

# Making the Right Choices

**IT HAS NOW BEEN 12 YEARS SINCE EARTH DAY 1990**, when people across the country came together to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the annual event created to increase citizen, corporate, and government involvement in protecting the environment. It was on Earth Day 1990 that environmental leaders set forth goals to reduce our impact on the planet. This special Countdown report that replaces our regular membership newsletter, Earth Tips, brings you our annual update on the world's progress in meeting these goals.

Unfortunately, as we approach Earth Day 2002, we cannot document many improvements in the environment. Our actions have resulted in unprecedented levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, we have increased our energy consumption, and we have not stopped the dumping of untreated waste into the earth's waterways.

We are, however, making some improvements. As a global community, we are shifting away from carbon intensive energies, reducing sulfur dioxide emissions, and increasing the market for environmentally responsible products. Increasingly, people are basing purchasing decisions on the environmental impacts of products and manufacturers. Sociologist Paul Ray, Ph.D., classifies this new type of consumer as Cultural Creatives, 26% of all American adults who care deeply about and act on their feelings for ecology and saving the planet, peace, and spirituality. According to the Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) Journal, in 2000, this growing market represented \$546 billion globally and \$226.8 billion in the U.S. This is resulting in the success of environmentally responsible grocery stores, restaurants, dry cleaners, an array of green businesses, and a steady annual 12% increase in the amount of organic farmers.

The growing LOHAS market is an excellent start. By demanding cleaner energy, cleaner cars, and more products made from recycled materials, we will convince power companies, auto manufacturers, and other industries to change their behavior and transform the way we do business in this country. In this report, you will see how a more dramatic shift in behavior is needed by consumers, businesses and governments to change our path and end the debate between profit and actions to slow global warming and to protect our natural resources, biodiversity, and water quality.

Earthday Resources will help you to shift your consumption to environmentally responsible businesses through our Shop for the Earth, our online store filling with companies that are dedicated to sustainable business practices and protecting our environment. Visit [www.earthdayresources.org](http://www.earthdayresources.org) to shop for the earth and to learn how to make choices in your everyday life to reduce your impact on our world. **E**

**Safe and Sustainable Energy**  
Reducing energy consumption

**Basic Human Needs**  
Promoting sustainable agriculture

**Biological Diversity**  
Protecting the world's remaining forests

**Waste Reduction**  
Eliminating hazardous waste production

**Protecting the Earth's Atmosphere**  
Combating acid rain and reducing air pollution

**Global Goals for the Green Decade**  
A summary of the goals set on Earth Day 1990

**Resources**  
Where to look for more information on these issues

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EARTH TIPS

# Create a Safe, Sustainable Energy System

## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Increase the global research and development budget for hydrogen and other solar fuels 50-fold by 2000.*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

We have not met this goal. According to the U. S. Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, research and development across the world has remained relatively flat for hydrogen and solar fuels. The U.S. federal budget for hydrogen systems research in 1997 was \$19.1 million. In 2001, the budget for hydrogen systems was \$21.8 million. By investing more in the research and development of hydrogen and other solar fuels, we will move towards a new, sustainable energy future with reduced climate changing carbon emissions and oil use.



Hydrogen powered fuel cell technology is emerging as a promising source of power. Fuel cells combine pure hydrogen with oxygen from the atmosphere to form water and in the process, energy is created. Many researchers believe fuel cells will replace gasoline in the

future. Once sustainable methods of separating hydrogen are developed, we face the task of building an infrastructure on the scale of our 200,000 gasoline stations. The U.S. Department of Energy states that increasing hydrogen activity will open up markets for renewable technologies such as wind and solar as these energy sources can be used to create hydrogen power. Daimler-Chrysler, Toyota, and Honda have plans to mass-produce and market fuel cell vehicles by 2004.

## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Reduce per capita residential energy consumption by 30% and industrial use by 40% by 2000.*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

We did not meet this goal. In fact, energy use has been increasing throughout the world at a rapid rate. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), world energy consumption is projected to increase 59% between 1990 and 2020. Most of this energy comes from fossil fuels and nuclear power that pollute the environment and endanger public health. **E**

## WHAT'S HAPPENING ON RENEWABLE ENERGY INCENTIVES

State and local governments in the United States are beginning to provide incentives for renewable energy. As solar, wind, and geothermal power are becoming viable energy sources, states are offering financial programs aimed at moving consumption away from fossil fuels. While state governments are not doing nearly enough, they are far ahead of the federal government. According to Stateline.org, at least 43 states offer programs that range from personal and corporate rebates to loans and sales tax moratoriums.

California has led the way, with renewable incentives and conservation efforts. As a result, 12% of the state's energy comes from renewable sources and an aggressive conservation effort led by the state government during this past year's energy crisis, reduced state consumption of fossil fuels by more than 10%.

More programs offering a good start to a sustainable energy future:

Nevada has set a goal of obtaining 20% of its power from renewable sources by 2015.

Colorado's State Public Utilities Commission has ordered a 168-megawatt wind power farm in place of a natural gas plant.

New York has a variety of local rebate programs that enable residents to get back as much as 60% of the costs of their investments for installing renewable energy in their homes.

The City of Chicago and surrounding suburbs have committed to buying 20% of their power from renewable sources by 2020. **E**



Earthday Resources for Living Green now houses the program of Earth Day 2000. We are expanding to provide you with even more resources for sustainable living, and evolving to operate entirely from the internet. Visit [www.earthdayresources.org](http://www.earthdayresources.org) to see the changes and get more from your organization for green living. Members receive Earth Tips five times per year. For membership information, call us at Earthday Resources.

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# Meet Basic Human Needs

## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Promote low input sustainable agriculture, with crops grown as close as possible to markets. Reduce global pesticide use by 75%. Emphasize low-tillage crops to reduce soil erosion.*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

We have not met these goals. This makes it difficult for our food production systems to overcome major challenges on the horizon. These challenges include feeding an exploding population, expected to be at 8 billion by 2020, from limited agricultural areas already affected by soil and water degradation. Many countries do not have the land available to feed their growing populations which requires areas like Australia, Europe, and North America, areas experiencing slower population growth, to provide more food for export. Exporting food means that food will not be grown closer to markets and more natural resources will be used to prepare and transport food.

The World Resources Institute states that many governments across the world subsidize pesticide use to increase food production, which provides a disincentive for farmers to use less harmful practices such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) or organic farming. Thus, pesticide use is remaining constant across the world.

Greater demands on agriculture land and the regular use of pesticides combined with unsustainable farming practices and an increasing demand for meat are resulting in increasing soil erosion, water pollution, and other types of land degradation. Scientists at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) state that nearly 40% of the world's agricultural land is seriously degraded, which can affect the long-term productive capacity of those soils.

The good news is that a significant shift in consumer demand is helping to promote low input sustainable agriculture. Across the globe, the demand for organic food is growing as people become increasingly concerned about the use of antibiotics, pesticides, and genetically engineered ingredients in their food. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the number of organic farmers is growing by 12% per year and organic cropland doubled between 1992 and 1997. **E**

## WHAT'S HAPPENING ON GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

Genetically engineered foods have been touted as a way to reduce pesticide use and world hunger. However, genetically engineered foods are not required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to undergo safety testing before going to market and so we have no way of knowing the long term effects they will have on human health or the environment. Furthermore, without required labeling, consumers do not know if they are purchasing and eating foods that contain genetically engineered ingredients. Current estimates are that 60-70% of processed foods contain these ingredients. Risks of genetically engineered foods include new allergies, contamination of native plants, and the use of more pesticides. In addition to the health and environmental risks, genetically engineered foods are not alleviating world hunger. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that 98% of genetic alterations are done to make food production and processing easier and more profitable for the manufacturers. Only 2% of alterations are aimed at improved nutrition or taste.

On February 6th, Genetically Engineered Food Alert, along with thousands of concerned citizens across the country, launched a campaign calling on Kraft Foods, the largest food company in the U.S. to remove genetically engineered ingredients from their foods. The campaign was launched with press conferences in Kraft's headquarters cities of Chicago and New York and with educational events in over 170 cities across the country. Kraft claims that its products can be found in 99% of American households, yet many of these products contain untested and unlabeled genetically engineered ingredients. **E**

# Ensure Healthy Water

## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Outlaw all dumping of untreated industrial and medical wastes in surface streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans.*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

Most countries in the world continue to allow untreated wastes to be dumped directly into waterways. In their *The State of the World 2001* report, the UN Population Fund reported that 90 to 95% of sewage and 70% of industrial wastes in developing countries are dumped untreated into surface waters where they pollute the usable water supply. The UN report states that natural systems may purify water when there is enough water available. However, due to a growing population, intensive land use, and industrial development, clean water is becoming scarcer. Pollution such as acid rain, fertilizer, pesticide, and manure runoff are damaging our water eco-systems and those that depend on them. The World Health Organization reveals that 1.1 billion people do not have access to clean water and 2.4 to 3 billion people lack access to sanitation.

While the Clean Water Act outlawed dumping of untreated waste in the United States in 1972, many companies and government facilities fail to comply. According to the U.S. Public Interest Research Group with information obtained through the Freedom of Information Act from the Environmental Protection Agency, one in four of the nation's largest municipal, industrial, and federal facilities were in significant violation of the Clean Water Act at least one time between October 1st, 1998 and December 31st, 1999. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that 40% of the nation's streams, lakes, and estuaries remain unsafe for fishing and swimming. **E**

# Enhance and Protect Biological Diversity

## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Ban all logging in ancient forests and provide the greatest possible protection for the world's remaining forests.*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

We are not meeting this goal, leaving ancient and other remaining forests unprotected from mining, logging, and associated destructive forms of development. Destruction of our forests contributes to global warming, desertification, and a significant loss of biodiversity. Deforestation of tropical forests can contribute to global warming because biomass in these forests serves as a carbon sink, which absorbs carbon from the atmosphere. The United Nations Population Fund's *The State of the World Population* explains that after fossil fuel combustion, tropical deforestation is the second most important source of carbon dioxide.

In the U.S., only 4% of our ancient forests remain, down from 10% in 1993. Although 2/3 of these ancient forests are located in our national forests, they are still not protected from development. On January 12, 2001, Americans won some protection for these areas with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. However, this protection policy has not yet gone into effect and is currently being challenged in federal court by the timber industry and several western states.

Outside of the United States, much of the world's remaining old growth forests are found in the Amazon rainforest, Central Africa, Southeast Canada, and Russia. According to the UN Population Fund, the forests in Latin America and Africa are at a particularly great risk of destruction due to current rates of development and population growth. In fact, at current rates of development, the Amazon rainforests are likely to be gone by the end of the 21st century. **E**



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## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Re-structure international lending policies to relieve the current pressure put on many developing countries to destroy global environmental treasures to service their debts. Link all future development assistance to criteria ensuring sustainable development.*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

Although attempts, such as the Heavily Indebted Countries Initiative (HIPC), have been made to re-structure lending policies we have not achieved this goal. According to the Worldwatch Institute, 47 countries meet the World Bank's statistical requirements for being very poor and very indebted, of which only 41 are currently eligible for the World Bank's recent debt cancellation initiatives. This leaves out some of the world's largest debtors. Together, these 47 countries owe \$422 billion. As of April 2001, lenders have committed to \$33 billion in debt forgiveness for 22 countries.

The Worldwatch Institute continues to state that although some debts are being forgiven, the system is not changing. As a result, developing countries will continue to receive loans from industrialized nations for projects that will only put them back in debt. In addition, rather than relieving debts, many creditors are creating an endless cycle of debt by granting loans to borrowing countries to repay debts. Worldwatch Institute states that for every dollar borrowed in 1999 by some of the poorest countries, 83 cents went to repay loans.

Debt pressure is continuing to place human health and the environment in danger as countries spend more on debt payments than basic social services and remain dependent on export oriented mining, logging, and soil degrading monoculture crops like coffee and cocoa rather than planting diverse food crops to feed their citizens. **E**

# Reduce Waste and Toxic Pollution

## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Eliminate 80% of hazardous waste production by the year 2000 through comprehensive source reduction programs.*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

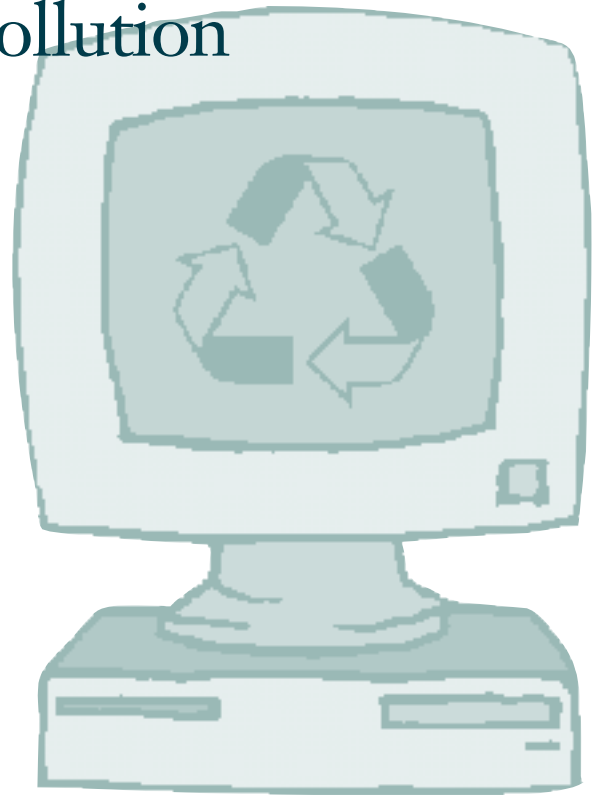
We did not meet this goal. The UN Environmental Programme's (UNEP) Global Environmental Outlook report states that 400 million tons of hazardous waste is generated in the world annually and that about 75% of the pesticide and hazardous waste generation is from developed countries.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Toxic Release Inventory (TRI), reporting facilities in the United States released 3.8 million tons of toxic chemicals in 1999, a 5% increase over 1998. Overall, toxic chemicals produced by certain industries have declined, but as more industries report, the amount of pounds of chemical releases reported climbs.

The EPA explains that this number still only represents a fraction of chemicals released into our environment and does not account for the full range of effects on our environment. TRI reporting does not account for all sources of releases. Numerous industry sectors are not required to report, other sources, such as waste management activities are not included in TRI reports, and reporting facilities often submit estimated data as they are not required by the TRI program to monitor their actual releases. Even if the release data were complete, it still only reflects releases into the environment and does not attempt to gauge the extent of public exposure or adverse health and ecosystem effects.

TRI data is a useful as a starting point for communities to identify where toxic pollution is originating and which chemicals are being released. This information can give citizens and legislators the tools to reduce the use of toxic chemicals in their communities. Legislation passed in New Jersey and Massachusetts has resulted in the reduction in the use of toxic chemicals, toxic waste created, and pollution.

On the global front, we are taking some important steps to reduce hazardous waste. In 2001, the U.S. joined 90 countries in signing the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, which will eventually lead to the elimination of toxic persistent organic pollutants worldwide. **E**



## WHAT'S HAPPENING ON PC RECYCLING

PC disposal is creating a mounting problem in this country. Computers are now ranked as the nation's fastest growing category of waste by the Environmental Protection Agency with only 10% being recycled. Many PC monitors are made with toxic components like lead and mercury. Some communities are launching programs to assist residents with recycling, reusing, and properly disposing of their computers. Massachusetts has made it illegal for people to put their old monitors in landfills and California has passed a similar law. These programs are a good start, but pass the costs of responsible disposal onto taxpayers. Tens of thousands of students, investors, and consumers across the country have joined our ecopledge.com campaign to convince Dell to offer a "take back" program to individual U.S. consumers which will recycle or otherwise dispose of PCs in an environmentally responsible manner at the end of their useful life. **E**

# Protect the Planet's Atmosphere

## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Ban all CFCs and other ozone depleting chemical emissions by 1994 and halt production of such chemicals by 2000.*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

We are progressing on this goal, but have not achieved it. The Montreal Protocol, signed by 160 countries in 1987, has been updated several times and now requires developed countries to phase out 15 types of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), along with other ozone depleting chemicals such as halons, hydrochlorofluorocarbons, carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform.

A longer term plan has been established leading to an eventual phase out of 40 more ozone depleting substances including methyl bromide by 2010 for developed countries and freezing increased use for developing countries by 2002. The U.S. began to curtail methyl bromide use in 2000 and is now deciding which uses of methyl bromide should qualify as special exemptions to the phase-out. It is likely that the U.S. will allow much continued use of ozone-depleting methyl bromide by farmers and fumigators. Under the Montreal Protocol, developing countries are given 10 additional years to phase out their use of these substances and the countries are eligible for financial assistance to end their use of ozone depleting substances.

Ozone depletion leads to an increase in ultraviolet rays on the Earth's surface. While ozone depletion does not cause global warming, it has been discovered that the two atmospheric problems do interact and ongoing global warming could delay the ozone layer's recovery. Increased ultraviolet (UV) rays increase dangers for people of developing skin cancer, immune system problems, and cataracts. UV rays can adversely affect crops as well as disrupt the food chain. Chemicals that eat away at the ozone layer include chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons (found in extinguishers), methyl bromide (pesticide), and methyl chloroform (used as a solvent in industrial processes.)

As a result of international protocols and compliance by participating countries, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration states that the ozone layer is expected to recover over the next 50 years.

## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Combat acid rain by reducing sulfur dioxide emissions by 90% and nitrogen oxide by 75% by 2000.*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

We have not met this goal, although we are making progress in reducing sulfur dioxide. In the United States, the U.S. EPA states that national emissions of sulfur dioxide have decreased by 17% over the last decade while nitrogen oxide emissions remain constant at about 23 million tons per year since the 1980s.

According to the U.S. Geological Service, acid rain is formed when some particles of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, released by the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil products by power plants and automobiles, get transported by winds and caught in clouds. When the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide particles come into contact with water droplets in clouds, chemical reactions can result in acid rain. Acid rain can damage forests, soil, fish, and human health. In *Acid Rain Revisited: Advances in scientific understanding since the passage of the 1970 and 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments*, the authors state that power plants will need to reduce their emissions of sulfur and nitrogen by as much as 80% to allow already damaged lakes and forests to recover.

## EARTH DAY 1990 GOAL

*Curtail CO2 production from combustion of fossil fuels by 20% by 2000. By 2020 worldwide, carbon emissions from fossil fuels should be reduced to 2 billion tons (down from 5.66 billion tons in 1988.).*

## PROGRESS TO DATE

We did not reduce CO2 production from the combustion of fossil fuels by 20% by 2000. Burning fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas responsible for global warming. By building up in the atmosphere, carbon dioxide traps heat that would otherwise escape. According to the UN Environmental Programme's *Global Environment Outlook-2000*, annual global emissions of carbon dioxide continue to rise. Over the last decade, global carbon dioxide emissions have increased over 300 million tons per year. The Worldwatch Institute states that atmospheric CO2 concentrations are now at unprecedented levels in relation to the last 420,000 years.


Increased carbon dioxide in our atmosphere is a consequence of burning carbon intensive fossil fuels. The Worldwatch Institute states that today, annual carbon emissions total a little more than 6.3 billion tons, which does not place us on the trajectory to meet our goal of 2 billion tons of carbon emissions from fossil fuels by 2020. The International Panel on Climate Change predicts annual carbon emissions from fossil fuels will range between 9 and 12.1 billion tons in 2020.

The Worldwatch Institute notes that 1999 marked a milestone in the fossil fuel era when worldwide use of less carbon-intensive natural gas surpassed coal, the most carbon-intensive fuel. China, responsible for 24% of world coal use, experienced a 25% decline between 1997 and 1999 by reducing coal production subsidies, closing inefficient state-owned industries, and shifting to natural gas for residential cooking and heating.

More good news comes from Denmark, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, who have implemented carbon taxes as a way to reduce carbon emissions. Other important steps in the right direction include UK's goals of reducing carbon emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by 2020 and Iceland's goal of becoming the first hydrogen economy producing 70% of their energy with carbon free hydrogen between 2030 and 2040. **E**

**PROCLAIMED ON EARTH DAY 1990, THESE GOALS ADDRESS THE MOST CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES FACING GLOBAL SOCIETY. OUR QUALITY OF LIFE, AND QUITE POSSIBLY OUR SURVIVAL, DEPENDS ON ATTAINING THEM. THE  SYMBOL INDICATES GOALS THAT ARE DISCUSSED IN THIS YEAR'S REPORT.**

## CREATE A SAFE, SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SYSTEM


 Reduce per capita residential energy consumption by 30% and industrial energy use by 40% by the year 2000.

 Increase the global research and development budget for hydrogen and other solar fuels 50-fold over the next ten years.

Increase renewable energy production to 20% of the total energy generated by 2000.

Stop commissions for new nuclear power plants.


## MEET BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

 Promote low input sustainable agriculture, with crops grown as close as possible to markets. Reduce global pesticide use by 75%. Emphasize low tillage crops to reduce soil erosion.

Encourage dietary shifts to healthier foods that are lower on the food chain.

Provide family planning information and contraceptives to every woman in the world who wants them and stabilize the world population to no more than eight billion people.

## ENSURE HEALTHY WATER

 Outlaw all dumping of untreated industrial and medical wastes in surface streams, rivers, lakes, and oceans.

Reduce per capita residential water use by 30%.


Design all future sewage treatment facilities to segregate human sewage from industrial discharges, returning the former to the land and recycling the latter.

## PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

By 1996, reduce world military expenditures by 50% to approximately \$500 billion per year.

By 1992, convert the United Nations Environmental Programme into an international regulatory agency with the necessary authority to safeguard the atmosphere, the oceans, and other global commons from trans-boundary environmental threats.


## ENHANCE AND PROTECT BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

 Ban all logging in ancient forests and provide the greatest possible protection for the world's remaining rainforests.

Reforest 130 hectares (52 million acres) by the year 2000.


Triple the world's parkland and ecological reserves.

Establish an International Fund for the Conservation of Biological Diversity, following the model developed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

 Restructure international lending policies to relieve the current pressure put on many developing countries to destroy global environmental treasures to service their debt. Link all future development assistance to criteria ensuring sustainable development.


## REDUCE WASTE AND TOXIC POLLUTION


Reduce solid waste by 75% by the year 2000 by establishing effective recycling and composting programs, enacting international standards that ensure ease of recycling at the end of every product's lifetime, and banning all packaging that is not recyclable.


 Eliminate 80% of hazardous waste production by the year 2000 through comprehensive source reduction programs.

Clean up all existing toxic waste and hazardous waste sites to acceptable levels of safety.

## PROTECT THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE

 Ban all CFCs and other ozone depleting chemical emissions by 1994 and halt production of such chemicals by 2000.

 Combat acid rain by reducing sulfur dioxide emissions by 90% and nitrogen oxide by 75% by the year 2000.

 Curtail carbon dioxide production from the conclusion of fossil fuels by 20% by the year 2000. By 2020, worldwide carbon emissions from fossil fuels should be reduced to two billion tons per year (down from 5.66 billion tons in 1988.)

Improve urban air quality in the world's major cities by reducing all automobile pollutants by at least 50% by 1995. Improve future health through investments in urban planning, public transportation, and alternative fuel vehicles. **E**

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