

# Will we need a cap-and-trade for everything? : Greenbang

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Cutting carbon emissions globally isn't enough, according to the World Resources Forum (WRF), which publicly met for the first time in Davos this week. The world also needs [per-capita targets for all the natural resources it consumes](#), the group says.

“Europeans use ten times more natural resources than people in Africa or Vietnam,” said Sigmar Gabriel, Germany’s Environment Minister. “If all people on this planet follow our European resource consumption model, we would need at least two more planets by 2050.”

In other words, we can't get there from here.

A joint initiative of the Technology and Society Lab of The Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Testing and Research (Empa), the Swiss Academy for Engineering Sciences (SATW), and the Factor 10 Institute/France, the WRF focuses on global resource consumption and policies for sustainable growth.

At today's rate, global growth is anything but sustainable. Humans today are extracting 60 billion tonnes of raw material from the Earth each year — 50 per cent more than 30 years ago — and overall resource use continues to increase.

At the Davos meeting, WRF attendees adopted a declaration that calls for western economies to massively reduce their material inputs and for the world to dramatically increase resource productivity. They also agreed that, because the price of natural resources is low compared to that of labour, industry will not purposely drive those changes. Only governments can provide the necessary framework and incentives.

The WRF declaration begins,

“The recent financial crisis has dramatically shown how flimsy the banking and investment institutions are that were supposed to be so robust, and how vulnerable they are to false expectations of continued rapid growth and consequent over-exploitation of the monetary and fiscal arrangements that serve as surrogates for the real economy.

“What is true of the economic system is also true of the ecosystem. Beyond a critical threshold, the services that the biosphere has evolved and provided over millions of years can breakdown with little warning and with much loss to human, social and economic values.”

The declaration ends with a nine-pronged call to action for the world's political leaders:

1. Seek international agreements on world-wide per-capita targets for natural resource extraction and consumption to be effective by 2015 at the latest;
2. Introduce effective policy measures to greatly enhance resource productivity as well as curbing demand over time;
3. Introduce with urgency resource use targets in areas of particular concern – like fresh water, marine resources and tropical forests – to put a halt to the rapid destruction of ecosystem services and biodiversity;
4. Focus research and development on the goal of increasing resource productivity;
5. Seek societal consensus by 2012 on ecological and economic indicators (on micro-, meso-, and macro-levels) in tune with the laws of nature and beyond GDP;
6. Reshape the framework conditions for the economy to account for the scarcity of natural resources and recognise the need for their extraction and sale to promote the environmental sustainable development of the countries in which they take place;
7. Seek dialogue with the business community to help redesign business models where revenues would be increasingly derived from quality of services rather than by selling material products;