Chapter 4
Sustainable Consumption Trends in the World in the Context of Green Economy and Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, sustainable growth and development are main economic policies for the countries all over the world. Decreasing natural resources, deepening environmental pollution and global warming problems are red alert of our planet. Every single country on the earth has the responsibility to protect our planet. So, increasing environmental awareness caused new tendencies in consumer behaviors. Countries aim not to pollute or harm the environment while improving their economic performance and life quality by green economy. Besides, by sustainable consumption, it is aimed to support personal sustainable development. In this context, sustainable consumption trends and the reflections of green economy applications in the world will be discussed in this chapter. In addition, developed countries and developing countries will be compared with each other through results of global ecological footprint.

INTRODUCTION

Harmful and careless human exploitation of the natural environment has caused massive pollution. Since the unplanned expenditure of natural resources has occurred rapidly, the problem of sustainability problem has developed into one of the world's most crucial issues (Barr & Gilg, 2006). When the nations

of the world tried to find alternative ways to protect economic growth and sustainability, they realized a crucial fact: improvement and development must be sustainable.

Development, however, had widely-varied meaning for each nation in each time period. Though the definition varied, development always included not only economic features, but also non-economic features, such as the quality of life. In fact, a growth that is harmful for the environment and the ecological system cannot be sustainable (Meadows et al., 1972).

The history of sustainable development is relatively new, stemming from the early 1970s. Sustainable development and the creation of a clean and unspoiled natural environment took on importance only after the foundation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This event marked the first time for the world's nations to mention *"ecological balance"* and *"the future of humanity"* at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which was held during 5-6 June, 1972 in Stockholm (Johnson, 2012).

In 1980, The World Conservation Strategy (IUCN) introduced the idea of sustainable development and emphasized the challenges of integrating development and the environment, as well as the responsibility of conserving natural resources for the coming generations. However, The World Conservation Strategy was not successful enough in its environmental strategies. More specifically, the strategy could not explain conservation strategies in a suitable matter to influence economic policies or how misguided economic policies might harm the environment.

Following this effort, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, also known as *The Brundtland Commission*), created by the UN as a result of a General Assembly resolution in 1985, published *Our Common Future* in 1987. The report mentioned sustainable development as a tool of economic policy. The report emphasized sustainable development: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987). The Brundtland Report defined the relationship among population growth policies, poverty eradication, technology, and distribution of goods harvested from natural to explain sustainable development. The report also emphasized the growing role of developing countries in improving and restructuring the environment. The report suggested that these countries improve their development policies, taking into consideration long-term growth with sustainable natural resources. More specifically, the report's intent was to achieve economic development for the global economy: satisfying the needs of the present generation without harming the next generation's resources.' (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015).

Toward the end of the 1980s, environmental awareness increased, thanks to these reports and the meetings of those commissions who created the reports. In 1988, according to Pearce et al. (2012), the environment was the second-most important issue to the world's political leaders at 93%, right behind unemployment, which ranked highest, at 98%. After these issues, price stability followed with 90%, arms limitation at 85%, agricultural surplus at 70%, a single European market at 63%, European political unification at 57%, and EC expansion to include Turkey at 27% (Pearce, Markandya & Barbier, 2012).

In the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, sustainable development took on importance both for global and for national policies. In two decades, many developments had taken place to tackle this issue, but most countries had not implemented much of the agenda. Most of the countries found it difficult to apply the UNCED decisions.

To improve their sustainable development agenda, the United Nations developed two broad themes during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in 2012 (UNCSD, or Rio+20): an institutional framework for sustainable development and a green economy as it contributes to the eradi-

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