



Switzerland's Commitment to a Green Economy

International commitment

At the Rio+20 Conference (June 2012), the concept of the green economy was put on top of the political agenda and recognized as a sustainable development tool. The transition to a green economy requires changes to production and consumption patterns, new technologies, in-depth knowledge, innovation and experience sharing. Switzerland supports the **Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP)** because it facilitates these different processes. The platform was founded in 2012 by UNEP, the OECD, the World Bank and the Global Green Growth Institute and now has 29 partners. The platform is able to collect and process theoretical knowledge and practical experience as concerns green policies and make it available to interested stakeholders.

National green economy action plan

On 8 March 2013, the Federal Council adopted the Green Economy Action Plan. In doing so, it intends to conserve natural resources, make consumption more environmentally friendly and strengthen the circular economy. The action plan banks on voluntary initiatives and the commitment of industry, as well as better conditions for the federal government to correct market failures. It includes 27 measures in the following four priority areas of action:

1. **Consumption and production:** Current consumption patterns and product manufacturing use large quantities of natural resources and cause major environmental impacts. For that reason, it is necessary to improve information on the ecological aspects of products and company product ranges and increase innovation. Furthermore, close cooperation with the economy provides opportunities for further efficiency improvements.
2. **Wastes and raw materials:** The extraction of raw materials causes major environmental impacts. More efficient use of raw materials and the closure of material cycles will need to become priorities. In the future, fewer raw materials should be used to produce goods and less waste should be generated.
3. **Cross-cutting instruments:** The Cleantech Master Plan and greening the tax system are projects that affect more than one issue. But since a large portion of its environmental impact is caused abroad, Switzerland will not reach its goals by working solely at the national level. To reduce the overall pressure exerted on natural resources from the extraction of raw materials and the production of goods, Switzerland will need to step up its international efforts to promote a green economy.
4. **Goals, monitoring, information, reporting:** To know whether Switzerland is on its way to becoming a green economy, it must fully measure its progress and use these measurements as the basis for monitoring the success of its measures. Goals must also be set and progress reports prepared. In addition, dialogue with economic circles, the scientific community and civil society is an important part of developing a green economy. Finally, awareness measures can be used to support this dialogue.

Environment Protection Act to be adapted to a green economy

At its meeting on 27 February 2013, the Federal Council decided to extend the measures for a resource-efficient approach to the economy and consumption in Switzerland and to adapt the Environmental Protection Act (EPA). The salient points of the planned EPA revision are in line with the priority areas of the Green Economy Action Plan. The Federal Council will refer the dispatch for the revision to the parliament in February 2014. The revision of the EPA is an indirect counterproposal to the "For a Sustainable and Resource-Efficient Economy (Green Economy)" popular initiative. The initiative, which was submitted on 6 September 2012, aims to establish a sustainable and resource-efficient economy, promote closed material cycles and ensure that economic activities do not impair the potential of natural resources by including a new article in the Swiss Federal Constitution. Hence, the aim of the initiative is to ensure that the economy and consumption in Switzerland are sustainable from 2050 and only use the amount of resources that can be produced by the earth (which would correspond to an ecological footprint of 1). The Federal Council welcomes the general direction of the initiative. However, it believes that it will not be possible to implement it by 2050, particularly due to the environmental impacts generated by the Swiss economy abroad. For this reason, it rejects the initiative and presents an indirect counterproposal with the aforementioned change in the environmental legislation. The objective here is the limited implementation of the concerns raised by the initiative in the framework of the Federal Constitution as it stands.