommended to: i) update regional frameworks every few

years and ensure incorporation of critical socio-economic challenges in the region: ii) invite the key stakeholders including private sector in regional supply chains and stakeholder groups to the regional processes; iii) involve high-level political leaders including for endorsement of the plans; iv) clearly identify responsibilities and resources for implementation; v) follow-up on status of implementation and monitoring of the regional framework; and vi) ensure coherence with regional SCP follow-up processes and SCP platforms and frameworks.

- **Establishment and monitoring of national policy strategy framework for SCP in line with SDG 12.1:** the survey identified that there are two approaches in establishing overarching national strategies: i) develop a specific and dedicated national action plan for SCP; or ii) mainstream SCP as a priority into other national sustainability and development policies. Owning a national strategy itself, however, does not ensure its effective implementation and resource mobilisation for the shift to SCP. The key point is in what level SCP objectives are truly integrated in other national policies and how much resources, commitments, and engagements of ministries and stakeholders are made. The next step for government, with support from the 10YFP and other actors, is to investigate the effectiveness and implementation status of the SCP strategies at national level, and how to strengthen implementation in an integrated manner.
- **Broadening policy focus of SCP:** many governments are broadening the scope of SCP policy into systemic approaches beyond the conventional environmental issues. Specific tools such as consumer information and awareness, sustainable public procurement and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSRs) and specific sectors such as food and agriculture, buildings and construction, mobility, transportation, and urban planning, and leisure and tourism already integrating or supporting SCP policies or objectives in the case of some governments. However, SCP objectives or measures are yet to be integrated into broader domains such as taxation and fiscal policy, well-being and social security policy, research, development, and innovation policy, and information and communication technology policy.
- **Effective and dynamic policy mix:** Among 287 reported SCP policies and initiatives, only 21% are based on regulatory instruments, 12% on both regulatory and economic instruments, 7% on economic instruments, while the other 60% comprise 'softer' instruments such as voluntary and information-based tools. It is important to recognize that no single instrument can promote the range of actions and objectives required to achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns. More transformative changes towards SCP will probably require innovative policy mixes that combine and integrate different objectives and that also cut across institutional boundaries, creating shared responsibilities for implementation.
- **Establishment of coordination mechanisms:** the global survey confirmed that there are two approaches in establishing institutional and/or multi-stakeholder mechanisms that support SCP policy-making at national level: i) establishing a specific national coordination mechanisms dedicated for SCP or ii) mainstreaming SCP into national mechanisms for sustainability and development. In either case, such a coordination mechanism should convene regularly rather than on an ad-hoc basis. It is also crucial to i) setting mandates for Ministries beyond that of environment to integrate SCP principles and objectives into each sector's national policy-making, ii) locate the coordinating responsibility for SCP at a higher level in government hierarchies wherever possible; and iii) ensure participation of sub-national entities with necessary allocation of resources and tools.

- **Ensuring stakeholder participation:** many of the responding countries have established a process for stakeholder participation in SCP policy-making to various extents and using a variety of approaches. To further ensure stakeholder engagement, it is recommended to: i) ensure the reflection of the feedback provided in the stakeholder mechanisms into policy-making, not only as one-time process for the establishment of national frameworks; ii) establish a scientific expert community to support SCP particularly in lower to middle income countries; and iii) invite broader stakeholder groups to the SCP policy-making process such as small-and medium enterprises, youth, women, trade unions, and indigenous people.
- **Developing comprehensive national indicators:** not only recommended for monitoring at the programmes and initiatives level, but also including indicators and targets set within national policy frameworks for SCP or those with SCP mainstreamed. The national SCP indicators can include the ones to measure the well-being level (including beyond GDP) and satisfaction of fundamental needs, while capturing the reduction of environmental impacts and resource consumptions triggered by the lifestyles of people and the entire activities of the society. These will need to be coherent with and sometimes identical to the indicators being developed to monitor progress towards the SDGs.

