



Beauty Buzz

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Overshooting our resources

As we approach 1 August, the official date for planetary 'overshoot' in 2018, it is time for us to consider where our personal responsibility lies in protecting our home, the beautiful planet Earth.

Earth Overshoot Day (EOD), is the day in which we run into our natural resource 'overdraft'; the date when we, the human race, have taken more from nature than our planet can renew in an entire year.

In 1987 the United Nations *Brundtland Report* suggested the answer: that through 'sustainable' development we could reduce our environmental impact, and defined this as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Soberingly, when the report was published the EOD was set as 18 December, and in the 31 years since publication we have done little to change our behaviour. We are currently consuming planetary resources at 160% and by 2030 the estimate is that we will reach 200%, meaning we require two planets to sustain our consumption. There is not a moment to lose.

To become truly sustainable we must temper our desire for growth against our limited planetary boundaries; or, put simply, we need to balance the needs of people and the planet with profit. As Kate Raworth writes in her ground-breaking book *Donut Economics*: 'There is a sweet spot in which we can all live in harmony with the planet – one between what we as human beings require to live and what the planet can support'.

This isn't a new concept. The philosopher and spiritual scientist Rudolf Steiner wrote about this immediately after the First World War. Calling this approach his 'Threefold Social Order', Steiner believed these three spheres could and should operate in balance. He proposed practical ways to execute this vision through economic-spiritual enterprises from the birth of the organic farming movement

through to the pharmaceutical company Steiner founded to create natural medicines: Weleda.

Today, Weleda leads the way in sustainable business practices and Steiner's approach is inspiring a new generation of green entrepreneurs. At Weleda, we take decisions based on what is 'good for nature' and 'good for people' whilst supported by 'sound business practices'. We believe, for instance, that value must be shared equally across the supply chain, otherwise winners and losers are created and

the system fails.
Radical or just
common sense?

In the beauty industry we are surrounded by many businesses claiming to be sustainable, which I applaud whilst remaining sceptical of motives. The litmus test of

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being 'sustainable' is to ask where does this responsibility sit within the organization? Is it, for example, with procurement; with marketing; with quality? Every action and decision a sustainable business makes must be based on value rather than price, through true-cost accounting. This ensures the environmental damage of doing business is not only accounted for but also provided for, such as cleaning up the rivers polluted with synthetic chemicals washed down the plug hole; ridding the oceans of microplastic pollution; offsetting the carbon pumped into the atmosphere; ensuring the health and wellbeing of consumers is not compromised by the products they have been sold. For a business to be truly sustainability the responsibility must rest with everyone in the business at every level – from the most senior at board level down to the most junior, and not seen as an add-on function.

As we approach EOD we must all reflect on our business practices and behaviour, asking what we can do to help humanity and the planet live in harmony together. It is time to own our responsibility.

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