

Trade-based environmental spillovers are significant and must be part of any global and national strategies to safeguard the Global Commons, says new report released by the Center for Global Commons at the University of Tokyo, SDSN and Yale University

Tokyo, Paris & New Haven, 22 March 2024: The fourth edition of the Global Commons Stewardship Index Report presents the most recent data on domestic impacts and transboundary spillovers on the Global Commons. Building on the latest research and modelling tools in the field of industrial ecology and environmental science as well as the recognition that this work has now begun to receive we hope this report can support the efforts made by policymakers at the global and national levels to safeguard the Global Commons. The report was launched today at the Villars Institute Summit 2024 in Switzerland.

Naoko Ishii, Director of the Center for Global Commons and a lead author of the report, emphasizes the following: *“Current economic system continues to undermine the health of the Global Commons, to its breaking point. We need to urgently come up with the governing mechanism to safeguard the Global Commons, in particular spillover impacts through trade.”*

Access the report:

The GCS Index report, data platform and databases are downloadable free of charge at: <https://cgc.ifi.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/research-en/gcsi-en/> & <https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/>

We underline three major findings from this year’s GCS Index edition:

1. Global production and consumption systems continue to undermine the stable and resilient Earth systems, the global commons, which are the foundations of our civilization. We underline in particular, the impact of G20 countries which are responsible for the lion’s share of global negative impacts on the Global Commons. In per capita terms, Australia, Canada and the United States are the worst G20 performers according of this year’s GCS Index. In absolute terms, China, the United States and the European Union are the worst performers globally. G20 countries are not only responsible for production-based negative impacts on the Global Commons, but also for more than 70% of the GHG emissions and deforestation in the international trade system. No country has achieved high levels of human development and low impact on the Global Commons.

2. The environmental stress caused and transmitted through trade systems is significant; often exceeding 30% of countries’ total GHG emissions and 50% of countries’ total impacts on deforestation and water stress. One-third or more of the total GHG emission footprint of South Korea, Japan, Italy, the EU, Germany, France and the United Kingdom is embodied into trade. More than half of the total deforestation caused by Germany, India, Turkey, France, Italy, China, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and Japan is generated outside of the borders of these countries. Finally, 50% or more of scarce water consumption in the EU, Italy, South Korea, Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and Canada happens in the rest of the world to satisfy consumption in these countries. These findings emphasize that negative trade-based spillovers are significant and must be part of any strategy to safeguard the Global Commons. Good

data and metrics at all levels (global, national, industry, commodity levels) are critical to address negative impacts from unsustainable supply chains.

3. The world currently does not have a global governance mechanism to coherently address spillover impacts associated with unsustainable global supply chains. It is now urgent to come up with effective governance mechanisms to safeguard the global commons based on sound data and the latest insights from science. The publication of the Villars Framework for a Sustainable Global Trade System in 2023, led by the Remaking Trade for a Sustainable Future initiative, is an important step in this direction. Published ahead of several important international events including the September 2024 UN Summit of the Future, the November 2024 UNFCCC COPs in Azerbaijan and in Brazil in 2025 as well as the CBD COP in Colombia in 2024, the 2024 GCS Index report provides useful data and statistics to define pathways and policies to curb domestic and spillover impacts on the Global Commons – and sharpen the focus of policymakers on these challenges.

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About:

About the Center for Global Commons at the University of Tokyo

The [Center for Global Commons at the University of Tokyo](#) was set up in 2020 to promote transformation of key socio-economic systems in energy, food, resource circulation, and urbanization through the multi-stakeholder coalition involving variety of partners. The CGC and University of Tokyo seek to play a key role in catalyzing society transformation by mobilizing decision-makers across a broad spectrum—far beyond academia— in search for fundamental solutions to challenges to humanity.

About SDSN

The [UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network \(SDSN\)](#) has been operating since 2012 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. SDSN mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development, including the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement. We aim to accelerate joint learning and promote integrated approaches that address the interconnected economic, social, and environmental challenges confronting the world.

About the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy

The [Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy](#), a joint undertaking between Yale Law School and the Yale School of the Environment, advances fresh thinking and analytically rigorous approaches to environmental decision-making across disciplines, sectors, and scales. In addition to its research activities, the Center also aims to foster discussion and collaboration across the Yale campus on environmental law and policy issues at the local, regional, national, and global levels. The Center has produced the Environmental Performance Index, a biennial country-scale gauge of sustainability outcomes covering 11 policy areas based on 33 underlying indicators, since 1999.