

Qualifying for the green

In a country like Switzerland, there are many opportunities to help protect the environment. There are also just as many opportunities to harm it. Gain a bit of insight into how you may better qualify for the label 'green' with just a few simple steps.

By Sven Gallinelli | Meet John Waste and Harry Saver. These two neighbours have only one thing in common: they're both fictional. Despite this, their lifestyles as described below are based on reality and the fact that the wealthier a country is, the more likely its residents can make active choices between living an ecologically friendly life or not.

Let's begin with John Waste. He appreciates the finer things in life: a big, powerful car that uses 15 litres of fuel per 100 kilometres. John Waste likes to always be comfortable – using public transport is therefore out of question. Moreover, he loves to cruise with his car, so he drives his high-class vehicle to work each day, thus helping him to accumulate 150,000 kilometres annually.

John Waste lives in a 150-square-metre detached house that is kept warm with oil heat to ensure a constant temperature of 24°C in every room. He is also a gourmet connoisseur, which means he buys food primarily at a delicatessen, where the most exquisite items are flown in from far away.

Since John Waste works hard for his salary, he also needs to relax once in a while – especially in wintertime when the weather in Switzerland is cold. This he can only do at a five-star resort in Hawaii, to which he must fly 17 hours each way (27,300 kilometres round trip), in First Class, of course. Back home, after three weeks of air-conditioned luxury, he disposes of all of his trash in the same bag.

Tally time

By the end of the year, John Waste will have racked up 48 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions – far from the 8.07 tonnes that are average in European Union countries.

With this figure in mind, let's have a look at how different Harry Saver's lifestyle is. He lives just a couple of streets away from John Waste, in a multi-family house that was recently renovated to comply with the Swiss MINERGIE®-Standard. This means the house operates with much less energy, thanks to the renovations. (Learn more about the MINERGIE®-Standard on page 18.) Throughout his 80-square-metre apartment, Harry Saver uses energy-saving light bulbs.

He also invested in new household appliances like a dishwasher, a washing machine and a dryer that use only a minimum of power and fit today's energy standards. Harry also ignores the standby feature on his household devices, and religiously switches them completely off instead.

Just a couple of hundred metres away from Harry Saver's house is a bus stop. After a smooth ride on the bus, he arrives at the train station, where he profits from the excellent Swiss railway system that brings him to his workplace reliably and on time. He is not a car owner, but he is a member of the Swiss car-sharing organisation Mobility, where he can easily reserve a car via the Internet should he need one. When the holiday season approaches, the train is also Harry Saver's first choice, since he loves to spend his vacation in nearby countries.

The food he keeps in his energy-saving fridge is purchased from the store around the corner that offers a wide range of local and organic food. He only eats seasonal vegetables and fruits. Quite often, he buys regional products at a farm not far away from his home. Harry Saver also makes full use of the efficient Swiss recycling system, and separates his trash. (For further details about how to recycle in Switzerland, please turn to page 52.)

By the end of the year, Harry Saver will have produced nine tonnes of CO₂ emissions – exactly 39 tonnes less than his neighbour John Waste.

Go from grey to green

Today, you can find people who lead either of these two lifestyles. But more often, reality is not so black and white, but grey. Many people, while making an effort to live responsibly, are still not yet completely eligible for the green label.

Did you know ... ?

As a tip to reduce energy use, the WWF notes you can slice the electricity consumption of your coffee maker in half by upgrading to one with an automatic shut-off feature. Coffee makers without automatic shut-off features burn 200 kilowatt hours of electricity per year. During a machine's 10-year average life span, this tallies up to SFr 400, with only 10 per cent due to the actual coffee production. Coffee makers with automatic shut-off features can reduce such expenditures to a fraction.



CO₂ emissions are reduced when produce doesn't have to travel far to reach the table

“As a consumer you can do many things to protect the environment,” says Damian Oettli, leader of the “One Planet Living” project of the Swiss branch of the WWF (the Global Conservation Organization).

He recognises, however, that no one will follow each bit of green-living advice. “Every [person] has to find out for themselves where one is able to make concessions.”

Every concession a person can make, even a small one, is better than nothing, he adds, and explains it's the sum of all such efforts and actions that count. However, he pointed to three specific areas in which a reduction of emissions is especially important – nor so difficult to achieve.

Did you know ... ?

According to a report by the BBC, electrical equipment left on standby in the UK in 2006 resulted in the equivalent CO₂ emissions of 1.4 million long-haul flights. In other words, the news organisation said, if the entire population of Glasgow flew to New York and back, their emissions would still be less than those from appliances left in sleep mode.

Habitat

The first is your habitat. Detached houses are the biggest contributors to per-person CO₂ emissions. If you own one, you can save energy by installing solar panels or using renewable resources like wood chips to heat up your water. Buildings need to be well insulated in order to keep the warmth (or cool air) inside.

While it is up to your landlord to renovate the building if you rent, he or she may qualify for financial reimbursement from the government for efficiency renovations, depending on when the house was built.

You can also follow Harry Saver's example and use energy-saving light bulbs. Consider this: One kilowatt of power keeps an energy-saving bulb burning for 90 hours while Thomas Edison's filament bulbs darken after 17 hours with the same amount of power.

Another simple measure is to turn off appliances that have standby modes, such as the television or Internet modems. A television in standby mode consumes about six watts of energy a day; by the end of the year, this could cost SFr 6.

While that may not seem like so much, just start counting all the appliances that are running on standby: the DVD player, the video-recorder, modems, radio alarm clocks, the stereo, the charger for your mobile that



Energy-saving light bulbs are an easy way to save on electricity bills

you do not unplug. In the end, it could amount to as much as SFr 75 a year. According to the WWF, standby appliances in Switzerland use 865 million kilowatt hours of energy a year; in the EU it adds up to 36 billion kilowatt hours.



© Mobility

The Mobility scheme is a good way to get access to a car without significant added costs or environmental impact

Transportation

The second important area in which to conserve is transportation. Undoubtedly for many, owning a car is like religion. But, especially in Switzerland, you can't find many excuses for using a car instead of public transport.

The public transportation network in Switzerland is exceptionally comprehensive, and includes trains, busses, trams and even ships with timetables exactly balanced so you have quick and efficient connections.

But public transport also has a downside: it can be one of the biggest CO₂ producers.

The biggest offenders are airplanes. If you fly from Zurich to New York, you produce as much CO₂ as you would by driving 15,000 kilometres with your automobile.

While it may not be reasonable to avoid flying altogether, you can compensate for your emissions by donating money to projects that invest in CO₂-friendly measures, through organisations like myclimate. (A profile of myclimate can be found on page 8.)

Wealth and the environment

Does wealth have an impact on how much CO₂ a country emits? A look at the statistics may indicate 'yes'.

America is undoubtedly the international leader in CO₂ emissions. The average U.S. inhabitant produces 20 tonnes of CO₂ per year. In the EU, the per capita average is 8.07 tonnes. The EU continues to take measures to further limit CO₂ emissions – most recently by announcing new standards for cars and industry, designed to reduce overall CO₂ emissions by 20 per cent by 2020, compared to the 1990 level, which was 8.9 tonnes.

Even though the per-capita average of CO₂ emissions in Switzerland is lower than in the EU (at 5.83 tonnes), Switzerland is aiming for the same 20 per cent reduction as the EU. This also represents a reduction of 20 per cent compared to the 1990 level, which was 6.7 tonnes.

Compared to the EU, Switzerland has tougher restrictions in many areas.

"The Swiss environmental law is an important and valuable basis for protecting the environment, and it's something the EU hasn't got," says Susanne Schnyder, organisation communication team leader at Greenpeace Switzerland.

With regard to water and forest protection, Switzerland has done its job well, says Greenpeace. Still, it's not quite sure yet if Switzerland will reach its CO₂ emissions reduction target, in part because it lags the EU in traffic emissions.

"Of all cars that are newly bought, the cars in Switzerland waste the highest CO₂ emissions," says Schnyder. Because people can afford to, she explains, they buy bigger and more powerful cars that release more CO₂.

But it's not that easy, says Damian Oettli, leader of the "One World Living" project at WWF. "The connection between wealth and CO₂ emissions has been researched many times, and the results show that there is not a coactive connection between them." However, he adds, wealth leads to more consumption, which can cause negative impacts on the environment.

"On the other hand, wealth can also have a positive impact, especially in socially and politically calm areas of the world: more wealth means a lower birth rate, and therefore less humans causing less waste."

And there is another factor that makes wealthy countries more likely to engage in actions that can save the environment, says Oettli: "Many people consider an ecologically friendly lifestyle as trendy and prestigious."

Swiss International Air Lines uses myclimate to help customers calculate and offset the carbon emitted during a given flight (<http://swiss.myclimate.org/EN>).

For example, the carbon produced during a round-trip flight from Zurich to Dallas, Texas via Frankfurt, Germany is 1.85 tonnes, which can be compensated for with SFr 57.

Or with low-cost carrier easyJet, one passenger flying round-trip from Basel to Marrakech, Morocco, will emit 356 kilograms of CO₂. The offsetting option here appears at checkout, costs a mere SFr 11.37 and goes to a United Nations-certified emission-reduction project.

Sustenance

The third major area is food. Once more, Harry Saver can be your idol here. If you can, buy food from local farm stores, rather than choosing to eat foods that must be transported over long distances. You can also make it a priority to buy organic food.

The biggest step you could take would be reducing your appetite for meat. Imagine this: 15,000 litres of water are needed to produce only one kilogram of beef, including the water that is needed to grow the food for the cows.

Animals that enter the food chain also have another impact on the environment.

According to the WWF, cows account for 14 per cent of the global CO₂ emissions – thanks to the methane gases they emit while digesting their fodder. Annually, an adult cow releases 115 kilograms of gases into the atmosphere (1,000 kilograms equal one tonne); one tonne of methane gas is the equivalent of 21 tonnes of CO₂.

No doubt Harry Saver leads the lifestyle of the future, and can be a role model for all of us.

Nevertheless, if you make even a little effort in the three areas mentioned above, you will already be leading a life worthy of the green designation.

Reduce your carbon footprint:

This CO₂ calculator shows how much CO₂ you emit per year: http://www.lfu.bayern.de/luft/fach-informationen/co2_rechner/index.htm.

The Swiss Railway (SBB) has a timetable for train, ship, bus and all other connections to move people around publicly. You can plan your trip door-to-door: www.sbb.ch.

Mobility is the Swiss car sharing system that makes cars available at many train stations, villages and cities for short-term leasing: www.mobility.ch.

myclimate provides individuals and businesses with the opportunity to compensate for CO₂ emissions: www.myclimate.org.

MINERGIE® is the Swiss energy standard. Find out how to renovate your house to be more energy-efficient: www.minergie.ch.

WWF and Greenpeace provide tips and ideas for a greener life: www.wwf.ch and www.greenpeace.ch.



The St.Gallen MBA

One of Europe's most selective MBAs

Full-time MBA

- 40 places
- Average GMAT 694
- Average 65% post-MBA salary increase

Part-time MBA

- 40 places
- Modules in Germany, Switzerland and Spain
- A flexible approach to learning

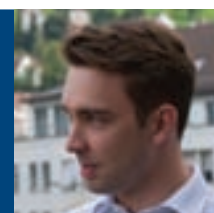
MBA Summer School

- Refresh your CV with a 2-3 week Management Certificate
- June 2009 theme - 'Sustainable Globalization'

Career perspectives

- dedicated MBA Careers Manager
- fully integrated MBA soft-skills curriculum

Name: Arnold Smeysers
Nationality: Belgian
Class of: 2007
Current company: Oliver Wyman
Current position: Consultant



Background

I started working as a trainee in a large shipping corporation in Antwerp, Belgium, not far away from where I grew up. After a few years of the usual trainee rotations I had the opportunity to expatriate to Zurich, Switzerland. For the next step in my career, I realised I needed another business degree.

Changing career tracks

It proved to be rather difficult to find a job in financial services (my new objective). Although my motivation was booming and I considered myself the employee all banks and insurance companies were waiting for, my CV had too many blank spaces to back up my intentions. Having some years of work experience, approaching my thirties and looking for a career change, an MBA turned out to be the logical next step.

Ubi bene, ibi patria

Not only my professional life evolved in my new home country, but also my personal life. Since I came to Switzerland, I have met great people and I am blessed with trustworthy friends who will stick by me no matter what. Naturally I also became accustomed to the Swiss quality of life. So my mind was made up rather quickly: the St. Gallen MBA!

Return on investment

Looking back, the St.Gallen turned out to be the key to unlock the opportunities I was looking for. My hypothesis was confirmed when I landed a position as a consultant in a top-tier management consultancy. The investment not only paid off after finishing the degree, but also a full-time MBA turned out to be the best decision. I must admit that 2007 was one of the toughest, but surely also one of the best years of my life!

www.mba.unisg.ch

