

THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT INITIATIVE

Tackling today's challenges for a better future



Global Footprint Network®
Advancing the Science of Sustainability

environmental
studies



Join us in aligning public decision-making with resource security and climate stability

PARALYSIS

Humanity is paralyzed as it faces the obvious: the human enterprise has become so large that it has started to overwhelm the planet's life support systems. Symptoms include erratic climate change, biodiversity loss, and freshwater scarcity. While overuse and erosion of our natural capital is possible in the short-term, it fundamentally puts at risk not just economic performance, but the ability for all people to thrive.

This challenge now has global recognition through international accords like the Paris Climate Agreement, requiring a dramatic and rapid reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that advance well-being for all on our one planet.

Countries, cities, and companies are still poorly equipped to rise to this challenge. Many deny the urgency of the situation. But ignoring this reality is eroding their ability to operate, while simultaneously jeopardizing all others. Governments and companies still lack the tools and understanding to react to these challenges and to make the necessary decisions to secure their own long-term success.

THE WAY OUT: THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT INITIATIVE

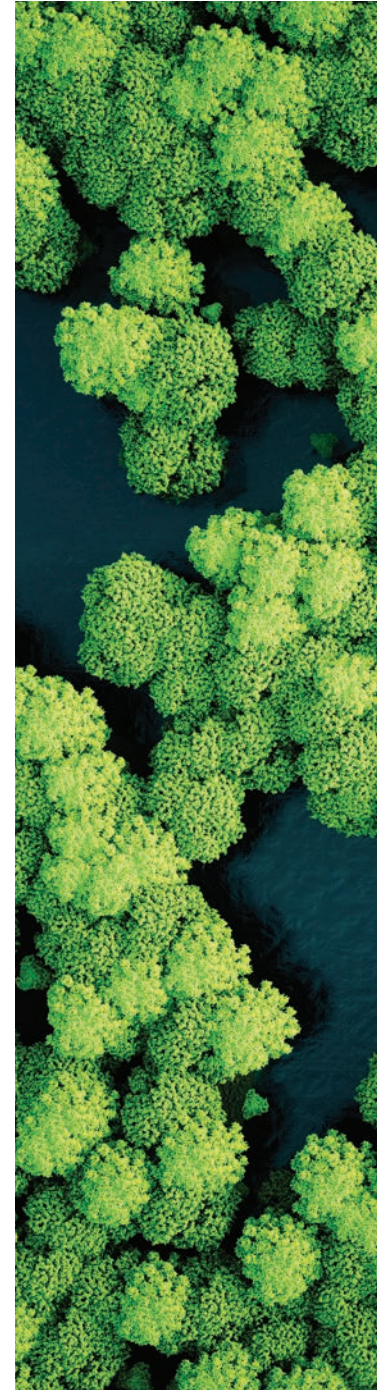
Flying blind is dangerous for planes. It is also dangerous for economies, whether companies or entire nations. As pilots need reliable cockpit dials, economic decision-makers require robust and relevant accounts. Financial accounts not only help avoid bankruptcy; they also allow managers to maneuver. Having stretched resource use beyond their limits, economies also need robust environmental accounts, if they are to avoid ecological bankruptcy.

The new Ecological Footprint Initiative, developed by York University and Global Footprint Network is providing just that. Motivated by a vision of a world in which all can thrive within the limits of our one planet, the purpose of this initiative to support this transformation.

Together we are building an academic network around the world's premier ecological accounting database: The National Footprint Accounts. The research and data hub at York University will host this effort and coordinate the international, academic network.

Our ambition is nothing less than having public and private decision-making recognize our planet's resource limitations. To achieve impact, the initiative combines academic rigor and research with a purpose-driven campaign and communication prowess of the not-for-profit world.

Our focus is to convince governments and businesses around the world that economic policies and investments informed by emerging resource and climate realities are more likely to succeed. Providing the accounts through an independent, politically-neutral, and scientifically credible institution will make them undeniable and will help decision-makers to navigate the challenges they face.



MAKING IT HAPPEN - WITH YOU!

With the experience and credibility of the Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES) at York University and Global Footprint Network, this initiative will attract participation from institutions from all continents. The enabled international collaboration will foster a universal perspective, and strengthen the resonance across many cultures and economic conditions.

The Ecological Footprint builds on a solid history. Developed by Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees in the early 1990s, it continues to be the only metric that comprehensively compares human demand on nature against nature's renewal. Since 2003, Global Footprint Network has been maintaining and publishing these accounts, covering over 200 countries from 1961 to today. The latest accounts tell us that humanity exceeds the planet's capacity by over 70 percent.

The accounts have been incredibly successful: they are quoted in nearly every report or article on sustainability. The term "footprint" is now synonymous with human impact. Over 10 national governments have applied the metric and the annual campaign "Earth Overshoot Day" reaches over 1.5 billion annual media impressions.

To achieve large-scale change, we will take this tool to a new level. The initiative amplifies its rigor, reach, and acceptance through an international research collaboration, effective governance through an International Board, scientific robustness through an independent scientific review committee, and engagement through an active and well-connected outreach team. It will make the tool a true north star for sustainability.

WHAT THIS INITIATIVE WILL PRODUCE



1. National Footprint Accounts that are derived from solid data sources and assembled with academic rigour, to ensure they are robust, objective, independent, and influential.



2. An international collaboration of researchers who drive the accounts' improvements, increase their influence, and strengthen their reputation and applicability so that the accounts will have greater sway among key decision-makers.



3. A consortium of governments who contribute to and draw upon the accounts and adopt them as a key tool in their own decision-making.



4. A growing pool of researchers skilled in Footprint accounting who can apply their skills and knowledge to advance a world where all can thrive within the means of our planet.



The Initiative will focus on three goals:



To be the "go-to" centre for advanced research in environmental systems, resource accounting, metrics, modelling, and indicators; being a beacon of scientific information for schools, communities, cities, and countries.



To improve policy-making and implementation in the private and public sector of countries across the world.



To build a cadre of sustainability researchers by providing experiential education in the field of environmental systems and metrics.

Canada is an ideal host location for the Initiative. Toronto is home to major businesses and close to relevant government and international agencies in Ottawa, Montreal, New York and Washington. Canada has a strong brand as a forward-looking society with a global outlook.



ABOUT GLOBAL FOOTPRINT NETWORK

Global Footprint Network is an award-winning, international non-profit organization, co-founded by Dr. Mathis Wackernagel and Susan Burns in 2003. The organization produces and promotes Ecological Footprint accounting, including the National Footprint Accounts, which track the ecological performance of over 200 countries.

Global Footprint Network has worked with national and sub-national governments as well as corporations. It also runs international campaigns that highlight the benefits of living within the means of our planet.

Awards include the 2015 IAIA Global Environment Award, the 2012 Blue Planet Prize, the 2011 Zayed International Prize for the Environment, and the 2007 Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship.



ABOUT YORK UNIVERSITY

York University, Canada's third largest university is renowned for its innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning. Founded in 1959, this vibrant, diverse university boasts more than 50,000 undergraduate and graduate students, 7,000 faculty and staff and more than 300,000 alumni worldwide. Building on our belief that learning happens outside the classroom as well as within, York has pioneered programs and resources that connect the classroom to the workplace and to the broader community and promotes research that has real-world impact.

A true pioneer in the teaching of environmental studies, York University established North America's first Faculty of Environmental Studies in 1968. To date, we offer the largest graduate program in Environmental Studies in Canada. We are a nationally leading interdisciplinary program, distinguished by an ability to study environmental issues from an unparalleled breadth of perspectives integrating the natural and social sciences, as well as the humanities and planning.

FES is one of very few places in North America that offer graduate and undergraduate courses in ecological economics, as well as research and outreach. Our work on ecological economics by our outstanding and award-winning faculty members is ground-breaking and widely cited.

To participate as a funder or to join this academic network, contact:

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