

The Finland we want by 2050

– Society's commitment to sustainable development

Vision: A prosperous Finland within the limits of the carrying capacity of nature

"In 2050, every person in Finland will be a valuable member of society. Finland will be an affluent society that lays the foundation for sustainability and provides its citizens, communities and companies with the conditions they need to operate sustainably. The carrying capacity of nature is not exceeded and natural resources are used in a sustainable manner. Finland will promote peace, equality and justice, and offer practical and sustainable solutions to the world's problems."

We are living during a time of great global change, the management of which will require determined shared efforts in the coming decades. From a global perspective, we have already exceeded ecological risk limits when it comes to biodiversity, climate change and the nitrogen cycle. At the same time, over a billion people are living in poverty and even greater numbers live without adequate income, electricity or food.

In Finland, national challenges regarding sustainable development include the safeguarding of our welfare state amidst an aging society, the sustainability gap and changes in the production structure, high carbon dioxide emissions relative to the population, protecting biodiversity, and the sustainable, fair and effective use of natural resources.

Sustainable development is an absolute necessity, and achieving it will require far closer and comprehensive cooperation between administration, non-profit organisations, companies, researchers and citizens. The aim is a humanity-wide learning process, which seeks to bring about a cultural change towards a sustainable future society and world. To this end, we need mutually agreed-upon goals and objectives and the commitment to see them through, based on each person's individual expertise and potential.

We must take responsibility for the national implementation of global sustainable development commitments and, at the same time, create local and innovative solutions. The concrete promotion of sustainable development requires:

- a shared desire to solve problems,
- understanding, expertise and continuous learning,
- people who shoulder responsibilities, people who bring about changes, leaders and pioneers,
- adjustment of values and attitudes, more effective and closer cooperation, and societal guidance, and
- more effective ways of operation.

To fulfil these requirements, we, the members of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, commit ourselves to promoting sustainable development and invite all operators and citizens to take part in the work on society's commitment.

Our shared objectives

In order to make our vision for 2050 a reality, Finland must focus on achieving the following objectives. These objectives look at sustainable development from the perspectives of the well-being of people and the environment, a healthy and sustainable economy and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles. In formulating these objectives, we have strived to consider the principles of sustainable development: global responsibility, cross-generational thinking, the limited carrying capacity of nature, cooperation, and the creative utilisation of knowledge and expertise. More detailed descriptions of these principles are included below.

Objective

1. *Equal prospects for well-being*

All members of society will be guaranteed equal prospects for health, education and employment. We will hold to a high standard of education and general knowledge, while also promoting social mobility. Sustainable development will be integrated into primary education, the education of all specialised fields and lifelong learning. We will reduce inequality by ensuring an adequate livelihood and basic social security. We will pay special attention to the well-being of children and young people. We will ensure equivalent welfare services and equal access to all welfare services. We will support the recognition of cultural rights and we will strengthen cultural values that support sustainable development. We will support possibilities for the indigenous Sámi people to practice their own culture in accordance with sustainable development and to transmit their culture from one generation to the next.

We will do what we can to eliminate extreme poverty and reduce inequality and discrimination in the world. We will fulfil our development cooperation commitments.

2. *A participatory society for citizens*

We will strengthen democracy and promote equal opportunities for all persons to influence their own lives and common issues. We will especially support the participation of young people in the society. We will make administration more transparent: open and public information increases the trust of citizens and their chances of influencing societal issues. We will promote cultural activity, diversity, equality and tolerance, so that all citizens, including different minorities, can fully take part in developing our society.

We will actively participate in international cooperation that promotes peace and security, human rights and sustainable development.

3. Sustainable work

The measures we will undertake to achieve a more sustainable economy include increasing jobs and improving the productivity, profitability and quality of work. Our goal is a high employment rate. We will promote the creation of jobs in the green economy. We will develop our education and social security systems, in accordance with the need for new expertise, the needs of the employment market and the measures needed to secure an adequate livelihood. We will support the employment of young people, harness the expertise of immigrants and provide employment opportunities for those with a reduced capacity to work. We will promote entrepreneurship and innovation and develop the service sector.

We will help the industrial sector in its regeneration process, aiming at more value-added and high-productivity jobs. We will improve the quality of employment by increasing the opportunities for employees to have an influence on their work and on developments in their work environments, and by providing opportunities for flexible working methods and schedules.

4. Sustainable local communities

We will create sustainable and safe communities, where jobs, housing, comprehensive services, sustainable transport systems, the use of information and communication technology, and green areas support economic, social and cultural well-being, as well as the well-being of the environment. We will strengthen local communities by supporting an active civil society, and by developing meeting places, operating models and local decision-making that promote social learning and influence, so that citizens can create pleasant and healthy living environments for themselves. We will reduce the need for traffic, increase telecommuting arrangements and strengthen electronic services.

We will prepare for changes in climate and water levels and promote local adaptation to climate change.

5. A carbon-neutral society

Our objective is a carbon-neutral society. To achieve this objective, we will follow a national roadmap¹ towards a carbon-neutral society by the year 2050. The central measures to be undertaken for reaching this objective are improving energy efficiency, increasing the share of renewable energy sources, and developing the low-carbon sectors of the economy. We will develop intelligent and interconnected structures, such as transport and energy systems, that enable and promote the use of renewable energy sources and energy savings, while also encouraging people to reduce energy consumption. We will invest in the development of innovative energy technologies and forms of energy, as well as new businesses.

6. An economy that is resource-wise

Finland and Finns will promote and offer sustainable and competitive solutions, both nationally and globally. We will increase resource efficiency, as well as create business models that boost the productivity of natural resources and test them. Our companies will be globally respected for their socially responsible business operations.

¹ The preparation of the roadmap began in spring 2013 under the direction of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

The wise utilisation of resources and knowledge that is open to all will provide a competitive advantage to companies and communities and a basis for environmental business. Finland will offer the best test market and operating environment in the world for environmental innovation and a sustainable economy. We will invest, in particular, in clean technology, high-quality research, the bioeconomy and renewable energy, as well as in the development and production of non-material goods and services. Finland will pioneer sustainable food production and forestry.

7. Lifestyles that respect the carrying capacity of nature

We will do what we can to bring the global consumption of natural resources to an environmentally sustainable level by the year 2050. We will focus on encouraging both consumers and companies to reduce their ecological footprints. We will make it as easy and cost-effective as possible for consumers to make consumption choices that conserve natural resources in housing, transport and food. We will encourage companies and communities to offer sustainably produced products and services to consumers. We will strengthen attitudes that value sustainable choices in our operations. We will support lifestyles based on non-material consumption and services that sustain such lifestyles.

8. Decision-making that respects nature

We will foster people's respect for biodiversity and raise their awareness of its importance, so that administration, municipalities, companies and citizens will consider it in their own decision-making and actions. The goal is to stop the loss of biodiversity by 2020.

We will strengthen guidance that promotes biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources and that respects proprietary rights. We will increase our understanding of the importance of ecosystem services for people's well-being. We will redirect environmentally harmful incentives, while considering social, economic and cultural conditions in a balanced manner. We will promote the use of scientific research data to support decision-making.

Our principles for sustainable development

Global responsibility

The effects of our actions reach far beyond our national borders. The world's challenges are also Finland's challenges, and we have the potential to assume the role of a pioneer in solving shared global problems. Accepting global responsibility requires a sense of fairness: through its actions, Finland must ensure that others also retain their potential for sustainable development and the resulting security and peace.

Cross-generational thinking

The consequences of our actions must be assessed far into the future. Instead of promoting short-term interests, we should weigh the effects that our decisions will have on future generations. A cross-generational perspective requires us to grasp large-scale issues, understand the interwoven consequences of our solutions and take responsibility for our actions.

The limited carrying capacity of nature

The well-being of the systems that maintain life on Earth is paramount to the well-being of humanity. While the number of people on the planet continues to rise, the amount of natural resources available to each person is decreasing. As a result, the capacity of nature to produce and sustain the functions that are vital to the well-being of both people and all other species has been exceeded. Our activities must be adapted to the carrying capacity of nature and its natural regeneration, so that we can safeguard humanity's chances for a good life, both now and in the future.

Cooperation

Sustainable development requires everyone to work together. All people must be prepared to make sustainable choices and make their voices heard. In Finland, we solve our differences together and have trust in the fact that our society works. Well-being that lasts for one's entire lifespan and social security create the basis for a sustainable society.

Creative use of knowledge and expertise

Research lays the foundation for solving the greatest challenges faced by society and humanity. A prerequisite for prudent action over the long-term is to combine skills, knowledge, expertise and creativity. We need to constantly develop both experience-based knowledge and evidence-based scientific knowledge in an open manner. We also need to utilise existing information and skills more effectively in finding sustainable solutions. To find new solutions, we also need cooperation, initiative, and trial and error.

Establishment of operational commitments and monitoring of objectives

Operational commitments

In order to reach the objectives detailed in this document, operational commitments will be established with administrative sectors and other societal operators, such as companies, municipalities, organisations, educational institutions and local operators. By establishing these operational commitments, these societal operators commit themselves to doing their part in attaining our objectives. The operational commitments will include concrete measures, changes in operating procedures and innovative trials that promote our shared goals and that can be carried out in 5 to 10 years. Through these concrete commitments, operators can take part in the promotion of all or just some of our shared objectives.

The general secretariat of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development will be responsible for establishing operational commitments. All commitments will be made available on the Commission's website.

Inviting operators to take part

To reach as many operators as possible and to spread the commitment work as far and wide as possible, a plan will be drawn up, detailing how (measures, schedules) the commitments are handled with different operators. The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development and its general secretariat will actively promote the implementation of society's commitment by, for example, bringing different parties together to negotiate required measures and the responsibilities and tasks that different operators are willing to promote.

Monitoring of society's commitment

To ensure the implementation of society's commitment, a monitoring plan will be drawn up. The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, ministries and organisations will promote and monitor the implementation of society's commitment by setting intermediate targets, among other actions. The achievement of the shared objectives, intermediate targets and individual operational commitments will be continuously monitored in real time, by way of impact and monitoring indicators. The progress of society's commitment will also be monitored at annual gatherings.

Society's commitment and its relationship to other programmes and strategies

Society's commitment to sustainable development will serve as a long-term framework and instrument of policy coherence for the strategy and programme work of different administrative sectors. Together with the foresight report, it will support the setting of objectives of future reviews and future government programmes. Society's commitment is the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development's interpretation of what sustainable development means. The measures specified by different operators will, in turn, define the content of sustainable development in practice.

In its follow-up work, the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development will consider the objectives concerning sustainable development, including mandatory targets for Finland, which are currently being set as part of ongoing international processes (including post-2015 and the shared agenda for sustainable development, global negotiations on climate change and environmental treaties, international round of trade negotiations).