

# We have an overconsumption problem

BY CHERYL JACOBS

*These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. (Psalm 104.27-28)*

*When they were satisfied, Jesus told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” (John 6.12)*

Thanks to God for the bounty of good things we enjoy, particularly in this beautiful and prosperous part of the world.

But more and more, humans are gathering more than they need, consuming more resources than are extracted, grown or produced.

We have an overconsumption problem. Sentient Media has reported that we currently “need 1.7 Earths to provide enough resources to match our consumption.”

And consumption has been rising on a per capita basis, not just as a result of population growth.



Protests against overconsumption in Rotterdam in 2020.



This rate, however, is not spread evenly across the world as higher-income countries, like ours, consume much more than their share.

We are pressured to consume by our capitalist economic model and rapidly evolving technology to create, market and deliver stuff.

We constantly face an over-

whelming choice of stuff — for eating, for wearing, for playing with, and for supposedly improving our lives. It is difficult to resist over-buying.

Perhaps part of the issue is also our own scarcity mindset and lack of trust in our God who has promised to provide for us. As I write this, Canada is in a full-on panic over looming tariffs from the USA.

But, “the pressure to constantly consume is driving destructive resource extraction, pollution and waste, and contributing to the climate and extinction crises.” (Jennifer Molidor, Senior Food Campaigner at the Center for Biological Diversity)

As one example, almost one-fourth of all land animals raised globally for food are never actually eaten. They die prematurely on the farm or in transit to slaughterhouses (a tragedy in itself), parts are wasted during production or go to waste in stores, restaurants and homes.

Given animal agriculture contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, this is a lot

of emission in vain. And food in landfills produces methane, further increasing the greenhouse gas problem.

**Individual action:** Reiterating some of the R's for sustainable living: Rethink whether you are purchasing an unnecessary item or more food than you will eat; Refuse to look at unsolicited advertisements or to see a “best before” date as an expiry date; Reduce your consumption overall but especially of higher emission foods and products, and (yes, I've said it before) disposable containers and packaging.

**Parish action:** Talk together about the pressure to consume. Engage a Community Food Mentor from Food For All NB to discuss food security.

**Resources** (more at [nb.anglican.ca/GreeningUp](http://nb.anglican.ca/GreeningUp)):

- How Overconsumption Affects the Environment and Health, Explained ([sentientmedia.org/overconsumption/](http://sentientmedia.org/overconsumption/))
- [foodforallnb.ca](http://foodforallnb.ca)

*Cheryl Jacobs worships at Christ Church Cathedral and is trying to live greener...*