

Sustainability Factsheet

Talking about sustainability

Sustainability. It's a word we've all heard and it's a word most of us think we understand. Sustainability, in its simplest definition, is the organising principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. (Brundtland Report <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>)



The roots of sustainability

So let's go back to the basics: where does the word come from? Although the idea of caring for our environment has been around for a long time, the roots of the word sustainability can be linked to the term 'sustainable development', a term explored in the 1987 UN report from the Brundtland Commission, entitled, 'Our Common Future'. The aim of this report was to seek a path for a more sustainable form of development, a development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

The [Brundtland Commission](#) recognised that we need to promote economic and social advancement, but need to find ways to do this without environmental degradation, over-exploitation or pollution. They have expanded on the concept of sustainable development with three areas of focus for sustainability - economic growth, environmental protection, and social equality.

The three pillars of sustainability

Economic Growth

The first pillar is focussed on ways to help countries grow economically, without overusing or exploiting their natural resources. Working with developing nations to create sustainable economies that don't rely on resource extraction is the focus of this pillar.

Environmental Protection

The second pillar of sustainability is investing in technology that helps to reduce the environmental impact of energy production and protect natural resources.

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This means increased investment in renewable energy sources, like solar, wind, and hydropower, and reducing the amount of energy consumed.

Social Equality and Equity

The third pillar focuses on the well-being of people. This pillar works on reducing the gap between rich and poor, as well as addressing growing inequalities in wealth and resources through environmental protection and sustainable development.

