



Text A

Using less, living better

by Janez Potocnick

Our world is a hungry consumer. During the 20th century our population quadrupled, and our economic output increased 40 fold. We multiplied our fossil fuel use by 16, our fishing catches by 35 and our water use by 9. By 2050 our population will have grown to nine billion people. A child could do the maths – the bottom line is that this is clearly not sustainable. We need to look beyond tomorrow and fundamentally change the way we produce and consume. We need to stop wasting resources and live within the physical and biological limits of the planet. In a nutshell, we must be resource efficient.

This year's theme at Green Week is resource efficiency – using less, living better. The title conveys our belief that using less and reducing the environmental impact of what we use doesn't mean an end of economic growth. During the four days of the Green Week conference in Brussels we will be discussing EU resource efficiency policy from many different angles – from the availability of resources, recycling, taxation, agriculture, research, fisheries and construction.

The European Commission believes that resource efficiency must be integrated into all EU policies in order to achieve a Europe of sustainable growth by 2020. My aim as commissioner for the environment is to make sure that jobs, growth and the environment are considered together. We must promote competitiveness, prosperity and quality of life without risking future ecological crisis. We must look beyond a focus purely on jobs and growth. We must also focus on the type of growth we want to secure. We are now working on a road map towards a more resource efficient Europe. So concretely, what do we need to do?

First of all, we need to implement existing legislation. Today 50% of environmental infringements in the EU happen in the field of waste management. More needs to be done to prevent waste and reduce land fills. The solution

lies not only in legislation and enforcement, but in making markets for secondary raw materials work properly and making waste too valuable to waste. For instance, did you know that 40 mobile phones contain about one gram of gold? You would have to mine and treat on average one tonne of ore, often using toxic substances such as cyanide, to get the same amount of gold from primary extraction.

Secondly, we will need to steer the market towards resource efficiency by using market-based instruments. Prices must reflect the real economic and environmental costs. Shifting the burden of taxation from labour towards resource use or environmental impacts would push our economies in the right direction.

We cannot avoid the issue of looking at how market-based instruments can be used more effectively. Thirdly, we need to make better use of good, but underused instruments. We must develop eco-design, certification schemes, eco-labels and environmental management auditing schemes further so that they can make a difference. But above all, we need to change attitudes as well as our own policy-making. That means integrating the resource efficiency "mindset" into everything we do – from waste management to research and development, energy, transport, construction, industry, raw materials, agriculture, fisheries, biodiversity, regional development and more.

The days when we believed that growth and environmental protection are mutually exclusive are over. Today we can conclude that resource efficiency actually means business and that it already contributes towards job creation on a large-scale. Take the eco-industry, for instance.

With an annual turnover of €319bn, the eco-industry sector is already one of Europe's biggest. It is a fast-growing and dynamic sector. New technologies, such as solar and wind energy are feeding that progress and it is estimated that the sector employs 3.4 million people across Europe: more than the steel, pharmaceutical or

automotive sectors. Waste management is another good example – if countries recycled 70% of their waste, at least 500,000 jobs would be created in Europe. But resource efficiency is not only about a niche of eco-industries, however dynamic and important. It is about turning around the production and consumption patterns of the wider economy. Many more dynamic enterprises are already adapting to a

future where efficient and sustainable use of resources will give a competitive edge. Only if we work together – across policies, across institutions, across borders, involving business and citizens - can we make the shift towards a resource-efficient, sustainable growing European economy. I hope Green Week will produce many concrete suggestions on how to bring that about.

GLOSSARY

WASTE MANAGEMENT IS THE INDUSTRY WHICH REVOLVES AROUND THE COLLECTION, STORAGE, AND DISPOSAL OF WASTE, RANGING FROM ORDINARY HOUSEHOLD WASTE TO THE WASTE GENERATED AT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS. DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IS CRITICAL FOR NATIONS ALL OVER THE WORLD, AS MANY FORMS OF WASTE CAN DEVELOP INTO A MAJOR PROBLEM WHEN THEY ARE NOT HANDLED PROPERLY. NUMEROUS FIRMS PROVIDE WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES OF A VARIETY OF TYPES, AND SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS ALSO REGULATE THE WASTE MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY FOR SAFETY AND EFFICACY.

1 Read the first part of the article (paragraphs 1, 2 and 3) and answer these questions.

1. Who wrote this article? What is his position in the EU?
2. What will the world population be by 2050?
3. Is the way we produce and consume sustainable? Justify your reply.
4. What do need we to do?
5. What is resource efficiency? Does it mean an end to economic growth?
6. What does the European Commission believe?
7. What is the commissioner's aim?

2 Read paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 and find out what concretely we need to do.

3 Read the last paragraph and answer these questions.

1. What is said about the eco-industry? What examples are given?
2. What else does resource efficiency also imply?
3. How can we make the shift towards a resource-efficient sustainably growing European economy?

4 Class discussion.

- What can we, as citizens and consumers, do to reduce our daily impact on the environment?
- How important are government's and local authorities' policies concerning waste management?
- What is the situation in your area as regards waste management and recycling?
- What do you personally do to respect and save the environment?

Text B

Global Water Sales

Trade Rules Control International Access to Clean Drinking Water

Increasingly, private companies are taking over water systems and can now use international trade rules to challenge local government authorities on water exports.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) consider water a trade commodity.

Private company ownership of international water resources can have alarming consequences. For example, actions by local governments to limit or block the sales of global water operations are considered as unfair trade barriers.

When Mexican authorities try to restrict production from Pepsi's local water bottling operations, WTO and NAFTA trade tribunals have the power to impose significant fines on Mexico's federal government. While Pepsi's international sales boom, impoverished Mexicans suffer from scarcity of clean drinking water.

Multinationals Profit from Global Water Trade

Some say that the global importance of water in this century will mirror worldwide demand for oil in the 20th century. According to the New Hampshire Social Justice Monthly, a gallon of water costs more than a gallon of gasoline in many areas of America. Not surprisingly, large multinationals including Nestle Perrier water, Coca Cola (Dasani) and Pepsi (Aquafina) dominate the US\$10 billion a year bottled water industry.

Over the last decade, a major trend has been private company takeovers of public water service companies. This includes water supplies, utilities, waste water treatment, sewer and pipeline construction, purification, testing and well drilling.

Financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund are pressuring

poorer countries to sell their water companies to private foreign interests. Water rates are then increased so that locals can no longer afford their own water.

European Union Water Companies

Two huge French multinational giants Veolia Environment and SUEZ are leading the charge to take over global water services. Veolia is the world's largest water and waste water service provider while SUEZ is the second largest. Together, Veolia and SUEZ have controlling interests in water companies in 120 countries on 3 continents and distribute water to 100 million people worldwide.

The European Union, where the world's biggest water companies including Veolia and SUEZ are located, continues to pressure the WTO to govern water-related industries under the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services. Under GATS, a secret panel of trade experts will decide whether local water regulations are fair.

In assessing fairness, GATS does not consider human rights or local living conditions. Nor does the WTO contemplate the fact that more than 1 billion people, or 16% of the world's population, lack access to safe water supplies. Most notably afflicted are the poor in South America.

The WTO must protect future access to safe, clean and affordable water in all countries, even if it means standing up to huge multinational corporations.

Adapted from an article by Daniel Workman
<http://www.suite101.com/content/global-water-sales-a18827>

GLOSSARY

COMMODITY

SOMETHING USEFUL THAT CAN BE TURNED TO COMMERCIAL OR OTHER ADVANTAGE.

1 Read the article and answer these questions.

1. How many people in the world lack access to safe water supplies? Who and where in particular?
2. What worrying phenomenon is going on with regard to water resources?
3. How do the WTO and NAFTA consider water?
4. Can private company ownership of global water resources have alarming consequences? Justify your reply.
5. How important will water be in our century?
6. How much does water cost in many areas of America?
7. What companies dominate the bottled water industry?
8. What major trend has been going on over the last decade?
9. How does it happen that local people can no longer afford their own water?
10. What multinational corporations are the world's leaders in taking over global water services. How powerful are they?
11. Where are the world's biggest water companies located?
12. What does the European Union want the WTO to do?
13. What will be done under GATS?
14. Does the author of the article criticize GATS and the WTO? Justify your reply.
15. According to the author of this article, what must the WTO do?

2 Class discussion.

- Do you think that water must be considered a trade commodity or a human right?
- Do you think it is fair to privatise water?

3 Write a summary of the article.