



## September 25 is Earth Overshoot Day: The day our demand surpasses nature's budget

(OAKLAND, CA, USA) – We all know nature doesn't do bailouts. Yet, on Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, humanity will have demanded all the ecological services – from filtering CO<sub>2</sub> to producing the raw materials for food – that nature can produce this year, according to data from Global Footprint Network, a research organization that measures how much nature we have, how much we use, and who uses what. From now until the end of the year, we will meet our ecological demand by depleting resource stocks and accumulating greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Since the mid 1980s, humanity has been demanding ecological services faster than the planet can regenerate them, a condition known as *ecological overshoot*. We now use in less than 10 months the amount of resources it takes 12 months for nature to generate, according to Global Footprint Network data.

"It's a simple case of income versus expenditures," said Global Footprint Network President Mathis Wackernagel. "For years, our demand on nature has exceeded, by an increasingly greater margin, the budget of what nature can produce. The urgent threats we are seeing now – most notably climate change, but also biodiversity loss, shrinking forests, declining fisheries, soil erosion and freshwater stress – are all clear signs: Nature is running out of credit to extend."

### Addressing Carbon Key to Balancing the Budget

Earth Overshoot Day comes just 80 days before world leaders meet at Copenhagen to tackle the most prominent result of our ecological overspending. Our carbon Footprint (as calculated by Global Footprint Network, the amount of land and sea it would take to absorb all the CO<sub>2</sub> we emit) has increased 1000% since 1961. Carbon dioxide emissions now account for over half of human demand on nature. We are now emitting much more carbon dioxide than the natural ecosystems of the planet can absorb; thus it is building up in the atmosphere and contributing to climate change.

Because of the global economic slowdown, we will reach Earth Overshoot Day one day later than last year, according to Global Footprint Network projections. By comparison, in the past, Earth Overshoot Day has steadily moved four to six days closer to January 1<sup>st</sup> each year.

"The fact is that in spite of a very painful world economic situation, we are still way over-budget in our use of nature," said Wackernagel. "The challenge is to find a way to reduce overshoot in boom times as well as lean years. How can we maintain healthy economies and provide for human well-being in a way which doesn't depend on liquidating resources and accumulating CO<sub>2</sub>? This will be the critical question of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

### How Earth Overshoot Day is calculated

Every year, Global Footprint Network calculates humanity's Ecological Footprint – the amount of productive land and sea area required to produce the resources we consume and absorb our waste, including CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – and compares that with biocapacity, the ability of ecosystems to generate resources. Earth Overshoot Day, a concept devised by U.K.-based new economics foundation, is calculated from 2005 data (the most recent year for which data are available) and projections based on historical rates of growth in population and consumption, as well as the historical link between world GDP and resource demand to account for the impact of the worldwide economic slowdown.

### Taking Action

This Earth Overshoot Day, Global Footprint Network will be participating in [Climate Week NYC](#) to call on leaders for action at Copenhagen. Both collective agreements and individual actions by countries, cities and organizations to improve resource efficiency and curb CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will be critical to balancing our nature budget. Minimizing reliance on fossil fuels in favour of cleaner and less resource-intensive forms of energy is one important step. Another is encouraging resource-efficient infrastructure. The roads, power plants, housing, water systems, and urban expansions we invest in today may last 50 or even 100 years. Poor choices can lock us into this ecologically (and economically) risky resource consumption for decades to come.

Global Footprint Network and its international partner network is focused on solving the problem of overshoot, working with businesses and government leaders around the world to make ecological limits a central part of decision-making everywhere.

**Media:** For a media kit and supporting graphics, visit [www.footprintnetwork.org/earthovershootday/media](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/earthovershootday/media)

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