

Moving towards becoming sustainable consumers



The theme of World Consumer Rights Day celebrated on 15 March 2020 was 'the sustainable consumer'

If everyone lived the lifestyle of the average person in western Europe, we would need three planets to support us! Meanwhile, about one billion people live in extreme poverty, unable to access a decent quality of life.

We have to take urgent action to address the global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. For this we need to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, waste and resource use. It is vital we change our model of consumption.

The theme selected by Consumers International (CI) for World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD), celebrated on 15 March 2020 was 'The Sustainable Consumer'. The focus was on involving and empowering consumers to make sustainable choices needed to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Encouraging consumers to consume

Nutshell

- The theme for this year's World Consumer Rights Day is 'The Sustainable Consumer'
- Consumers can make a huge impact on the environment by what they buy, how they use products, and how they dispose them of

sustainably is vital. It is equally important to ensure that they have the choice and that the infrastructure needed is in place for them to do that.

Huge impact

As consumers we can make a big impact on the environment through our purchase decisions. In addition, how we use, and dispose products we do not want, also have an impact as they may land up in landfills or in incinerators causing pollution. Consumers can call for more sustainable products and services by demanding that the whole system (from production and manufacturing to packaging and disposal) works towards this end.

Consumers need to be educated on sustainable consumption and lifestyles. They should be provided with adequate information through standards and labels. Also, producers, retailers and policymakers should do all they can to make products safe, durable and resource-efficient.

Details of CERC's activities

To mark WCRD this year, Consumer Education and Research Centre, Ahmedabad (CERC) invited students of Suraj Hindi High School to the CERC campus on March 12. They were told the significance of WCRD and their rights and responsibilities as consumers. A brief

to them. Personnel from the food safety department, Gandhinagar, explained about food adulteration. Two presentations – on eco-labelling and misleading advertisements – were made.

Tips on saving paper

On March 13, a programme was held on the topic of 'The Sustainable Consumer'. Among the tips given to save paper were the following:

- Store office files digitally
- Print on both sides of a sheet of paper
- Reuse paper envelopes
- Change your bills to 'paperless' and pay them online or by phone
- Proofread your work carefully before printing it
- Use smaller margins of .75 inch (1.90cm)

How to save energy

A presentation on saving energy gave the following tips:

- Switch off electrical appliances when not in use
- Replace CFLs and incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs
- Use rechargeable batteries for products



- Keep your refrigerator away from a potential heat source and do not open the door frequently
- Clean the blades of fans regularly to improve airflow Opt for a laptop which consumes much less energy than a desktop

Composting

A demonstration was given on composting using compost maker and kitchen waste such as fruit and vegetable peels, used tea and coffee, egg shells, leftover food scraps, etc.



Every two inches of waste should be covered with two inches of compost maker. The compost bin should be kept in a place having good air circulation, easily accessible, and protected from direct rain.

Another demonstration was given on making an environmentally friendly floor cleaner using jaggery, citrus peels, water and a pinch of yeast. The cleaner can be used for mopping and toilet cleaning.

To protect the planet and provide fair social conditions for current and future generations, we need to think about the way we produce and consume goods and services. The aim of sustainable consumption is to increase resource efficiency and fair trade while helping to alleviate poverty and provide access to food, water, energy, medicine and more.