

THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN CHANGING CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

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Introduction

This paper was prepared for the OECD seminar on *Improving Governance for Sustainable Development* held at the OECD headquarters in Paris on 22-23 November 2001, and discussed during the session on « The Role of the Civil Society ». The aim of the paper is twofold:

- Provide background information on the possible role of stakeholders (including business and various citizens' organisations) and their relation to government in changing consumption and production patterns; and suggest possible policy responses for attaining this goal in high-consumption societies.
- Suggest preliminary criteria for assessing and evaluating a country's performance regarding public participation in sustainable development policy making and in changing consumption and production patterns.

The background information section will discuss three important issues:

- the role and function of stakeholder involvement and citizen participation;
- arguments for participation and stakeholder involvement;
- limitations of participation and stakeholder involvement.

We will first discuss the function and role of stakeholder and citizen participation from an analytic perspective. We distinguish between citizen participation and stakeholder involvement because citizens have quite different participation limitations from other stakeholders (citizens organisations, NGO, business). We will formulate some basic criteria for public participation performance on the basis of arguments for and limitations of participation and stakeholder involvement.

Citizen participation and stakeholder involvement in sustainable production and consumption governance

Compared with the responsibility of citizens and stakeholders in other areas of sustainable development, producers and consumers carry a large responsibility for sustainable production and consumption. In line with the Brundtland definition of sustainable development, sustainable consumption can be defined as the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and

bring a better quality of life while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations (Symposium, 1994).

Unsustainable consumption is either directly or indirectly related to many environmental problems. Directly because consumption itself pollutes, and indirectly through the production and disposal of consumer articles. Sustainable consumption is closely related to sustainable production. Sustainable consumption addresses the demand side, looking at how the goods and services required to meet basic needs and improve quality of life can be delivered in ways that reduce the burden on the Earth's carrying capacity. The emphasis of sustainable production is on the supply side of the equation, focusing on improving environmental performance in key economic sectors such as industry (Robins and Roberts, 1997)ⁱ.

The Brundtland report of 1987 (WCED, 1987) focuses to a large extent on the issue of production (Lafferty and Langhelle, 1999). The proposed solutions are aimed primarily at the input stage (resource use) and the output stage (pollution and waste) of production, whereas the intermediate stage of consumption has received less attention. While the Brundtland report is rather uncritical of economic growth, in the *Agenda 21* document the critical growth debate of the 1960s and 1970s is reflected in the concept of « consumer and production patterns »: « *To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies* » (Agenda 21, Chapter 4). Since Rio there have been six international conferences held on this subject which gradually resulted in both composition and level of consumption and production becoming a subject of discussion.

OECD Member countries have in place, or are developing, a broad range of policies to modify unsustainable patterns of production and consumption as well as the behaviour of individual consumers.ⁱⁱ Producers have a direct interest in any government regulations that affect the input, process or output of their production processes. Producers in OECD countries are accustomed to environmental regulation of production processes and many traditional regulatory, economic and communicative environmental instruments have been institutionalised.ⁱⁱⁱ

Although consumers are also used to some restriction of their consumption by government regulation, government actions to change consumption patterns are relatively new. Initial findings of the OECD's own examination of these initiatives show possibilities for a shift towards less environmentally damaging consumption patterns with no sacrifice in quality of life. Government actions to change consumption patterns can be taken on national and regional/local government levels. Initiatives to influence consumption patterns make use of a range of tools including regulation and economic instruments. Participation is strongly correlated with the use of so-called social instruments, such as awareness-raising campaigns, education and learning initiatives, information and labelling schemes, and voluntary agreements.

The function and role of stakeholder involvement and citizen participation

Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992) stresses the idea that sustainable development is not possible without close co-operation with all relevant stakeholders in sustainable consumption and production

policies. Instead of arguing the necessity of stakeholder involvement, we are going to reverse the discussion here by imagining what a *lack of stakeholder or citizen involvement* or a *missing government role* would mean.

Let us analyse the function and role of stakeholder involvement and citizen participation in changing consumption and production patterns, as compared to that of government, by imagining two hypothetical countries.

The government of country A pursues policies directed towards changes in consumption and production patterns but does so without any engagement with stakeholders or citizens. There are no institutions in place dedicated to fostering stakeholder/citizen involvement. These other societal actors are just considered to be faithful implementers and remain completely passive towards any government policy.

What are the basic handicaps and limitations of such a system?

- Although the decisions come from representative democratic institutions, the legitimacy of decisions could be questioned given the lack of stakeholder or citizen involvement. There is a potential for decisions taken without participation to be seen as illegitimate because they do not reflect the will and values of the people. For example, business may think that government policies unrightfully intrude into market decisions.
- There is a higher risk of conflict between government and stakeholders, as the latter are not offered the possibility of articulating their various interests.
- Absence of stakeholder involvement also deprives government of an additional source of ideas and information. Participation contributes to the quality of decision making, because it provides government with necessary information and contributes to both systematic identification of problems and their causes, and the consideration and assessment of alternative strategic options.
- If societal stakeholders stay completely passive there is no wide discussion on sustainable production and consumption. Thus people and organisations learn less about the environmental problems that result from unsustainable production and consumption. Policies implemented will have less support and compliance, since stakeholders and consumers (citizens) are unaware of or disagree with them.

In imaginary country B the situation is reversed. Here government stays passive and stakeholders and citizens try to push the issue of sustainable consumption and production. Why would stakeholders do this without government intervention? Some citizen organisations and NGOs would pursue goals including sustainable consumption and production for ideological and normative reasons. Business might claim to have idealistic motives for pursuing sustainable production and consumption, in that business leaders are also community members and heads of family, with a personal interest in sustainable development.

More important in imaginary country B is the idea that many stakeholders have functional arguments to strive for sustainable consumption and production. In the first place, businesses could have competitiveness reasons to strive for sustainable production: they might believe in the first movers argument -- that those first to adopt a sustainable production strategy will be more

competitive in future. Businesses could also have functional arguments because of consumer power. If a considerable proportion of consumers asks for "sustainable products" it is beneficial for businesses to supply those, simply as a matter of enlarging their market share. Also, business depends on positive public relations, both for appealing to consumers and for attracting potential employees. A responsible company would be better able to attract capable staff than a 'polluting' company.

It is clear that in this imaginary country B, where government stays passive in the field of sustainable consumption and production, businesses and retailers can still do a lot on their own. They can make changes in production processes and products themselves, and introduce sustainable production as long as economic circumstances allow this. However, government policies that do not take sustainable consumption and production into account may undermine these stakeholder efforts.

What can other stakeholders like citizen organisations, NGOs and consumers themselves do if the government of imaginary country B remains completely passive? The following three principles might serve as a guideline for action (Environmental Home Guard):

1. Self-organised commitment

An NGO can, through joint action and information, give consumers the feeling that they are part of a large community of individuals who think and choose the same way and can provide consumers with the opportunity to commit themselves to start changing their habits and consumption patterns. The most impressive example of such a self-organised commitment in the world is the so-called Norwegian Environmental Home Guard.

2. Information provision

NGOs and citizen organisations can provide simple and practical information related to consumption.

3. Organising consumer power.

Through consumer power, NGOs and citizen organisations can enforce more sustainable production. For example, they can demand better labelling of products (general declarations of contents as well as more specific, independent eco-labelling); and they can use their consumer power to work for a greater selection of greener product alternatives, at a reasonable price and with an acceptable quality. It is not only from individuals and families that the pressure for sustainable consumption can be generated; the impact on the market will be much greater with the involvement of many different types of institutions including schools, companies, and housing co-operatives, to name only a few.

Actions of NGOs and citizen organisations aimed at self-organised commitment, information provision and organising consumer power are all examples of environmental action. They are not examples of political participation in government policies. Such actions are, however, closely linked to political actions like campaigns, and lobbying.

What are the basic handicaps and limitations of the situation in country B?

- Having no specific government policies aimed at sustainable production and consumption implies that there are no integrated policies to facilitate the desired changes in consumption and production patterns (in sustainable energy consumption, water saving or integrated waste policy, for example). These policies include the use of taxation and the passage of legislation, such as in the banning of toxic products, or requiring the development of ecological industries (sorting systems for waste collection, improvement of recycling systems and new recycling industries, better collective transportation systems, etc.).
- The absence of specific government policies could also render government actions counterproductive -- interfering with individual efforts by consumers and collective action by NGOs and citizen organisations. Having no sustainable production and consumption government policies also implies limitations in knowledge provision and the knowledge network, because government often functions as an important knowledge provider and broker.
- Voluntary action by business is not the same as voluntary compliance of a specific branch of industry, as is usual in voluntary agreements. If there are no government policies and only some producers comply voluntarily with self-set sustainable development goals, those businesses run the risk of being economically punished for their efforts. Further government regulation, which could otherwise function as a catalyst for change towards sustainable production and consumption, is absent in country B.

In a sense the situations in country A and B are complementary. These imaginary situations illustrate the principle that the responsibility for sustainable production and consumption is shared between government, industry, environmental organisations and consumers. A clear role for the government is expected and necessary. Government has a special responsibility regarding interests beyond those of key participants. This responsibility usually relates to decisions elsewhere in the life cycle of products: at another level of scale, in a different policy field, or at a different point in time.

The amount of citizen participation and stakeholder involvement that is allowed or solicited by governments is one only side of the coin. The degree to which citizens actually wish to participate is also crucial. This simple-minded experiment shows that a clear role for societal stakeholders is necessary, particularly because sustainable consumption and production are interrelated.

Arguments and motives for stakeholder involvement and participation

The previous discussion about the role and function of stakeholder involvement and citizen participation presented arguments and motives for stakeholder involvement. Table 1 shows how we can distinguish between normative arguments (those with an emphasis on democratic and emancipatory values) and functional arguments (those with an emphasis on pragmatic usage) related to stakeholder and citizen participation.

Table 1 Arguments and motives for stakeholder involvement and participation (Coenen et.al., 2002)

| Normative arguments | | Instrumental arguments | |
|--|--|---|--|
| For government | For participants | For participants | For government |
| Functioning of democracy | Emancipation, particularly of certain groups | Protection of stakeholder interests | Additional source of ideas and information |
| Creating « shared responsibility » for and ensuring legitimacy of sustainable development policies | Empowerment and learning about sustainable development problems faced by society | Improving participants' quality of life by demanding better air quality, green areas, organic food, environmental information, etc. | Broadening of public support for sustainable development |
| | | | Reducing the level of conflict, protecting stakeholder interests |

The normative perspective on stakeholder involvement and participation builds on arguments for direct democracy, stressing popular sovereignty and emphasising direct involvement in substantive decision-making on the part of the wider public. From this perspective, government policies on sustainable consumption and production aspire for « shared responsibility ». One could say that this necessitates a redefinition of the role of government and societal actors, or at least an attempt to extend the role of civil society relative to that of the state. There is an inherent tension between this view and the elitist normative perspective on participation which questions the abilities of the public to participate in a meaningful way.

Functional arguments for the establishment of national and local policies on sustainable consumption and production relate to three categories of general arguments for public participation, for both the government and the participants involved (see table 1) (Coenen et.al., 2002).

1. Involvement in policy making offers the possibility of articulating the interests of the different stakeholders. Without this involvement the decisions taken will not be seen as legitimate because they will not reflect the will and values of the people. Participation will increase legitimacy and reduce the level of conflict.
2. Extensive public consultation is coupled with a systematic identification of problems, their causes, and the consideration and assessment of alternative strategic options. In this way information and experiences from all sectors of the community will be involved in the process of policy preparation. This contributes to the quality of decision making, because participation gives government information necessary for decision-making.
3. Public participation has an intrinsic value for the participants; participation is essentially about empowerment or learning democratic skills. Through participation, people learn of the

problems that society faces through unsustainable consumption and production, and how to interact with others that have different opinions or interests. This type of argument is particularly emphasised in Agenda 21, which is formulated in terms of the intrinsic value of public participation, especially in contributing to the social emancipation of certain groups such as women and youth.

Potential limitations of participation and stakeholder involvement

We know from earlier participation experiences that any citizen participation or stakeholder involvement process faces certain limitations. In this section we will briefly review these limitations, specifically concerning involvement in sustainable production and consumption policies (compare Coenen et.al., 2002).

Demands on participants

Participation and stakeholder involvement processes are generally demanding for the participants in terms of knowledge, capability, time and resources. First, in order to form an opinion, people need experience with the matter and need some circumstantial information. Secondly, participants must have a certain level of competence to participate; the capability to phrase concerns and discuss interests related to potentially abstract topics is particularly problematic with sustainable development issues. Finally, participation is time- and resource-consuming (Day, 1997). This is true for individual citizen participation but also for businesses and NGOs, although the bigger the business or NGO the lesser this limitation will be of concern.

The wish to participate

The desire for broad participation, given the demands on the participants, raises the question of the degree to which particular citizens actually wish to participate. In general, citizens do not engage in environmental decision making processes when they do not feel a responsibility or an acute threat. For NGOs and citizens organisations, reasons for participating are linked to the founding aims of the organisation. For business, the wish to get involved is largely related to the question of a particular company's interests. The problem with sustainable production and consumption issues is often that the sustainable development agenda is very broad. It is difficult to involve stakeholders in such a broad and comprehensive political agenda because it addresses global and long-term issues that go well beyond the scope of the shorter term or limited concerns and interests of stakeholders.

Representativeness

The desire for broad participation and involvement also comes up against the problem of representativeness. Even if citizens wish to participate, their ability to articulate wishes and perceptions differs highly. It might be dependent on education level, for example. Participation tends to be biased in favour of dominant actors (e.g. experts, officials and interest groups) who have the time, energy and money necessary to participate in deliberations (Woltjer, 2000). It could well be that those who have the time and opportunities to participate are not representative of the wider population, but have more extreme opinions (Fiorino, 1990). A lack of interest in

the decision-making process on the part of some stakeholders can also be the result of other influence mechanisms affecting these actors, such as lobbying.

Types of decisions

Stakeholder involvement also depends very much on the types of decisions stakeholders have to help make. They could be involved in decisions about strategic goals, norms and values as well as in concrete, operational decisions. It is particularly difficult to get stakeholders involved in strategic decision making. First because it is not clear what is at stake for the participants at the strategic stage. Generally, stakeholders are inclined to become involved in decision-making only when they think that an issue is in their immediate interest (Sewell and Coppock, 1977). Participation at the strategic level also requires more knowledge and time, a significant restriction given the time and resource constraints of ordinary citizens compared to those of experts, government officials, business and interest groups.

Creation of expectations

A final major limitation to any form of stakeholder involvement concerns raising expectations of real influence. Stakeholder involvement or citizen participation is not meant to be a form of direct democracy that sets aside representative democracy. Participation should be seen as a complement rather than a replacement of « conventional » strategies (e.g. Goldberg, 1985; Alexander, 1996; Woltjer, 2000). On the other hand, participation without consequences is not very attractive for citizens or stakeholders. For instance, research on LA21 shows that if citizens are only involved in very small operational decisions, like the colour of their garbage can, they withdraw from the process because they don't feel they have real influence.

Participation in business policies

All OECD countries have a mixed economy, meaning that some decisions are left to the private sector, while others are delegated to the public sector. The implication is that in many cases, private decisions are only indirectly subject to citizen participation and stakeholder involvement, only as far as government has a responsibility (e.g. to grant a license for plant expansion). Citizens or stakeholders can influence decisions that are taken in the private sector, but often only when they can claim a special title to certain production factors that are essential to the private decision (as with land ownership). Citizen influence may increase, however, as some corporations aim for more stakeholder participation as part of the new Corporate Social and Environmental Performance approach. Corporate Social Responsibility implies that a company conducts its business in a socially acceptable way and that it is accountable for its effects on all relevant stakeholders. Consumers demand more social responsibility. They want safe products that have been produced in an ethical way and are ready to change their preferences accordingly. Therefore more and more companies are now publishing information on their social performance and open a dialogue with neighboring citizens and consumer organizations.

Protecting different sustainable development interests

Decisions that are made with citizen and stakeholder involvement do not necessarily lead to the best decisions from the perspective of sustainable development. On the contrary, there is no

guarantee that such an outcome is more sustainable or even more environmentally friendly. Sustainability often refers to long-term impacts and to large, cross-boundary geographical areas. Here, it would seem that important interests such as those of future generations or those in other fields of environmental policy are by definition excluded. Experiences with Local Agenda 21s in Western-European countries, for example, show that issues and themes chosen by the population mainly concern the « here and now » and less the « there and then » (Lafferty and Eckerberg, 1998). This makes sustainable consumption a difficult issue, as the necessity to change our consumption patterns and to reduce consumption is in part to secure the possibilities for future generations to consume and for other world citizens, particularly in less-developed countries, to have the opportunity to consume equally.

Lack of experience

Both the involvement in early stages of the decision process and the allowed level of participation are affected by culture and experience. Some countries have relatively limited experience concerning citizen participation, and early involvement of the general public is especially new and experimental. The tradition of public participation limits public consultation in information processes, and governments sometimes feel uncomfortable and hesitant about public involvement in policy making, especially at very early stages.

Criteria for stakeholder involvement and citizen participation

In this last section we suggest some preliminary criteria for assessing and evaluating a country's performance on public participation in sustainable development policy making and changing consumption and production patterns. These suggestions incorporate the different motives discussed above.

In order to assess and evaluate an OECD country's performance in the field of public participation in sustainable development policy, we have to bear in mind that all OECD Member countries are representative democracies with a mixed (private and public sector) economy. While the exact models of democracy may differ (e.g. consensus versus majority based; Held, 1996), each country places great emphasis on representative bodies and voting by the general public. Still, OECD countries have had considerably different experiences with participation and the institutionalisation of participation procedures.

Countries with a broader practice and a longer history of public involvement in procedures of environmental and planning acts have provided examples of both positive and negative experiences. Negative experiences may have frustrated politicians and government officials and made them hesitant about participation. Building experience in participation means more than just having consultation procedures in environmental policy and physical planning. It is dependent on a political culture with strong traditions in consensus-seeking approaches, « people's enlightenment » or consensus democracy.

When should a country's performance concerning public participation in sustainable development policy be considered 'positive' or 'good'? What is a good process or a good decision from the perspective of participation?

We distinguished above between a normative perspective and an instrumental, or functional perspective. In general, participation processes could be assessed and evaluated from the perspectives of both **process** and **outcome** criteria. We can therefore think in terms of a good process or in terms of a good outcome. A broad distinction can be made between the two types of criteria, referred to in literature as *fairness* and *competence*, that can serve as a yardstick with which to assess decision-making procedures (Renn, Webler and Wiedemann, 1995; Webler and Thuler, 2000). *Fairness* implies that the process and outcome are equitable, whereas *competence* refers to the construction of the best possible understanding and agreements, given what is reasonably knowable at the time a decision needs to be made.

For the judgement of *good participation processes*, **normative process** criteria for the communication processes between actors are often suggested. These criteria relate to an ideal communication situation that is often based on Habermasian criteria. For instance Agenda 21 explicitly promotes a more communicative approach to other actors in society (UNCED, 1992). In this idea of interactive policy making and planning, public and stakeholder involvement is intended to build consensus around appropriate actions and a sense of ownership of a given plan's goals. This is important because it means that third parties will plan their own decisions and actions to fit the intended government policy (Coenen et. al., 1998).

Normative process criteria would be for instance:

- equal say for participants;
- input taken seriously into account.

Functional process criteria would be for instance:

- transparency of decision making;
- a wide debate among all participants;
- involvement while there is still a decision to be made.

It is much more difficult to formulate assessment criteria in terms of a good outcome. As we have already seen, a good participation process does not necessarily lead to good outcome in terms of sustainable development. The impacts of participatory decision making are comparatively unrelated to substantive quality demands. Participatory decision making, therefore, can have positive as well as negative impacts.

The question of whether there is a good outcome of participation very much depends on what one considers to be a good outcome. For those who believe that experts can deliver the best decisions, citizen participation is not necessary, except perhaps as an extra source of information for experts. For those who believe that representative institutions take the best decisions, citizen participation may also play a limited role. Others would believe that participation offers the best outcomes because people are in continuous interaction, see the results of their decisions, and discuss both values and facts (e.g. Etzioni, 1993).

Outcome criteria could be:

- from the perspective of participation as something worth striving for in its own right :
 - citizens involved in a decision process become more aware of the problem and develop their own opinions.
- from the perspective of participation as a tool for the improvement of decision outcomes:
 - better (or best possible) information used;
 - inclusion of local knowledge and creative ideas;
 - inclusion of all interested parties, including those that cannot be represented (next generation) or cannot speak for themselves.

How can these procedural and outcome criteria be used to assess and evaluate a country's performance on public participation in sustainable development policy making and changing consumption and production patterns? Environmental performance reviews normally refer to three main questions related to the achievement of national objectives or international commitments:

1. To what extent is the objective achieved?
2. Is the objective ambitious or modest?
3. Are the results achieved in a cost-effective way?

Objectives can be either international commitments or national objectives. An example of international commitment to participation and stakeholder involvement in sustainable development is Agenda 21 (UN, 1993) which deems wide participation in the development of national and local strategies necessary. The Aarhus Convention is an international commitment for European countries which holds general obligations on participation in decision making:

- Public authorities must give notice that a decision will be made, in sufficient time for the public to prepare and participate in the process.
- Members of the public should have the opportunity to submit comments, information and analyses.
- Decisions should be in writing, and specify the reasons they were taken.
- Public input should be considered in the final decision.

At the international level, a certain amount of pressure for *harmonisation of arrangements for citizen participation* is apparent. The European Union acts as a unifying force through its regulations, especially on environmental assessment. Davis (1996) found, however, that implementation of such directives in the member states still reveals considerable differences between countries.

Apart from these general international commitments, the achievement of national objectives has to be judged both on the basis of **participation practice** and on the basis of **institutionalisation** of participation and stakeholder involvement.

Indicators for achievement could include:

- The extent to which participatory decision making processes are institutionalised in legislation. Participation literature distinguishes between traditional public consultation and

more modern interactive policy making (Woltjer, 2000). Traditional public consultation has often gained a legal basis, meaning that there is a more formal consultation procedure with rules for interaction for both government and the public. For policies aimed at sustainable consumption one finds only a very limited level of institutionalisation in legislation.

- The creation of new democratic and participation institutions.
- The use of certain methods, approaches or techniques which are deemed 'participatory', like citizen advisory committees, planning cells and citizen juries. The percentage of the population or stakeholders really involved is based on hierarchies of political involvement, ranking from less to more political involvement. Milbrath (1965), for example, has made an analogy with gladiator spectacles in the classic era: lowest on the ladder we find participants who are *apathetic*; their political role is passive and they have a general disinterest in sustainable development and policies. Higher on the ladder we find a group that is minimally involved in political processes, constraining themselves to information-seeking and discussing -- these are the *spectators*. Highest on the ladder we find the *gladiators* who really battle in the political process by attending meetings, campaigning and fundraising. Political opportunity literature shows that this last group is by far the smallest, and that the roles participants take are relatively stable (Almond and Verba, 1965).

The relative ambitiousness of a project has to be seen in a country-specific context and is related to a country's experiences with public participation. This dimension could be measured against the normative process and outcome criteria.

A third question is whether the results are achieved in a cost-effective way. Participation from an instrumental perspective adds to efficiency of decision making. We can think of instrumental arguments like a reduced level of conflict or more support for and acceptance of a policy among participants, but also in terms of the increased efficiency given by better information.

Conclusions

What is the possible role of stakeholders and citizens for changing consumption and production patterns?

It is clear that sustainable development is not possible without the close co-operation of all relevant stakeholders in creating sustainable consumption and production policies. Sustainable production and consumption is a shared responsibility among government, industry, environmental organisations and consumers. What does this shared responsibility mean?

Both governments and stakeholders (including citizens) can and should contribute on their own to sustainable production and consumption. Government can set a good example by 'greening' their own activities. Government can provide specific government policies aimed at sustainable production and consumption, which set a framework for facilitating changes in stakeholder consumption and production patterns. Further government can play an important role as knowledge provider and catalyst of stakeholder involvement in sustainable production and consumption. Business can contribute to sustainable development by changing their production

patterns and reducing the use of natural resources and producing more sustainable products. Further companies have to rethink their roles and responsibilities in relation to of all other stakeholders, particularly consumers and investors. Individual consumers can make better purchasing decisions. NGOs and consumer organisations can contribute to the commitment of individual consumers to sustainable consumption by providing information and organising consumer power.

Stakeholders can contribute to specific government policies in the field of sustainable production and consumption by articulating their interests, as well as by generating information and experiences from all sectors of society through their involvement in the process of policy preparation. In this sense stakeholder involvement is functional for government policies.

This involvement is also functional for stakeholders themselves because it could have an important effect on behavioural changes, particularly for citizens. Through participation, people will learn of the problems that society faces through unsustainable consumption and production; they will also develop skills for interacting with others who have different opinions or interests in solving these problems.

What policy responses would be needed to attain this role of stakeholders and citizens? Policy responses follow from the possible role of stakeholders discussed above. Government policies should:

Set a framework of policies to facilitate changes in consumption and production patterns by stakeholders.

- Prevent government policies from being counterproductive in relation to stakeholder action.
- Make use of stakeholder information and experiences by involving them in the preparation of government policies.
- Be a catalyst for initiatives from different stakeholders through knowledge provision, communication, financial stimulation and regulation.

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ⁱThere is a direct influence of producers and retailers on sustainable consumption. For instance, large supermarket chains decide on the selection of products offered to consumers in the stores, which in turn defines the desirable qualities of products for producers and wholesalers.

ⁱⁱ See Promoting Sustainable Consumption in OECD Countries: Synthesis Report of the 1999-2000 Programme of Work on Sustainable Consumption. Paris, 2001. [ENV/EPOC/WPNEP(2001)19]

ⁱⁱⁱ See paper, OECD (2001) Policies to Promote Sustainable Consumption: an overview, Paris. [ENV/EPOC/WPNEP(2001)18].