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BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE

## SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE GUIDE

### **@action**

#### *Rethink your Reality.*

In the words of Albert Einstein “*The world we have created today, has problems which cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them*”.

Breaking this down into a logical progression; it is our value system that determines how we think and feel about any particular subject. The way we think and feel about it then determines what we do about it – our actions. Our actions then have consequences and effects. So if we do not like the effects and consequences that we are experiencing and we wish to change our reality, we have to go back to the underlying cause, and begin by changing our value systems.

Unfortunately, many of the realities (effects) we are experiencing today are not very pleasant and are threatening the wellbeing of every creature living on planet Earth.

The most widely recognised of these is Global Warming, as documented in Al Gore’s groundbreaking film “An Inconvenient Truth” (\*1).

There are, however several other interconnected “Inconvenient Truths” that are equally threatening to the wellbeing of humanity (and other co-inhabitants of planet Earth)

These include:

- Reducing Natural Resources - limiting our ability to support a rapidly growing (over) population.
- Rising Levels of Pollution - impacting on plant, animal & human health.
- Loss of Biodiversity – weakening our ecological life support systems.
- Dysfunctional economic and growth development models – creating increasing poverty, crime & unemployment.

(For further reading about these Inconvenient Truths and how we can constructively respond to them click here for the article “Global Warming and Other Inconvenient Truths”)

Logically therefore, in order to deal with these “Inconvenient Truths”, we need to start by re-evaluating where we place our sense of “worth” or “value” and then begin to evolve a new set of values and beliefs that will produce better consequences and effects.

In the predominant current western culture, many people evaluate themselves and their status within their society primarily by how much “Money and Stuff” (M&S) they possess. The greater quantity of M&S they have, the higher their sense of self esteem & the higher their position in

civil society. If we follow the logic of this kind of quantitative M&S value system, it makes perfect sense to pay a football coach or a movie star millions of Rands each month because they are “money generators”. In contrast; teachers, nurses, firemen and policemen (the caring givers) use up money and resources, so it is logical to pay them as little as possible. Similarly eco-systems and “the environment” have no worth unless they are converted into M&S, so it is logical to chop down the trees for wood, burn the forests to make space for cattle grazing and use up our natural resources to convert into more M&S as quickly as possible. Following this quantitative M&S based value system, the ideal outcome is to gain as much as possible whilst giving as little as possible in return. The logical but bizarre consequence of respecting quantity of M&S as the primary indicator of a persons “value” would therefore be that many of those who end up with the highest social status and sense of self importance, would be those who have been most selfish, greedy and uncaring about the needs and rights of others. We would thus be honouring those who have taken the most away from other people and the environment. Adherence to this type of value system would absolutely motivate corruption and breed a disregard for whether our actions are harmful to others and the environment. Is this sounding uncomfortably familiar ?

**It is certainly uncomfortable and inconvenient to recognise that when we look at all of the 5 inconvenient truths above, each and every one of them can be directly linked to following the M&S value system! It is the selfishness, greed and short term thinking that directly result from following a M&S value system that are creating the potentially catastrophic effects we are witnessing today. So if we wish to have different outcomes and effects, this is where we need to begin.**

Undoubtedly we do need M&S for practical and survival purposes and it would be naive to assume otherwise, but think what would happen if we shifted our point of focus from quantity to **quality**? And what would happen if we valued ourselves and others in direct proportion to how much they have **contributed** to the wellbeing of society and our planet (instead of how much they have been able to grab for themselves)?

Under a value system in which we value quality over quantity and we honour and respect the givers rather than the takers:

- What do you think the effect would be on our crime levels?
- Is it possible that manufacturers might be encouraged to produce products less wastefully, with less pollution and design them to last longer?
- Do you think that consumers might buy more from companies that show that they care for society & our environment, thus making it financially advantageous for these companies to act in a more socially and environmentally sustainable manner?

With the consequences of our previous beliefs and value systems now upon us, is it too late to change our minds, and in so doing change our future reality?

I don't think so! This type of qualitative thinking has been evolving and growing in popularity over recent years. In western cultures, the foundations of such a “holistic” value system can be seen within the concepts of “Deep Ecology” (\*3) and “The Earth Charter” (\*4). In an African context, such a value system which honours caring, sharing and a mutually respectful interdependence can be seen in the concept of Ubuntu. In direct proportion to the degree that we adopt these value systems and act upon their guidelines – so we can “*heal the earth, and in the process heal ourselves*”.

\*1 - An inconvenient Truth – see <http://www.climatecrisis.net/>

\*3 – Deep Ecology – see The Enviropaedia page 66

\*4 –Earth Charter see The Enviropaedia page 71

## *Join an Environmental Organisation*

This is probably the most effective material action you can take to publicly express your care for the wellbeing of planet Earth. By supporting an environmental organisation, you will be making a significant contribution in 3 important ways:

**Firstly**, you will be providing the much needed funds to those who are best qualified to do the job of protecting and preserving our Earth and our natural resources. (If it makes sense to pay an Accountant to look after your money interests and a Lawyer to protect your legal rights, it then should make sense to pay an Environmental Organisation to protect the interests of your Earth!)

**Secondly**, as many environmental organisations have members' newsletters that increase your knowledge and understanding of what is going on, you will become more informed and therefore more empowered to be able to influence the choices and behaviours of others

**Thirdly**, by increasing membership numbers, you will be giving these organisations the "political power" to negotiate beneficial change with the Business & Government sectors. Whilst we as individuals need to accept responsibility for our own actions and their effects, there is no doubt that the behaviour of Government and Business have had far greater accumulative effects and consequences - for which they appear to have been slow and reluctant to accept responsibility. By giving your support to an environmental organisation, you will strengthen their ability to lobby Government for more sustainable policies and strategies and to "encourage" the Business sector to implement less wasteful and environmentally harmful practices.



**Endangered Wildlife Trust**  
[www.ewt.org.za](http://www.ewt.org.za)

### **Promoting Political and Business change**

If you wish to support and encourage negotiations with Business and Government sectors to change their behaviours and practices, we recommend the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) as a highly effective conservation and political lobbying Environmental Organisation (For membership info see [www.ewt.org.za](http://www.ewt.org.za))

Some Environmental Organisations Listed In The Enviropaedia To Choose From:

- African Conservation Fund
- AfriOceans Conservation Trust/Alliance
- Animal Anti-Cruelty League
- Animal Rescue Organisation
- Animal Voice
- Birdlife South Africa
- Botanical Society of South Africa
- Centre for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife
- Cheetah Conservation Fund
- Cheetah Outreach
- De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Trust
- Dolphin Action Protection Group
- Earthlife Africa

- Endangered Wildlife Trust
- Food and Trees for Africa
- Free Me Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre
- Friends Groups – WESSA
- Grassland Society of Southern Africa
- Humane Education Trust – Compassion in World Farming
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- Kalahari Conservation Society
- Mountain Club of South Africa
- Namibia Nature Foundation
- National Association of Conservancies of South Africa
- Overstrand Conservation Foundation
- People for Wildlife
- People’s Dispensary for Sick Animals
- Permacore – Permaculture Foundation of the Western Cape
- Sanwild Wildlife Sanctuary and Rehabilitation Centre
- Save our Seas Foundation
- South African Association Against Painful Experiments on Animals
- Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute
- Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB)
- The Emma Animal Rescue Society (T.E.A.R.S)
- The Wild Foundation
- Vervet Monkey Foundation
- Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa – WESSA
- White Shark Conservation Education and Exploration Society
- Wilderness Action Group
- Wilderness Foundation
- WWF-SA

## *Use your Consumer Power*

- Be an Ethical Consumer
- Shop Locally and Buy Locally Produced Goods
- Buy Organic and Natural Products
- Buy Fair Trade Products and Services
- Invest Ethically
- Support Companies Committed to Sustainability

### *Be an 'ethical consumer'*

You can be a part of the solution in making the world a cleaner, fairer and kinder place, rather than being a part of the problem. We can all make a contribution to a better world through the simple choices we make while out shopping by using our spending power proactively.

### *Small decisions create big effects*

Your consumer choices are the most important and most frequent, ethical decisions you can make and have a direct effect on global issues. Through our choices, we can support progressive companies that want to improve the way that business is done, and we can influence the way in which even the largest corporations and supermarkets do their day-to-day business. It's already happening, with supermarkets now displaying Fair Trade products, GM-free and organic foods and other more environmentally friendly products on their shelves. They are doing this in direct response to 'consumer demand'.

You don't have to feel powerless about the problems facing our planet. Our till receipts are like voting slips – manufacturers and suppliers closely monitor consumer buying patterns and respond directly according to consumer demand. Each buying decision you make, therefore has an impact – small in isolation but huge when it comes to a collective effect – because millions of consumers around the world are now responding to the call for 'ethical shopping'.

### *What is ethical shopping?*

Ethical Shopping means choosing to buy goods, products and services that are supplied by companies that act in an ethical manner – without causing harm to or exploiting humans, animals or the environment. Ethical shopping supports ethical companies and penalises others that ignore the social and environmental consequences of their practices. Our choices can be supportive (by buying products from companies that demonstrate a care for people and planet) or penalising (by refusing to buy products from companies that show no care about the effects of their actions and practices).

## *A Quick Guide to Some Ethical Shopping Principles*

**Energy efficiency:** Try to choose the most energy-efficient products wherever possible, such as energy-efficient light bulbs.

**Cleaning products:** Beware of the chemicals used in most common cleaning products. While the health effects of most common moulds are minimal, the chemicals used to remove them can be seriously harmful to your health and the health of our water and soil! Go natural – try to use alternatives such as vinegar for light cleaning or natural and ‘green’ products such as Enchantrix or Citrofresh (see their listing in the Directory for further information).

**Chemicals:** If you don’t recognise a chemical listed on the label of a product, it is best to assume that it is potentially hazardous to the environment and your health, so do some research. A list of carcinogenic chemicals often used in cleaning products can be found at [www.scorecard.org/health-effects/chemicals.tcl?short\\_hazard\\_name=cancer&all\\_p=t](http://www.scorecard.org/health-effects/chemicals.tcl?short_hazard_name=cancer&all_p=t)

**Dispensers:** Buy pump-action sprays rather than aerosols, particularly those which you can refill. If you do need an aerosol, choose one that is CFC free.

**Paper and stationery:** Use recycled stationery and toilet paper wherever available. If you need to print on a large scale, see pages 8–9 for information on Sappi Triple Green paper.

**Health-food shops:** These are usually a good source of information on healthy and ethical lifestyles.

**Health supplements:** Look for ethical health companies producing natural vitamin and health supplements free of preservatives and animal derivatives. Viridian is a good example (see their listing in the Directory).

**Beauty products:** Look for products that are not tested on animals. Beauty without Cruelty can supply you with a list.

**Genetically Modified foods:** We have a right to choose whether to eat GM products or not (see Topics on GMOs). Inform your local supermarket that you want to see GM products labelled accordingly. GM products that should be labelled include soya, maize, canola and vegetable oils.

**Shopping bags:** Buy a reusable shopping bag. Billions of non-recyclable or non-biodegradable carrier bags are used only once. These often end up in our rivers and seas where they kill or injure fish and other sealife. If you forget to take your reusable shopping bag with you when shopping, at least, reuse any new plastic bags as dustbin liners or for some other useful purpose. Look for the d2w mark (Degradable to Water) on plastic bags (see the listing for Self-Destruct Plastics in the Directory for more information on degradable plastics).

**Buy in bulk:** Wherever possible, buy products in bulk. This reduces packaging and saves money.

### **Ask yourself these questions before you purchase food:**

- How far has it been transported (food miles) to reach this shop? The further it has travelled, the more fuel has been burned, with resulting pollution, financial and environmental damage.
- Is it over packaged (more box than content)? This is not only a waste of packaging materials (that have a high environmental cost of production), but is also unethical in that it tricks us into believing that there is more content than there actually is.
- How was this food produced? Was it sprayed with chemicals and insecticides that may affect my own health and the health of soil and water? Was it bred and reared in cruel, tiny cages? Was it injected with growth hormones or fed an unnatural diet that may have a knock-on effect on my own health?
- Do I really need it? Is convenience, social pressure or targeted advertising influencing me to buy something that I do not really need?

Read labels. Look for food words you recognise and always opt for the product that has the fewest unrecognisable words. This rule of thumb may seem simplistic, but it works, because food manufacturers do not translate commonly known food names into a chemical name on packages.

## Shop Locally and Buy Locally Produced Goods

**Poverty alleviation:** Locally produced goods support and create local jobs, thus alleviating poverty, a major cause of environmental degradation.

**Social responsibility:** By purchasing local products you are more certain that you are not supporting child labour and unethical sweatshops often used in producing cheap imported goods.

**Support your own community and reduce your travel costs:** Your local, independent store can often provide a more personal, caring service and it definitely supports and generates more funds within your own community. Nurture your community spirit and order a weekly, seasonal veggie box from a local supplier. Shopping locally also reduces your own travel time and costs.

**Eating locally grown food is better for air quality and pollution:** Local produce does not have to be transported thousands of miles to reach you. This means less fuel is burned and, therefore, less environmental damage caused.

**Local food is fresher and better:** Ever tried a tomato that was picked within 24 hours? Local food is usually fresher and in tune with the seasons which means that they are at their peak in taste. Locally grown fruits and vegetables have longer to ripen because the produce will be handled less, and does not have to be 'rugged' to stand up to the rigours shipping. Seasonal foods are also generally the most abundant and should, therefore, be less expensive.

## *Buy Organic and Natural Products*

**Food:** Buying organic or biodynamic products ensures that you eat wholesome and nourishing food while encouraging a natural symbiosis in agriculture, which promotes both the health and productivity of soil life, plants, animals and people (see Topics Organic Food and Biodynamic Agriculture).

A simplistic rule of thumb to reduce the chemical load in your grocery basket is to read food labels. Look for food words you recognise and always opt for the product that has the fewest unrecognisable words. This may seem simplistic, but it works, since food manufacturers do not translate commonly known food names into a chemical name on packages. Take note of preservatives and colorants and avoid them as much as possible.

**Clothing:** Reduce your personal use of oil and chemical-derived products. Natural plant fibres include cotton, hemp, linen, jute, kenaf and ramie. Read labels to find clothing made of 100% natural fibres. Common names of synthetic fabrics are polyester, acetate and nylon.

**Personal Care:** Just because a personal-care product is sold in a health-food shop does not necessarily mean that it is made of natural materials. The rule of thumb for finding natural personal care products is the same for food: read the labels for ingredients you recognise as being natural.

**Cleaning:** Use natural and biodegradable products for cleaning. Buying eco-cleaning fluids or washing-up liquids gives progressive manufacturers more funds to invest in clean technology and helps to persuade the other manufacturers to consider changing their practices.

**Furnishings:** Organic wool and cotton-filled furnishings are highly recommended in order to avoid the negative health effects of materials containing formaldehyde, biocides, stain protectants, fire retardants and materials containing neurotoxins. Also look for natural carpets and carpet backing, wood furniture that has been finished with natural sealants, and avoid pressed-wood furniture because it contains formaldehyde.

**Pet Care:** Never use synthetic pesticides of any kind, give them food that doesn't contain animal by-products and use natural shampoos.

**Renovating and building supplies:** Every time you paint, renovate or build, choose the least toxic, most natural, inert materials.

## *Organisations Listed in The Directory Offering Natural and Organic Products:*

### Produce and products

Allganix – foods  
Breathecoat – paints  
Bryanston Organic Market – foods  
Bulgaz – converting vehicles to use liquid petroleum gas  
Citrofresh – cleaning and disinfecting products  
Earthmother – organic foods and products  
Enchantrix – organic products  
Envirotouch – paints  
Go-organic – online organic directory  
Greenways – fine cheeses  
Meadowsweet – organic herbs  
Organic Emporium – organic foods and products  
Organic Living – organic foods  
Organic Zone – organic foods  
Rob Harrewyn Organics – organic foods  
Rozendal – organic wines  
Savvy – kids' food  
The Ethical Co-Op – organic foods and products  
Wensleydale Farms – organic foods  
Woolworths – organic foods

### Garden care

Biogrow  
Plantwize  
Talborne

### Health and Beauty

AromAfrica  
Beautiful-Earth Aromatherapy  
Enviroorganics  
Esse Organic Skincare  
Herbal-Homeopathic  
Indigo Tree (The)  
Tocara Skin and Body Science  
Viridian

### Advice on natural and organic agriculture

Organics SA  
Rainman Landcare Foundation  
Klein Karoo Organic Initiative (KKOI)  
Biodynamic Agricultural Association of Southern Africa  
Newlands Mashu Permaculture Learning Centre (NMPLC)  
Ecocert-Afrisco (Pty) Ltd  
Ecocircle® Holdings  
Permacore  
EcoLink  
Food and Trees for Africa  
Agribusiness in Sustainable Natural African Plant Products

### *Buy Fair Trade Products and Services*

Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers. Fair trade organisations (backed by consumers) are actively engaged in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade (see Topic Fairtrade as well as their listing in the Directory or contact Fairtrade South Africa on the website [www.fairtrade.org.za](http://www.fairtrade.org.za) for lists of producers and traders).

### *Invest Ethically*

The JSE's socially responsible investment index (SRI Index) The SRI provides information on socially responsible investment (SRI) options (see Sustainable Development – Investments in the Sustainable Development section). Only companies that meet the Index Criteria and obtain the requisite score are included in the Index. The Index Criteria reflect sustainability and socially responsible practices that measure the integration of Triple- Bottom-Line principles relating to the economy, environment and society into their business activities.

The Centre for Sustainability Investing (CSI) was established in 2003 by the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) (<http://www.aiccafrica.org/>), with support from the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) Sustainable Financial Markets Facility. The Centre's mandate is to drive finance sector innovation for sustainable development in Africa. The Centre is making strides toward this goal by examining how financial product innovations, market mechanisms and regulatory structures can more effectively contribute to Africa's sustainable development.

They say that money talks and this is one of the most powerful and influential ways of getting your message to large institutions – that you approve of and will support ethical behaviour.

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### *Support Companies Committed To Sustainability*

Support companies that demonstrate that they care about people and planet or are committed to causes that have a positive impact on the environment and humanity. Some of the companies and initiatives featured in The Enviropaedia include the following:

**Barloworld:** Actively promotes and facilitates the development of new 'sustainable management' concepts and practices (see Sustainable Development in Management in the Sustainable Development section).

**Enchantrix:** Provides a range of environmentally friendly household products. Ford: Financial and material supporter of the Mazda Wildlife Fund.

**Holcim:** Sponsor of Delta Environmental Centre, WESSA and WWF, and of many thousands of rands' worth of The Enviropaedia distributed to underprivileged schools that could not afford to buy copies for themselves.

**Nedbank:** The only bank in South Africa to have signed the Equator Principles – (see Topic Equator Principles) and they support many environmental and social programmes through their Affinity Card Programmes and The Green Trust.

**Pick 'n Pay:** The supermarket chain that has launched many constructive initiatives (see Sustainable Development in Retailing in the Sustainable Development section).

**Rand Water:** Sponsor Delta Environmental Centre and promote water saving and environmental education.

**SAB:** Sponsor hundreds of thousands of rands worth of Enviropaedias to underprivileged schools that could not afford to buy copies for themselves.

**SABS:** Provides an important ISO standards accreditation service (see Topic Environmental Standards). Any company with an ISO accreditation is clearly trying to improve the quality of their products and services and reduce the impact they have on the environment. Look for companies that have achieved an ISO accreditation.

**Sappi:** Apart from sponsoring many environmental initiatives, they also produce a range of environmentally friendly paper (see the information on Sappi Triple Green on pages 8–9). The Enviropaedia is printed on Triple Green paper sponsored by Sappi.

**Toyota:** Produces some of the most environmentally friendly cars available and supports several highly constructive social initiatives.

**Viridian Nutrition:** Provides organic products and supports many charities.

**Woolworths:** Promotes organic foods and foods produced in an ethical manner, and supports Food and Trees for Africa and Eduplant. Woolworths has also made a policy decision to, wherever possible, remove genetically modified ingredients from their products and to clearly label those remaining products that may have genetically modified ingredients so that customers can make informed choices.

### THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS...

If we reward companies for their positive and sustainable initiatives (by using their products and services), we will encourage them to do even more and their competitors (those who do not demonstrate a care for people and planet) will be penalised by losing market share. You hold the “power of the purse” – you can reward or penalise. Make your purchasing decisions count toward a healthy, sustainable environment and planet.