

Sustainable Consumption and Production

HOW PALESTINE IS SWITCHING TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Building climate resilience and resource efficiency



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SwitchMed is an EU-funded initiative to support transformation towards Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and Circular Economy in eight Mediterranean countries. SwitchMed directly supports the reinforcement of an enabling policy environment, practices by private sector, and experience-sharing among stakeholders to build a community of practice on SCP, circular and blue economy and reducing the environmental footprint of consumption and production activities.

SwitchMed is implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (MedWaves, former SCP/RAC). The initiative is carried out in close coordination with the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (DG NEAR).

During SwitchMed's first phase (2013-2018) UNEP's collaboration with the countries focused on the development of National Actions Plans (NAPs) for the transition to SCP and demonstration projects. The Sustainable Consumption and Production National Action Plans (SCP-NAPs) feed into and are closely linked to related national strategies (Sustainable Development, Green Growth) and the regional SCP action plan developed by UNEP-MAP.

The second phase of the project (2019-2024) builds on the successes of the first phase by focusing on enhancing economic opportunities for businesses following green and circular economy models, enabling resource-efficient circular economies at national and regional levels. As a result, this action provides new employment opportunities, including for women. A special focus is encouraged to support their participation in trainings and capacity building activities and benefit from other supporting measures.

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SCP: PLANNING FOR CHANGE – IMPLEMENTING THE CHANGE

The core aim of SwitchMed is to assist countries in making the transition to SCP and circular economy, one of the objectives the world set itself when it adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.



SwitchMed started back in 2013 – at a time when the SDGs were not yet adopted as the international Agenda for 2030. UNEP’s first activities at country level were to present and raise awareness of SCP and present the positive impact such a switch could have.

As a first step, UNEP provided technical assistance and capacity reinforcement for countries as they developed National Action Plans (NAPs) for making this switch. The plans focused on resource efficiency in tandem with other social and environmental challenges such as gender equality and climate change.

Palestine’s NAP process began with wide-ranging consultations and a thorough assessment of the state of SCP in the country. More than 300 people took part in the development process. The NAP was conceived in line with the Palestinian National Planning framework and its vision is to integrate SCP into the country’s development agenda.

Three priority areas were identified:

- Agriculture and food, including sustainable and climate-smart agriculture, improving environmental practices in food production, and addressing food waste.
- Eco-tourism.
- Housing and construction, including green buildings and green procurement of infrastructure.

For each priority area, specific SCP objectives were identified.

In agriculture and food these were:

- Promote and implement best environmental and health practices and technologies in food manufacturing.
- Develop policy and legal frameworks through conservative agriculture, and empowering small farmers and their cooperative.
- Sensitize and educate food producers, retailers and consumers to promote green value chains.

In construction and housing:

- Enhance the role of public policy and decision making for greening of the building sector.
- Promote retrofitting of existing buildings stock.
- Sensitize and raise awareness of everyone involved in housing and construction.

In tourism:

- Promote the diversification of the tourism (e.g. ecotourism, cultural tourism, rural tourism, off-season tourism).
- Promote regulatory, legislative and financial measures to create green and decent jobs and foster local community engagement and empowerment.
- Raise awareness, capacities and technical skills to support sustainable destinations.

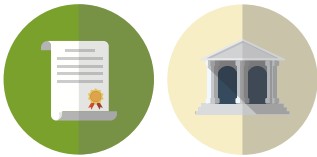


TEN SUCCESS STORIES | PALESTINE

01

PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AGENDA 2017–2022

The State of Palestine has worked to incorporate sustainable consumption and production into several national policies. In its Palestinian National Agenda 2017–2022 SCP is listed as a national priority under pillar three, which aims to ensure resilient communities. Adapting to climate change is a big part of this. An updated version of the national agenda was released at the end of 2020, which linked environmental concerns in a cross-cutting strategy. It recommended that the environment be integrated into policies on social protection, education, health, culture and heritage, economic development, agriculture, tourism, ICT, employment, housing, energy, transportation, water and wastewater management, justice and rule of law, international relations, security, local governance and administration, public finance including procurement and fiscal policies, youth, and gender. Additionally, the National Strategy for Economic Development links economic development and environment in the implementation of SCP within food manufacturing industries.



02

UPTAKE BY NGOS

Though Palestine's SCP National Action Plan was established by the government, NGOs has contributed strongly to its development. NGOs have used the NAP to attract funding to implement their programmes. Many agricultural organizations have environmental and social elements as in their rural community development and agricultural programmes, with the Palestinian Agricultural Institutions Coalition having in its objectives developing Palestinian agriculture in a manner that protects its environmental resources. The coalition in cooperation with We-effect is implementing a climate justice project linked to SCP. Other groups are working on greening food production, particularly dates, fresh herbs and olive oil, and others still on tourism, green entrepreneurship, and waste recycling and treatment.

Several NGOs and community initiatives have been active in promoting sustainability in agricultural products and in supporting small farmers/women and youth in marketing their products at environmental fairs. These events have resulted in higher sales, particularly in the Ramallah area, where there is higher consumer demand for organically produced or fair-trade products.



03

GREEN EXPORT POLICY FRAMEWORK

One policy approved by Palestine's Cabinet in June 2021, the Green Export Policy Framework, relies heavily on worked done in developing the country's NAP and, as such, has SCP at its core. The framework was developed through an EU-funded project, "Creating an Enabling Environment for Green Economy", and is being implemented by PalTrade.

The Green export policy framework sets a road map for three priority exports: export of sustainable grown agriculture products, with focus on organic products; export of services under sustainable tourism; and export of sustainably produced marble and stone.

Some other laws or decrees that have been triggered by the development of Palestine's SCP-NAP include regulations on solid waste management (no 3, 2019), allowance of utilization of treated wastes/or wastewater in irrigation (no 1, 2019), and bylaws or draft laws covering waste management, including disposal of building and demolition waste, and e-waste from government institutions.



04 SCP EXPOS



Sustainable consumption and production expositions held around the country proved popular and were a reliable way to raise awareness about SCP and its potential as well as collect information about initiatives already under way. Participants in the expositions remain keen for them to continue, but this has not been possible because of financial and staffing constraints at the Environmental Quality Authority. If events such as this were to be held on a regular basis, perhaps leading to an annual forum on SCP, significant momentum would be harnessed for SCP. NGOs active in the sector might consider establishing such expositions in parallel to their events, for instance. The expositions had a high participation and have been associated with high-level political attendance to these events.

05 ECO TRAILS

The SwitchMed project laid the foundation for eco-tourism in Palestine. One of the project's demonstration activities, the development of eco-trails, was particularly successful, and helped moved eco-tourism from an idea in the tourism export strategy to a more tangible, implementable approach on the ground. To begin, a number of eco-trails were tested using a methodology developed with the support of SwitchMed, and field visits were made. Some 53 people were trained, and a list of official eco-trails was developed. Rehabilitation of selected number of eco-trails was necessary to increase safety and accessibility, to efforts were made to improve landmarks and maps of the trails. Signs on the eco trails were also posted to provide good orientation for visitors. A guidebook to flora and fauna that could be seen along the trails was also developed, drawing visitors to the trails, and also broadening interest after it was distributed to public libraries and schools.

06 NATIONAL REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



In 2015 the world's nations agreed to a set of 17 interlinked Sustainable Development Goals, which call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection (United Nations n.d.). Importantly, during its first voluntary review of sustainable development in the country, Palestine determined that it would work to achieve its commitments under the SDGs would be through the implementation of its SCP-NAP. A number of initiatives are under way to measure and report achievements against the SDGs, including an online statistical platform, contribution to the United Nations' "Atlas of Sustainable Development 2020", and a national statistical report of achievements published in 2020.



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07 FUNDING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE



Palestine became the 197th member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2016, the same year it became a signatory of the Paris Agreement. Since then it has established a National Committee on Climate Change and designed the Environment Quality Authority as the responsible body for coordinating the country's implementation and reporting of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the UNFCCC.

Palestine has also prepared its Country Programme to the Green Climate Fund – titled "Climate Resilient Transformation with the Green Climate Fund", issued in 2019 – and endorsed by the GCF Climate Investment Committee on 5 November 2020. The program presented the Palestinian National Agenda and SCP-NAP as climate-related initiatives developed at the national level.

Access to the GCF is possible only through accredited institutions, so far none of the Palestinian organizations have been accredited. All GCF projects, therefore, go through UN agencies, or through international development agencies.

08 WATER MANAGEMENT

The biggest project in Palestine on Climate Change is called "Developing a low-carbon water management scheme and increasing water availability for sustainable agriculture", for which the country mobilized \$US 53.4 million. The project is co-funded by Green Climate fund (53 per cent), AFD (29 per cent) and Irish Aid (9.6 per cent). The project is expected to last five years and its executing agencies are the Palestinian Water Authority, the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture and FAO. The project is expected to avoid 166.9 k tons of CO₂ of emissions and will benefit 223.6 k people (GCF n.d.). The planned outcomes are to reduce the vulnerability of Gaza's coastal aquifer and secure sustainability of access to domestic and agricultural water, to promote climate resilient and water-efficient agriculture, and to enhance the institutional and operational capabilities for integrated resilient water management (GCF 2019). The project links to Palestine's SCP-NAP in that it promotes sustainable agriculture and food production and protects and secures water resources



09

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

One of the priorities identified in Palestine's NAP was to transition to more sustainable agriculture to improve food security and to protect natural resources. The Environment Quality Authority has begun this process by developing and disseminating appropriate tools to achieve this. Close to 100 people have been trained in total. Guidelines on biological pest control were prepared and 22 people were trained in their use, and 77 were trained in post harvesting practices and handling assessment. A manual was developed on best agricultural practices to prevent moisture loss from soil and organic matter, with 60 people being trained and a further 40 attending workshops.

10

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

A number of projects are under way in Palestine on circular economy. These include:

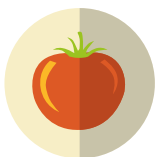
- DECOST, which addresses composting, sustainable behaviours, and urban agriculture, and has a budget of 3 million euros.
- HELIOS, which will develop vocational training on the green economy, and has a budget of 2.7 million euros.
- INNOMED-UP, which promotes circular economy within cultural and creative industries through technological development.
- GIMED, which aims to support green entrepreneurs through training and small grants.
- TEX-MED ALLIANCES, which aims to bring circular practices to the textile sector.



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SCP IN PALESTINE: **LOOKING AHEAD**

Around the world, humanity is making ever-increasing demands on nature, taking from the planet natural resources at a rate far greater than that with which nature is able replenish them. Simply, we are living beyond our planetary means.

How we adapt to this challenge of rising demand for shrinking resources will be our legacy to future generations. We have a choice: we can leave them a diminished world, or a more resource-efficient low-carbon one. The true value of programmes such as SwitchMed is that they show a way forward to this new world, one where we still produce the goods and services that we need, but do so in a cleaner, greener way. Switching to SCP also contributes to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) which aims to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean. It can help to end poverty, combat climate change, and prevent a mass extinction.

The current Covid-19 pandemic has provided a tragic illustration of how closely linked human and environmental well-being are. Biodiversity loss, shrinking habitats, dwindling natural resources, pollution and climate change all adversely affect humans as well as flora and fauna.

But the pandemic has also created a rare opportunity to begin again, to adopt a systemic life-cycle approach that balances nature's needs with national priorities. Implementing sustainable consumption and production practices across all sectors would be a significant step towards achieving this equilibrium.

Sustainable consumption and production policies also provide important opportunities to trigger transformative changes in economic and social systems and promote the human rights of women and girls as well as men and boys. It is imperative to integrate a gender perspective into sustainable consumption and production work in general and national action plans, which are the key policy instruments at national level that create the enabling policy environment to achieve SDG 12.

Currently, for instance, about one-third of all food produced is wasted, or spoiled because of poor transportation. This equates to 1.3 billion tonnes of food worth about \$US 1 trillion. And if the world switched to energy-efficient light bulbs we would save \$US 120 billion a year. Additionally, in the decade between 2010 and 2019, electronic waste grew by 38 per cent but only 20 per cent of that waste was recycled (United Nations n.d.).



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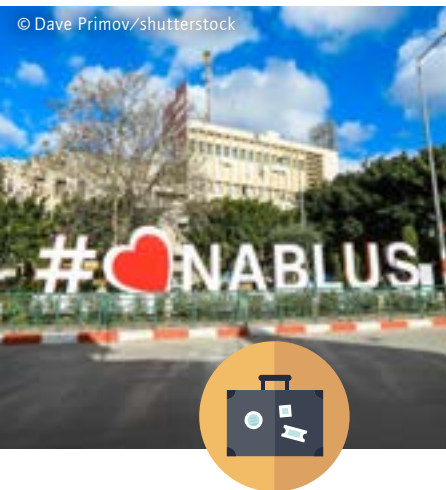
The National Action Plans developed by countries with the support of SwitchMed recognize the potential of making the transition to SCP and circular economy and set out the pathways they intend to follow.

In its National Action Plan, Palestine focused on creating sustainability in the agri-food, tourism and housing and construction.

SCP and the circular economy have great potential to respond to national priorities, and to the three global crises (biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change) the world is facing. Switching to more sustainable patterns of consumption and production across these sectors and others will need behavioural change at both national and individual levels but could generate significant economic benefits. Research by the International Resource Panel shows that more efficient use of materials and energy could add an extra \$US 2 trillion to the global economy by 2050 (UNEP 2017), while a study by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) shows that transforming the energy system could boost cumulative global Gross Domestic Product gains above business-as-usual by \$US 98 trillion by 2050, nearly quadruple renewable energy jobs to 42 million, and expand employment in energy efficiency to 21 million.



The opportunities for countries from sustainable consumption and production are rich and varied. Some ideas for building on successes and moving forward, subject, of course, to alignment with national priorities, include:



+ TOURISM. Tourism around the world has been hard hit by Covid 19, so, as the sector turns its mind to recovery, now may prove an opportune moment to support and encourage doing things differently. Embedding resource and energy efficiency, waste reduction, and protecting flora and fauna could build resilience in a sector that, traditionally, is jobs intensive. Working to reduce food waste from restaurants in the hospitality sector, as well as promoting locally grown in-season food, could help Palestine achieve some of its goals on GHG emissions, waste management, and circular economy. Additionally, for some marine or coastal destinations, a focus on sustainable actions could support the country's efforts to expand its "blue" economy, a strategy for which is currently being developed. Sustainable tourism is already a national priority, and a thriving blue economy could help deliver on that objective while improving lives and livelihoods, and promoting clean seas and environmental well-being.

+ PROMOTING CIRCULAR ECONOMY. A circular economy is a strong first step on the path to more sustainable consumption and production in that it encourages us to reduce, reuse, and recycle, but a truly circular economy closes the loop by encouraging the repair and remanufacture of goods produced. Palestine is already taking steps along this path with the introduction of regulations that promote waste recovery and treatment, and cleaner, leaner production processes. Projects that support the creation of a market for repaired and remanufactured items (where goods at the end of their useful life are made into something else) could be valuable. Examples here could be creating standards for second-hand or remanufactured goods, making room for them within public procurement regulations, putting in place incentives for their purchase, and supporting factories and start-ups in the production of remanufactured goods. Continued targeting of particular sectors, such as housing and construction, for instance, where much of the waste produced could be reused, may prove useful, and could aid in mainstreaming the principles of SCP and circular economy more broadly through society.



+ SUPPORTING CHANGE IN THE BLUE ECONOMY.

There is significant potential for SCP within the "blue" sector, from establishing more environmentally friendly port operations, to embedding resource efficiency in coastal and marine areas management plans, to innovative cleantech solutions, and standards for marine sports and eco-tourism. Protecting the biodiversity of marine environments could have significant flow-on economic effects, particularly in eco-tourism, but also by improving the livelihoods of coastal communities with the development of small-scale projects that highlight the cultural traditions and crafts of the populations along the coast. Additionally, greening operations in busy ports could be useful in reducing waste, cutting GHG emissions, and creating jobs.



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+ SUSTAINABLE FINANCING. Globally, a switch to green financing is under way. A database maintained by UNEP and the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership (GGKP) shows that there are now at least 391 national and sub-national policy and regulatory measures on green finance in place around the world, with 79 new measures were implemented or announced in 2019 (UNEP 2019). These measures range from transparency in climate-related risks in investment portfolios, to providing incentives for investing in green assets, and strengthening environmental risk management practices within institutions. Projects that support green investment, or a shift towards considering environmental impacts as a fundamental pillar of investing and lending practices, could be a significant contribution to building a better, greener, post-Covid economy.



+ DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION Delivering on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals the world set itself in 2015 will require commitment and innovation. Projects that examine, develop and assess the digital tools necessary to scale up ambitions in existing projects, to measure and record their achievements against SDG indicators, to understand the digital needs of industrial sectors to transform to cleaner more sustainable production, or that support technological start-ups working on creative solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution or that collect and disseminate data, statistics and knowledge will be important steps in the transformation to a more sustainable society. Expanding the digital transition to a range of sectors could aid in the efficient management of resources, as well as improving economic resilience in the post-Covid world by providing new green jobs.

Whatever path Palestine decides to follow in the years ahead, it is important that environmental, economic, and social concerns especially on gender equality, remain at its core. The country's commitment to sustainable consumption and production provides a solid foundation, but behavioral change at all levels of society will be essential to achieve the transformation to a resource-efficient low-carbon world. An agile, resilient, innovative approach could see us all doing more and better with less as we work together to face any challenges that arise.

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SWITCHMED: INSPIRING CHANGE

SCP is about doing more and better with less. It is about meeting humanity's needs but remaining within planetary boundaries, about using the natural resources that the Earth provides without degrading the environment. Now in its second phase, the SwitchMed projects works to support the development of policies and practices that support a switch to sustainable consumption and production (SCP) in the Southern Mediterranean region and to make the circular economy the mainstream business model there.

Palestine has already developed policies, strategies, and integrated plans to form a regulatory framework that has SCP at itscore. For some time now, it has been building on these, expanding its waste reduction plan, promoting a resource-efficient circular economy, and further developing its work on sustainable water management and energy solutions. It is clear that SCP is no longer just something discussed in meeting rooms. Now it is happening on the ground, across business and industry, in cities and regions, reducing pollution, improving the air we breathe, and promoting better use of nature's gifts through resource-efficient and low-carbon consumption and production practices.

In this document you will see 10 success stories inspired by the work of SwitchMed in the State of Palestine. They show how what began in workshops developed into plans that created a ripple that flowed out around the country. This short publication shows that opportunities for countries from sustainable consumption and production are rich and varied.

The Switch to SCP is off and running. SwitchMed is proud to have supported Palestine in its work to build a society where people and planet thrive and prosper together.

