

GLOBAL FOODPRINT – AN INVESTIGATION PROJECT

Learn about the "Earth Overshoot Day"



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1. Introduction

Have you ever heard of 'Earth Overshoot Day'? In this project we are going to find out how we can use the concept of 'Earth Overshoot Day' to reach the pathway towards a sustainable world.

Visit www.overshootday.org and inform yourself about 'Earth Overshoot Day'. Use the information as well as the various graphics provided.



2. Tasks

- Answer the following questions:
 - a) What is Earth Overshoot Day? Give a short definition.
 - b) What was the date of Earth Overshoot Day in Germany this (or last) year?
 - c) Which tendency can be seen in the date of Earth Overshoot Day since 1970?
 - d) Are there differences between countries?

- Work in groups. Choose one out of the following topics: cities, energy, food, planet and population.



3. Group presentation

- Visit “[solutions](#)” on the website of Earth Overshoot Day. Use the information that you find there to prepare a presentation. This presentation should give an answer to the question “How can we move Earth Overshoot Day to an earlier date?” from the perspective of your topic. You should also mention the importance of your topic for the pursuit of more sustainability.
- Present your results as a group in front of the class.



4. Writing

- Merge the most important points of your presentations into “6 ways to #MoveTheDate”.
- Under the hashtag #MoveTheDate people all over the globe are trying to raise awareness for our consumption patterns and for sustainable solutions. Do you think these campaigns among the civil society are useful? Or do you think it is rather the obligation of our governments to do something against the overconsumption of resources? Write a short comment.

- Information overshootday.org:

About Earth Overshoot Day

Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. We maintain this deficit by liquidating stocks of ecological resources and accumulating waste, primarily carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Earth Overshoot Day is hosted and calculated by Global Footprint Network, an international research organization that provides decision-makers with a menu of tools to help the human economy operate within Earth's ecological limits. To determine the date of Earth Overshoot Day for each year, Global Footprint Network calculates the number of days of that year that Earth's biocapacity suffices to provide for humanity's Ecological Footprint. The remainder of the year corresponds to global overshoot. Earth Overshoot Day is computed by dividing the planet's biocapacity (the amount of ecological resources Earth is able to generate that year), by humanity's Ecological Footprint (humanity's demand for that year), and multiplying by 365, the number of days in a year: $(\text{Earth's Biocapacity} / \text{Humanity's Ecological Footprint}) \times 365 = \text{Earth Overshoot Day}$

Measuring Ecological Wealth



Source: WWF Japan and Global Footprint Network; Ecological Footprint for Sustainable Living in Japan

Just as a bank statement tracks income against expenditures, Global Footprint Network measures a population's demand for and ecosystems' supply of resources and services. These calculations then serve as the foundation for calculating Earth Overshoot Day.

On the supply side, a city, state, or nation's **biocapacity** represents its biologically productive land and sea area, including forest lands, grazing lands, cropland, fishing grounds, and built-up land.

On the demand side, the **Ecological Footprint** measures a population's demand for plant-based food and fiber products, livestock and fish products, timber and other forest products, space for urban infrastructure, and forest to absorb its carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels.

Both measures are expressed in global hectares—globally comparable, standardized hectares with world average productivity. A hectare is equivalent to 10,000 square meters or 2.47 acres

Each city, state or nation's Ecological Footprint can be compared to its biocapacity. If a population's demand for ecological assets exceeds the supply, that region runs an ecological deficit. A region in ecological deficit meets demand by importing, liquidating its own ecological assets (such as overfishing), and/or emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. At the global level, ecological deficit and overshoot are the same, since there is no net import of resources to the planet.

History

The concept of Earth Overshoot Day was first conceived by Andrew Simms of the UK think tank New Economics Foundation, which partnered with Global Footprint Network in 2006 to launch the first global Earth Overshoot Day campaign. WWF, the world's largest conservation organization, has participated in Earth Overshoot Day since 2007.

- Information solutions from overshootday.org:

The current trend is not our destiny: #MoveTheDate

The past does not necessarily determine our future. Our current choices do. Through wise, forward-looking decisions, we can turn around natural resource consumption trends while improving the quality of life for all people.

While our planet is finite, human possibilities are not. The transformation to a sustainable, carbon-neutral world will succeed if we apply humanity's greatest strengths: foresight, innovation, and care for each other. The good news is that this transformation is not only technologically possible, it is also economically beneficial and our best chance for a prosperous future.

That is why we focus on the Power of Possibility: we have identified five key areas (see image below) that are defining our long-term trends most forcefully, all of which are shaped by our individual and collective choices.

