

Ethical Consumption

Why is this a Global Justice Issue?

Being an ethical consumer in today's world requires first recognizing that consumption is not just embedded in economic relations, but also social and political ones. Because of this, what we consume matters beyond the immediate context of our lives. When we consume goods or services brought to us by the economic system of capitalism, we effectively agree with how this system works. By purchasing goods produced by this system we give our consent, by virtue of our participation, to the distribution of profit and costs throughout supply chains, to how much the people who make stuff are paid and to the massive accumulation of wealth enjoyed by those at the top.

Not only do our consumer choices support and affirm the economic system as it exists, but they also provide legitimacy to the global and national policies that make the economic system possible. Our consumer practices give our consent to the unequal distribution power and unequal access to rights and resources that are fostered by our political systems. Finally, when we consume, we place ourselves into social relationships with all the people who participate in producing, packaging, exporting and importing, marketing, and selling the goods we buy, and with all of those who participate in providing the services we purchase. Our consumer choices connect us in both good and bad ways to hundreds of millions of people around the world.

So consumption, though an everyday and unremarkable act, is actually embedded in a complex, global web of economic, political, and social relations. As such, our consumer practices have sweeping implications. What we consume really matters!!!

GLOBAL GOAL INDICATOR:

Goal no. 12 - Ethical Consumption & Production (Target 12.8)

SUGGESTED CURRICULUM LINKS:

- Business Studies
- Home Economics
- Religious Education
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Gaeilge
- Geography
- History
- CSPE
- SPHE

Educational Toolkits (Active Learning Methodologies)

- ✓ Ethical Consumerism in European Education:
<https://developmenteducation.ie/media/documents/ECEEToolkit2014.pdf>
- ✓ CARS, RAW MATERIALS AND YOUR LIFE – Toolkit for teachers and educators.
http://stop-mad-mining.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Cars_edukit_EN.pdf

- ✓ ETHICAL PURCHASING GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS and COLLEGES:
<http://www.worldwiseschools.ie/downloads/Ethical-Purchasing-Guide.pdf>
- ✓ HOW TO BECOME A FAIRTRADE SCHOOL: <https://www.fairtrade.ie/get-involved/fairtrade-schools/become-fairtrade-school/> and <https://www.fairtrade.ie/get-involved/fairtrade-schools/>
- ✓ FAIRTRADE SCHOOL HANDBOOK:
<http://www.worldwiseschools.ie/downloads/Fairtrade-School-Handbook.pdf>
- ✓ Going Beyond the Symbols: Ethical Consumerism and Fair Trade for Post-Primary Education: [http://www.worldwiseschools.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Beyond the Symbols Post Primary.pdf](http://www.worldwiseschools.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Beyond_the_Symbols_Post_Primary.pdf)
- ✓ Trading Trainers Game: http://www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/trading_trainers_game-Fairtrade-Youth.pdf (check out the Christian Aid website)
- ✓ Sustainable Consumption & Social Justice in a Constrained World (hand out) <http://stop-mad-mining.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Sustainable-consumption-how-to-make-it-happen.pdf>
- ✓ A 60 second guide to Goal 12 – Responsible Consumption & Production <file:///Users/aoiferankin/Downloads/60SecondGuideSustainableDevelopmentGoals12.pdf>
- ✓ The Ethics of Fast Fashion: <https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/the-ethics-of-fast-fashion/>
- ✓ Ethical Consumption: <https://www.rgs.org/support-pages/search-results/?searchtext=ethical%20consumption&searchlocation=0>

TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

Useful Websites:

- <https://developmenteducation.ie/feature/ethical-consumption/>
- <https://www.behindthebrands.org/> (**Behind the Brands** is part of Oxfam’s GROW campaign to help create a world where everyone has enough to eat. The Behind the Brands Scorecard assesses the agricultural sourcing policies of the world's 10 largest food and beverage companies. It exclusively focuses on publicly available

information that relates to the policies of these companies on their sourcing of agricultural commodities from developing countries.)

- <http://stop-mad-mining.org/downloads/> - STOP MAD MINING
- www.eufic.org (The European Food Information Council)
- <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>
- <https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/the-geography-of-my-stuff/>
- <https://www.tradeaid.org.nz/>
- <https://www.tearfund.org.nz/EthicalFashion>
- <https://www.sustainablefashionmatterz.com/what-is-sustainable-fashion>
- <https://www.patagonia.com.au/pages/worn-wear>
- <https://www.ico-spirit.com/en/>
- <http://thepeahen.com/hm-sustainable-fashion/> (Is H&M as sustainable as they maintain?)
- <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/one-planet-network>
- <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/goals/goal-12/en/>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/oxfam-ethical-fashion-list/8045708>
- <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/>
- <https://www.commonobjective.co/learn/sustainability-issues?a=19>
- <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/>

Useful organisations & campaigns:

Fairtrade Fortnight: Fairtrade Fortnight takes place each year at the end of February running through early March and is designed to raise awareness about Fairtrade. There are usually events taking place in many Irish cities and towns and you could become involved in existing activities or design your own, such as collecting signatures to convince a local shop to stock only Fairtrade bananas or have your school only use Fairtrade tea and coffee.

Fairtrade Ireland has up to date information about Fairtrade Fortnight along with ideas for activities: www.fairtrade.ie

Clean Clothes Campaign: An international movement to remove child and forced labour from the garment industry by pressuring companies to make sure that all labour in their overseas factories meets fair standards. For more information: www.cleanclothes.org

Labour Behind the Label: This organisation focuses on garment workers' rights around the world and specifically on the issues of poor wages, long hours, unsafe conditions, physical and sexual abuse, and the suspension of the right to unionise. They are working to get companies to be aware of abuse throughout their supply chains. They have campaigns on-going that focus on the shoe industry, the right to a living wage and worker safety. For more information: www.labourbehindthelabel.org

The 28-Day Palm Oil Challenge: Rainforests around the world are under threat from western companies who use massive amounts of palm oil in their snack products. The website provides information on companies that use palm oil and how as consumers we can adopt a more sustainable lifestyle by using less palm oil. The palm oil industry is linked, in addition to destruction of the Rainforests, to animal cruelty, human rights abuses of local populations, and poor environmental standards. For more information: www.saynotopalmoil.com

Buy Nothing Day: This is an annual event that began in Canada as a response to the overconsumption following American Thanksgiving (a day called Black Friday originally because so many people went shopping that it caused problems in city centres around the United States). Supporters of Buy Nothing Day advocate a total suspension of consumer activity for one full day.

Short Video Clips:

- 1.**
Ethical consumerism and the Power of having a choice / a voice by Jason Garman at TEDx
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAG-t-kXcqE>
- 2.**
The Trolley Problem - The Trolley Problem presents an ethical dilemma that asks you to consider what influences your decision-making process.
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOpf6KcWYyw>
- 3. Wasted! The Story of Food Waste (2017)** Through the eyes of famous chefs, audiences will see how they make the most of every kind of food, transforming what most people consider scraps into incredible dishes that create a more secure food system.

Documentaries:

1. **The True Cost** – A documentary exploring the true facts behind the fashion industry and looks at labour exploitation and abuses, environmental impacts and genetically modified cotton is linked to cancer. It illustrates how the Western World's demand for cheap, quick and disposable fashion is destroying human lives and the planet.
Link: available on Netflix (<https://truecostmovie.com/learn-more/environmental-impact/>)
2. **Minimalism: a Documentary about the Important Things** - Joshua Fields Milburn and Ryan Nicodemus
Link: available on Netflix
3. **Bangladeshi workers pay price for West's cheap clothes**
Link: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-22305064/bangladeshi-workers-pay-price-for-west-s-cheap-clothes>
4. **Ethics Matters** (videos & teacher resources)
Link: <https://ethicsmatterstvseries.com/tv-series/>

Ted talks:

- Fast Fashion's Effect on People, The Planet, & You | Patrick Woodyard
- How to Engage with Ethical Fashion | Clara Vuletich
- How to change the world by fashion consumption | Jochen Strähle

Teaching and Learning Activities:

- Students should have opportunities to engage in activities that will increase and deepen their knowledge of ethical issues for the consumer
- Students could deliver a fair-trade lesson or assembly to younger pupils (ideas available on the fair-trade website)
- Students could visit a local supermarket to carry out a product survey on organic products, analyse, discuss, reflect, and report on the results.
- Students could devise a questionnaire to increase shoppers awareness of the implications of buying local produce, analyse, discuss and present their findings to other students/classes.
- Students could prepare an article for the school magazine 'How to shop to Save the Planet'

CREATING CHANGE - ACTION:

- promote fair trade and become a fair trade community
- promote second hand, charity shops and used bookstores
- promote and take part in Buy Nothing Day and Buy Nothing Christmas
- buy recycled products
- organise a campaign
- find eco product supplies
- support or set up zero waste suppliers, *eg: see News item October 7, 2013, in right hand column*
- support sustainable, green or eco-tourism initiatives
- practice event greening
- promote closer to home tourism
- lobby for Government action to enforce the use of bio-degradable plastic bags by supermarkets, or banning plastic bags altogether
- encourage the use of Reusable shopping bags
- encourage use and appreciation of local and community resources