

Press Release No. 54/2010

Press Relations Officer: Martin Ittershagen
Deputy Press Relations Officer: Stephan Gabriel Haufe
PR-staff: Dieter Leutert, Fotini Mavromati, Doreen Redlich, Martin Stallmann
Address: Postfach 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau
Telephone: +49 340/2103-2122, -6625, -2250, -2318, - 2367, -2507
E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de
Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de



Everyone–environment, economy, and consumers- stands to gain from conserving resources

Federal Statistical Office and Federal Environment Agency publish new data and research results on raw materials efficiency

According to the latest results of the Environmental-Economic Accounting of the Federal Statistical Office and the Federal Environment Agency (UBA), Germany is making steady progress in the area of protection of resources. The Federal government goal of doubling raw materials efficiency by 2020 over its 1994 level cannot be achieved with the measures in place up to now. Although raw materials efficiency in Germany has increased in recent years, the trend is not enough to achieve the targeted reduction of raw materials consumption.

About 60 billion tonnes of raw materials are now used worldwide every year, and the trend is on the rise. Oil, in addition to other primary materials such as metals, and rare earth elements in particular, have already become rare commodities. “Conserving resources and climate protection are major environmental policy challenges. Awareness of these issues must be raised. There is savings potential among businesses and in the building sector, which must be tapped urgently. This will help the environment, save costs and boost the economy in its international competitiveness,” said Jochen Flasbarth, President of UBA.

Resource scarcity is a global problem. The results of the joint Federal Environment Agency and Federal Statistical Office research project show that some of the efficiency gains made in the area of raw materials use is attributable merely to the fact that certain resource-intensive upstream processes are performed abroad. These added costs, or “backpacks of raw materials”, must also be reflected in the indicators that measure resource consumption, as this is the only way to draw conclusions about the actual burden it poses on the environment and the economy. Experts estimate that an additional 20 percent savings potential exists on material costs for business, industry and trade. Tapping this potential is beneficial to businesses and the economy overall. The results of pantha rhei modelling show that a reduction of material costs through indirect effects would result in a 14.2 percent rise in gross domestic product up to 2030 while national debt decreases by 226 billion euros. A policy of economic use of resources would thus also benefit the country’s population.

Press Release No. 54/2010

Press Relations Officer: Martin Ittershagen
Deputy Press Relations Officer: Stephan Gabriel Haufe
PR-staff: Dieter Leutert, Fotini Mavromati, Doreen Redlich, Martin Stallmann
Address: Postfach 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau
Telephone: +49 340/2103-2122, -6625, -2250, -2318, - 2367, -2507
E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de
Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de



As resources become scarcer, recycling and the use of secondary raw materials will become more attractive. The German economy can cut annual raw materials imports worth some 3.7 billion euros through recycling alone. Furthermore, the impact on the environment of raw material extraction and use is reduced. The reuse of recycled copper, for example, saves 50 percent energy, with the positive ecological effect that some 50 percent of the toxic slag from production can be avoided.

Policy initiatives can create incentives to further reduce resource consumption, which is particularly high in the construction industry and where remediation of building stock must be granted high priority.

Another serious problem is ever shorter product cycles, especially in entertainment and communications technology. Although products are becoming more efficient and consume fewer materials, equipment is replaced frequently. "A statutory extension of the warranty period to three or four years in this case would be a measure that promotes conservation of resources and also directly benefits consumers," said Flasbarth.

The public sector must also set a good example and make more use of its purchasing power to promote resource-efficient products and services on the German market. "The political goal set by the EU Commission to apply green procurement practices to 50 percent of all purchases in 2010 is a step in the right direction," Flasbarth declared.

For more information see the following links:

UBA background paper „Rohstoffeffizienz - Wirtschaft entlasten, Umwelt schonen“:
<http://www.uba.de/uba-info-medien-e/4038.html>

Information from the Federal Statistical Office on the Environmental-Economic Accounting:
http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Presse/pk/2010/ugr/ugr_pk,templateId=renderPrint.psml#

Dessau-Roßlau, 17 November 2010