

Common Terms Used Under the Sustainable Umbrella

How they are used and misused

growing misuse of terms makes it more difficult for
us to make informed choices

Sustainable/Sustainability

Sustain + able/ability = sustain meaning to “give support to, bear, keep up”...to be able to stay at a certain level

- No universal definition - various different viewpoints
- 3 pillars of principles: economy, society, environment...profit, people, and planet.
(youmatter.world)
- 4 pillars of principles: product development, supply chain management, waste reduction, and charitable partnerships (Marcus Fairs ,author)
- Environmentally Sustainable - “when a product or service can be maintained without depleting natural resources.” ([aaaa.org](#))

Image from NASA Solar System Explorations

Ecosystem

- Simple definition: “A community or group of living organisms that live in and interact with each other in a specific environment” (youmatter.world)
- Natural ecosystems are balanced: All the organisms within the ecosystem contribute to its stability
- Example: Grassland environment, herbivores eat grass, but balances out by their droppings which feed the soil to grow new grass
- We need a healthy ecosystem for our own survival, like all living beings on earth
- Our affect: Millennium Ecosystems Assessment “at the beginning of 20th c, human activity has changed ecosystems more rapidly than ever before” (youmatter.world)
- High demand from consumption: deforestation for crops, loss of natural pollination, water pollution, soil exploitation, and over fishing



Image from Green Queen

Eco-Friendly/Earth-Friendly

- Aspect of sustainability
- Product or service is not harmful to the environment
- Certifications / eco labels: American grassfed, Animal welfare approved, Certified B Corp, BASF Eco-efficiency



Images from bcorporation.net

Sustainable Development

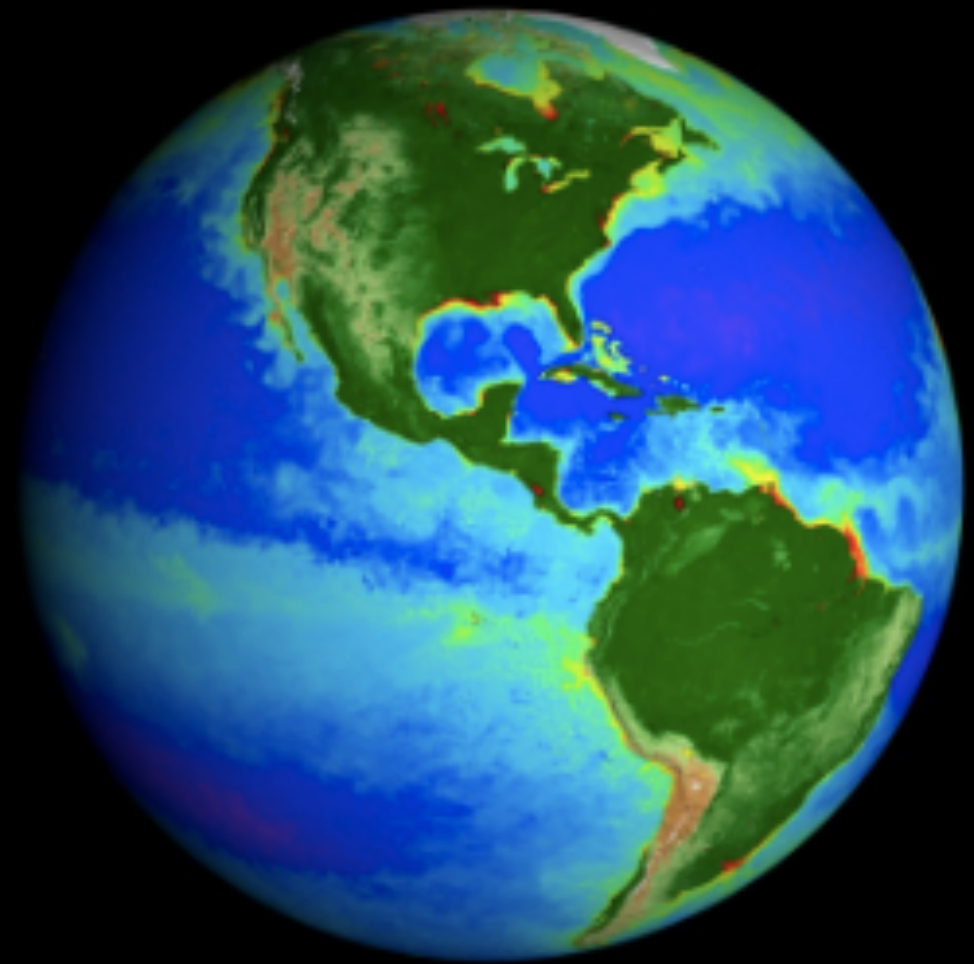
- Universal definition - Brundtland Report 1987
- Focuses on long term vision
- By adding the concept of “Development” - not only should we sustain ourselves currently but also consider how we compromise future generations
- “Societal progress and increased quality of life across the globe”...health, poverty, hunger, gender equality, education, etc.



Image from live science

Regenerative/Regeneration

- Takes sustainability further
- Extends the idea that we each modern society should sustain itself (change)
- Nature's systems
- Humans' damage to our planet - stopping harm is not enough to recover ecosystems...must "enhance and facilitate the conditions in which life can flourish and ecosystems can recover and become resilient" (youmatter.world)
- Regenesi Group and Gaia Education



Regenerative now

- Regenerative powers or processes cause something or become active again after it has been damaged or inactive. Collins Dictionary
- Movement towards regenerative agriculture and grazing: working with organizations like the Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Resilient Systems at Chico
- Carbon farming - Excessive carbon in our atmosphere and not enough in our soil. “Carbon farming means farming and ranching practices that are known to flow of carbon from the atmosphere and into soil life...increase agriculture productivity naturally.”
- Eco-system restoring crop projects



Image/quote from Fibershed

Reuse

- The “most sustainable” practice
- Simply using something again...re-use



Five Reasons Vintage Clothing Is Not Just "Old Used Clothes" (Even Though It Kind of Is)

Repurpose

- Using the same item, garment, product, etc intact but with a different “purpose”
- Reuse with a different purpose



Reduce

- Reduce amount of materials and goods we consume
(ohiovalleywaste.com)
- Minimalist - tied into Zero Waste Movement
- Buy less - Refuse what we don't need...impulse buying
- Includes energy: turn lights off!

Recycle

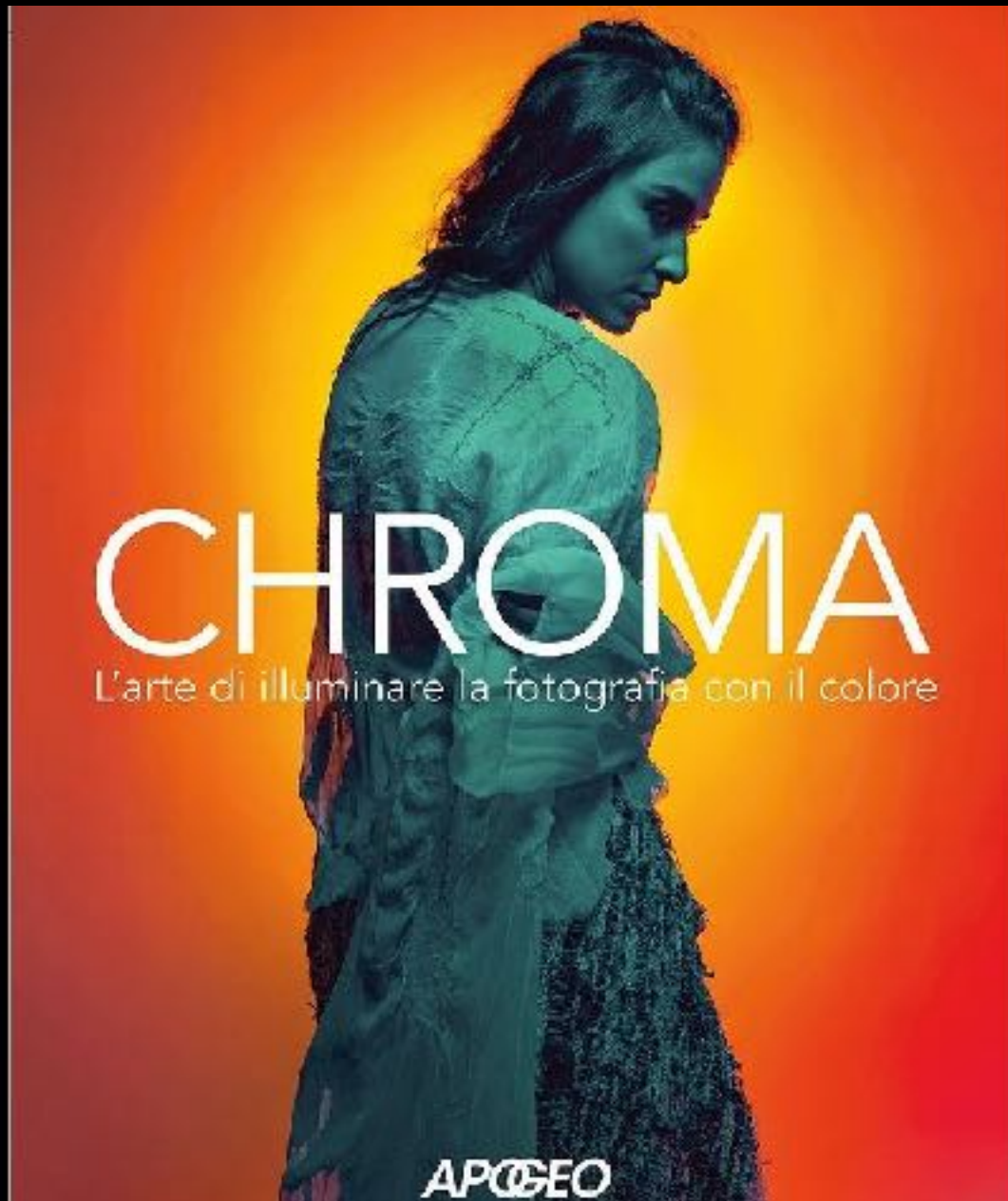
- Process of collecting and processing materials that would otherwise be thrown out as trash and turning them into new products - “CONVERTING WASTE PRODUCT INTO REUSABLE MATERIAL” (ecavo.com)
- Collect (Material recovery facilities)
- Sorted (usually still involves people)
- Cleaned
- Processed - break down original product/material



Image from medium.com

Upcycle and Refashion

- When you take something and use it to make something of higher or equal quality



Zero Waste...Movement

- Philosophy that aims to follow sustainable cycles where all materials are used (for various purposes) resulting in no trash to landfills or incinerators (webstaurantstore.com)
- Zero waste movement - Lifestyle encouraging us to use our resources in a circular way (like nature) - not the linear route
- Minimalist lifestyle: refuse what we don't need...goal: not generate or bring waste "home" (i.e., our own bulk (containers))



Biodegradable

- Refers to “a product breaking down into natural elements, carbon dioxide, and water vapor by organisms like bacteria and fungi” (webstaurantstore.com)
- Technically, pretty much everything is biodegradable even though it could take 100s and 1000s of years
- Biodegradable products break down much faster than others...carbon dioxide, water vapor, organic material not harmful to environment
- Usually made from sustainable materials
- When in landfill, creates methane...a greenhouse gas that's bad for the ecosystem



Image from Plastics today

Compostable

- A product will break down into natural elements only in a compost setting
- Break down faster than biodegradable products
- Break down into nutrient rich products which generates healthy soil for the planet

(webstaurantstore.com)



Greenwashing

- Occurs when a brand makes statements and promises to uphold sustainable/ environmental standards in ways that are unfounded, misleading, or inflated/ exaggerated
- Marketing, products, or entire business (aaaa.org)



A 2019 class action lawsuit against Nestle...production of key ingredient in company's chocolate products helped drive massive deforestation in West Africa...cocoa comes from farms using child and slave labour

Wokewashing

- “Wokewashing is when a corporation, institution, or individual says or does something that signals their advocacy for a marginalized cause but also continues to cause harm to vulnerable communities” (wokewashing.com)



Image from Wayland Student Press

**An example of woke washing was with the NFL...claiming to support the BLM movement after their horrible treatment of Colin Kaepernick
(class with Aja Barber: patreon.com/ajabarber)**

Carbon Footprint

- What is it? “The trace of greenhouse gases produced by human activities...an environmental indicator that measures both direct and indirect emissions of compounds like...methane, nitrogen oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, etc...but most of all carbon dioxide (lberdrola)
- Represents the “total volume of greenhouse gases resulting from everyday economic and human activity” (lberdrola)
- Carbon footprint of an activity - measured in tons of carbon dioxide emissions
- Major threat: increased amount of greenhouse gases (especially carbon dioxide), “creates a cover that traps the sun’s heat energy in he atmospheric bubble, warming the planet and oceans.” (sciencing.com)



Image from sciencing

**...the remembering of stone's story
while walking down a dried riverbed
being serenaded by crickets singing the blues
because everyone except them has forgotten
the knowing**

Connie Fife, Poet