



Going Green in 2012: 12 steps for the Developing World

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As we begin a new year, many of us are thinking about changes in our life — eating better, saving money. But there are also important resolutions we can make to “green” our lives. Here are 12 steps we can take to make a more sustainable impact on our environment:

1. **Recycle:** Brazil boasts a 96.5 per cent aluminium can recycle rate due in large part to the 180,000 Brazilians who collect and resell cans for profit. Set aside a separate container in your household for recyclable waste such as plastic, glass, metal, and paper.
2. **Reduce fossil fuel consumption:** Over the last two decades, roughly 75 per cent of human-made carbon dioxide emissions were produced by fossil fuel burning. Instead of burning coal or wood, use biogas converted from the methane produced by either livestock manure or weeds such as hyacinth.
3. **Make the switch:** Compact Fluorescent Lamps use 75 per cent less energy than incandescent light bulbs and last ten times as long. Encourage your local and national governments to follow the example of Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Venezuela, and others who have given free CFLs to consumers in exchange for their old incandescent bulbs.
4. **Choose filtered water over bottled water:** Globally, we consume 200 billion bottles of water a year; 86 per cent of this plastic ends up as garbage or litter on our roadsides and waterways. If you do not have access to a clean water source, choose to filter water instead of drinking it from a bottle. Women in Bangladesh pass water through clean saris folded four times to drop the cholera count by 99 per cent.
5. **Conserve water:** Half of the world’s people live in countries where water levels are falling. Since 70 per cent of water is used to irrigate farmland, it is important that we better conserve water as we grow our food. In Asia and Africa, the indigenous pigeon pea is draught-resistant and can grow in low-nutrient soil with little water while still producing a yield that is 20 per cent protein.
6. **Turn down the air-conditioner:** Use of air-conditioners increases 20-35 per cent annually in developing countries and the related chemicals emitted are stalling the global effort to heal the ozone, the layer of our atmosphere that protects the planet from harmful solar rays. Use more fans and less A.C. and if you want to install air conditioning in your home or business, use ozone-friendly units instead of those that emit hydrochlorofluorocarbons.

7. Support food recovery: Each year, roughly a third of all food produced for human consumption — approximately 1.3 billion tons — gets lost or wasted. In West Africa, farmers use solar dryers to save the 100,000 mangos that would otherwise go to waste annually.

8. Buy local, indigenous crops: Rice, wheat, corn, and soy are the crops that modern agriculture focuses on most. Indigenous and traditional crops, however, are often hardier and more resistant to pests and disease. Find out what crops are indigenous to your area and which farmers are growing them. Buy directly from those farmers or ask your local market to carry their products.

9. Plant a tree: Worldwide, we have lost 13 million acres of forest each year since 2000. Brazil is the fourth largest emitter of carbon dioxide; not because of industry or automobiles, but because of deforestation. Plant a tree or two at home. In addition to the environmental benefit, it will provide shade and keep your home cooler — plant a citrus or nut tree and enjoy the delicious food.

10. Plant a Garden: Given current population growth, farmers have to figure out how to feed 80 million more people every year. Raising more of our own food helps ease this burden and reduce household costs — plus garden surplus can be sold to generate income.

11. Compost organic waste: The World Bank estimates that 50 per cent of an average developing country's solid waste can be composted. By repurposing compostable waste such as food scraps, wood waste, and paper and cardboard products, we can reduce landfill space and add reclaimed nutrients to our agricultural efforts.

12. Eat meat that is raised right...and eat less of it: Livestock is raised on a third of the Earth's land, accounting for approximately 18 per cent of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. Support environmentally friendly farms. Giant, industrial farms are the worst livestock-related contributors to climate change, polluting the environment through heavy use of pesticides, herbicides, fertilisers, and other harmful inputs.

As we begin the new year, let's all resolve to make 2012 a healthier, happier and greener year.