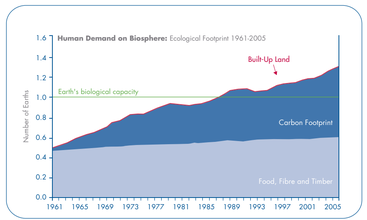
1 THE GLOBAL CONTEXT: THE PLAYING FIELD IS GETTING SMALLER

Humanity now demands 30 percent more ecological services than Earth can provide. This 30 percent ecological overshoot means that humanity is using resources faster than the Earth can regenerate and emitting more wastes than it can absorb. Moderate United Nations scenarios suggest that if current trends continue, by 2050 humanity would demand over twice as much as the Earth can renew. Yet the Earth cannot cope with this increasing resource demand for long, and every day the room to maneuver is shrinking. Therefore, resource decisions will become more significant. For every nation, the future rests on the decisions its leaders make today. Is your country positioning itself to gain competitiveness in this new global reality?



The Ecological Footprint compares the biologically productive land and water area a human population requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb its waste. The graph shows humanity's soaring Footprint: In 1961, we consumed 50 percent of the Earth's available capacity. In 2005, we used 30 percent more than the Earth's available capacity. Yet a number of countries exceed this global average by as much as 500 percent. For details consult The Ecological Footprint Atlas 2008 at www.footprint-network.org/atlas.

2 THE RULES OF THE GAME ARE CHANGING

In the past, the name of the game in our global economy has been quick profits – often at the planet's expense. But in today's world, where humanity is already exceeding planetary limits, ecological assets are becoming ever more critical and strategic. They are most valuable when they are managed well, and therefore able to serve your economy for years to come.

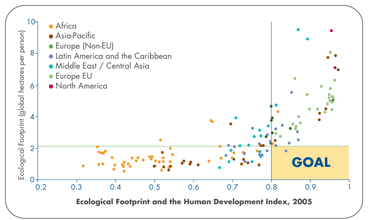
OLD RULES OF THE GAME:
MAXIMIZE ECONOMIC GROWTH (AND WITH IT RESOURCE THROUGHPUT), REGARDLESS OF EFFECTS ON ECOLOGICAL HEALTH AND HUMAN WELL-BEING.

NEW RULES OF THE GAME:
PROTECT YOUR ASSETS. YOUR ECOLOGICAL ASSETS ARE AT THE CORE OF YOUR LONG-TERM WEALTH. YOUR PER-CAPITA WEALTH ENABLES WELL-BEING.

The effects of ecological overshoot are already visible: Jeffrey Sachs, renowned development economist from Columbia University, points to increased water shortages, desertification, land erosion, stalled progress on crop productivity, declining groundwater tables, overgrazing, tropical deforestation, massive extinction of species, overfishing, and climate change. In this changing world, survival and economic success will depend on recognizing these realities and using the right tools to drive your competitiveness.

3 THE NEW GOAL: THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

Long-lasting well-being depends on producing rewarding lives for all within the means of the Earth. This objective will be met when, at least on average, all countries reach the bottom right-hand box in the diagram below. But as global population grows and more countries surpass their own ecological limits, the strain on global resources increases, and the prospect of sustainable development shrinks. What is the alternative to sustainable development? Ecological scarcity and resource wars; increased political and economic instability; and human suffering – all of which we are already seeing in places with severe food and water scarcity.

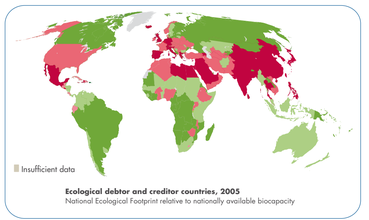


Threshold for high human development, according to UNDP
Global average available biocapacity per person (with no space set aside for wild species)

Can we move toward sustainable development? Sustainable development occurs when all humans can have fulfilling lives without degrading our planet. In the diagram, the sustainable development box is defined by the Ecological Footprint and the Human Development Index (HDI), an indicator of socioeconomic development. The United Nations considers an HDI higher than 0.8 to be "high human development". Given current global population and available land area, Ecological Footprints above 2.1 global hectares per person are not replicable. Despite growing commitments to sustainable development, most countries do not meet both minimum requirements.

4 WHO HOLDS WHICH CARDS?

In the new era – of living within the means of one planet – GDP becomes a less valuable indicator of progress and the distinction between developing and developed countries is vanishing. More significant is whether a country is an ecological debtor or an ecological creditor. Ecological debtors, those nations that overall use more resources than are available within their borders, will face more risks and will have to pay a higher price for their sustenance. Ecological creditors, those countries with biological capacity exceeding their own consumption, will have the stronger hand to play.



Ecological debtor and creditor countries, 2005
National Ecological Footprint relative to nationally available biocapacity

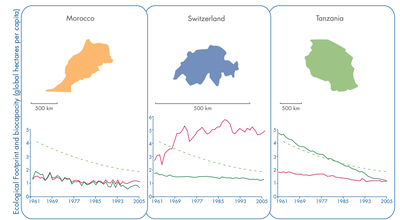
Ecological debtors:
Footprint more than 50% larger than biocapacity
Footprint 0–50% larger than biocapacity

Ecological creditors:
Biocapacity more than 50% larger than Footprint
Biocapacity 0–50% larger than footprint

Creditor nations can use their natural assets for biodiversity protection, for increased consumption by their own residents, or for export. Countries with a growing ecological deficit suffer from an increasing need for imports and a decreasing base of domestic ecological assets. Managing and strengthening ecological assets to benefit a nation's citizens, with increasing pressures for export from the global economy, is a challenge. It requires foresight, careful leadership, and robust resource accounting and planning tools.

5 IS MY COUNTRY AN ECOLOGICAL DEBTOR OR CREDITOR? WHAT SHOULD BE MY STRATEGY?

Each country has its own ecological risk profile and a unique path toward sustainable development. Three factors can help any country manage its risks and seize new opportunities: 1) Use sustainable production practices that generate increased wealth without increased resource use. Resource-efficient infrastructure and land-use planning is key; 2) Reduce and reverse population growth by giving women in your country full access to education and family planning support; 3) Maintain and increase biological capacity (the ability of an ecosystem to provide resources and absorb waste) through careful management, improved irrigation, re-forestation, topsoil maintenance, and conservation.



Ecological Footprint — Biocapacity — World's biocapacity

These graphs show how resource trends are playing out in three countries. The world's average biological capacity per person is shown as a common reference. If the country's Ecological Footprint is higher than biological capacity, the country is an ecological debtor.

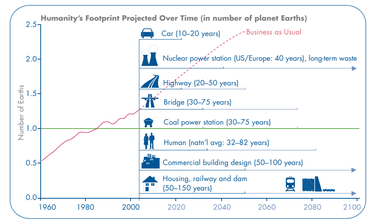
Morocco: The Moroccan Footprint per capita has been relatively constant. The biological capacity per person is far below world average and shrinking. Drought conditions make the biological capacity fluctuate.

Switzerland: With increasing energy efficiency, the Swiss per-person Footprint has flattened, though at a high level. Switzerland's Footprint is far higher than Switzerland's biological capacity. The country is increasingly dependent on other countries' ecological assets.

Tanzania: The Ecological Footprint per person is decreasing. Fast population growth pushed the biological capacity per capita below the world average.

6 PLAYING YOUR BEST CARDS INVEST IN OPPORTUNITIES, AVOID TRAPS, MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS FOR YOUR FUTURE

Today's policy, investment, and infrastructure decisions will determine our resource use for decades to come. For example: Is our future energy demand met by coal or wind? Is our mobility dependent on cars or public transportation? Will there be further population growth or will the numbers stabilize? Ecological Footprint accounting informs strategic decision-making, and for every large-scale decision you can influence, you have a choice: Support building resource traps, or invest in opportunities that safeguard your future.



Humanity's Ecological Footprint — Earth's biological capacity

Are you investing in resource traps or opportunities? Is our new infrastructure leaving us a positive legacy that allows us to operate effectively in a resource-constrained world or is it a trap that undermines a workable future? Moderate United Nations scenarios imply that if current trends continue, before 2050 humanity's Footprint (red line) would be twice what the Earth can sustain (green line). But such a path of growing ecological debt would trigger ecosystem collapses around the world. With the long lives of assets, it takes decades to get an economy and city infrastructure retooled and ready for severe resource constraints. Hence waiting is not an option. In fact, it is the pioneers who, using the right information, good governance, and human ingenuity, will win in this new resource reality.

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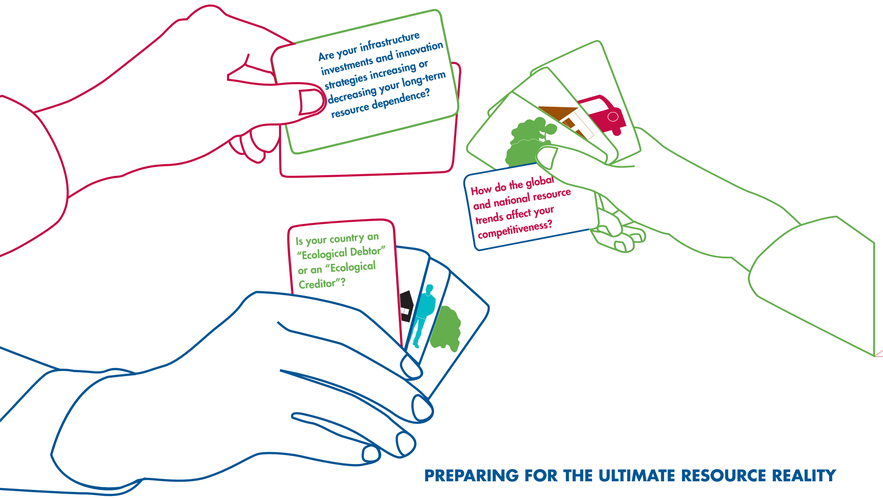
THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT – A TOOL FOR ADVANCING A NATION'S COMPETITIVENESS IN A NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY



PREPARING FOR THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE REALITY

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INFORMED DECISIONS = GOOD POLICY

The Earth provides all we need to live and thrive. Yet, as humanity pushes up against the Earth's limits, managing our ecological assets becomes essential for economic success, effective governance, sustainable development, and human survival. Just as strong businesses keep detailed financial accounts to manage and protect their assets, we need robust ecological accounts to manage and protect our ecological assets – and therefore our well-being. It's simple: To make good policy, you must first have all the relevant information. This is what the Ecological Footprint offers.

WHAT IS AN ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT?

Ecological Footprint accounts track the biologically productive land and water area a human population requires to produce what it consumes and absorb its waste under prevailing technology. Plainly stated, it measures how much nature we have, how much we use, and who uses what. This tool empowers decision-makers to navigate through tough policy choices, manage competing objectives and position themselves best for the future. You can apply it at the global, national, regional, individual or product level.

THESE COUNTRIES ARE ALREADY ENGAGED IN FOOTPRINT RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS:

➜ Switzerland (2005) ➜ Japan (2006)
➜ United Arab Emirates (2007) ➜ Belgium (2007)
➜ Ecuador (2008) ➜ France (2008) ➜ Qatar (2009?)
See www.footprintnetwork.org/reviews

For further information, please visit www.footprintnetwork.org ➜ For more on Footprint applications specifically, see www.footprintnetwork.org/nations and www.footprintnetwork.org/africa.
Global Footprint Network is a think tank in Oakland (California), Brussels, and Zurich devoted to creating a world where everyone can live well, within the means of one planet.

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Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

United Arab Emirates

مبادرة أبوظبي العالمية للبيانات البيئية
Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative

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ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT ACCOUNTING:

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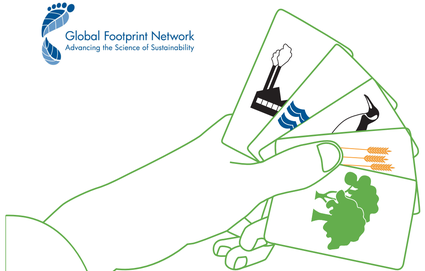

DRIVING COMPETITIVENESS IN A NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY

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