

You are more powerful than you think!

By Monique Barbut*

Are you overwhelmed by the depressing news coming at you daily? Conflict, forced migrants, famine, floods, hurricanes, extinction of species, climate change, threats of war ... a seemingly endless list. It might surprise you, but you can really make a difference on many of these issues.

Just like every raindrop counts towards a river and every vote counts in an election, so does every choice you make in what you consume. With every produce you consume, you strengthen the river of sustainability or of unsustainability. It is either a vote in favor of policies that spread social goods like peace and poverty eradication or social bads like – conflict or grinding poverty.

We look up to governments a lot, forgetting that governments set up policies to encourage us to make specific choices. That's how powerful our lifestyles choices are.

Imagine, what would happen if the world's over 7 billion consumers committed, every year, to just one lifestyle change that will support the provision of goods from sustainably managed land.

Every year, we make New Year resolutions about change. Why not include as one of those resolutions, a change of habit leading that will lead to a smart sustainable consumer lifestyle? Without any government intervention, you can make choices that will help to end deforestation, soil erosion and pollution or reduce the effects of drought or sand and dust storms.

However, to make the right lifestyle change, each of us must first find out where the goods we consume are cultivated and processed. For instance, if they are linked to conflict in regions with rapidly degrading land or forests or polluted water or soils, then chose an alternative that is produced sustainably. It is a small, but achievable change to make every year.

Every country and product has a land footprint. What we eat. What we wear. What we drink. The manufacturer or supplier of the products we consume. The brands related to these suppliers that we will support. We prioritize buying from the local small farm holders to reduce our global land footprint. Consumers have plenty of options.

But a vital missing link is the informed consumer.

Through mobile phone apps**, it is getting easier and easier to track where the goods we consume come from. It is also getting easier to find alternative suppliers of our choice, as the private sector embraces the idea of ethical business. The information you need is literally in the – mobile phone in the – palm of our hand.

But you must believe in your own power to change the world. The global effect on the market may surprise you.

We will reward the food producers, natural resource managers and land planners struggling against all odds to keep the land healthy and productive. This is cheapest way to help every family and community in the world to thrive, and avoid the damage and loss of life that comes from environmental degradation and disasters.

Make 17 June, the celebration of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, your date with nature. It's the mid-point of the year and a good moment to review the progress you are making towards your New Year resolution of a sustainable lifestyle.

In 2030, when the international community evaluates its achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, you can point to positive changes that you have contributed in favor of present and future generations.

You are more powerful than you think. Take your power back and put it into action.

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Read More

**For information on how to track your land footprint, read: [Fixing what the land is losing between the farm and your fork](#)

Information about World Day to Combat Desertification is here: [2018 WDCD](#)

To understand the link between drought and land degradation read: [Recurring droughts are clear and present dangers](#)

About UNCCD

The UNCCD is an international agreement on good land stewardship. It helps people, communities and countries to create wealth, grow economies and secure enough food and water and energy, by ensuring land users have an enabling environment for sustainable land management. Through partnerships, the Convention's 197 Parties set up robust systems to manage drought promptly and effectively. Good land stewardship based on a sound policy and science helps integrate and accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, builds resilience to climate change and prevents biodiversity loss.

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