

I. TRENDS IN RESOURCE USE

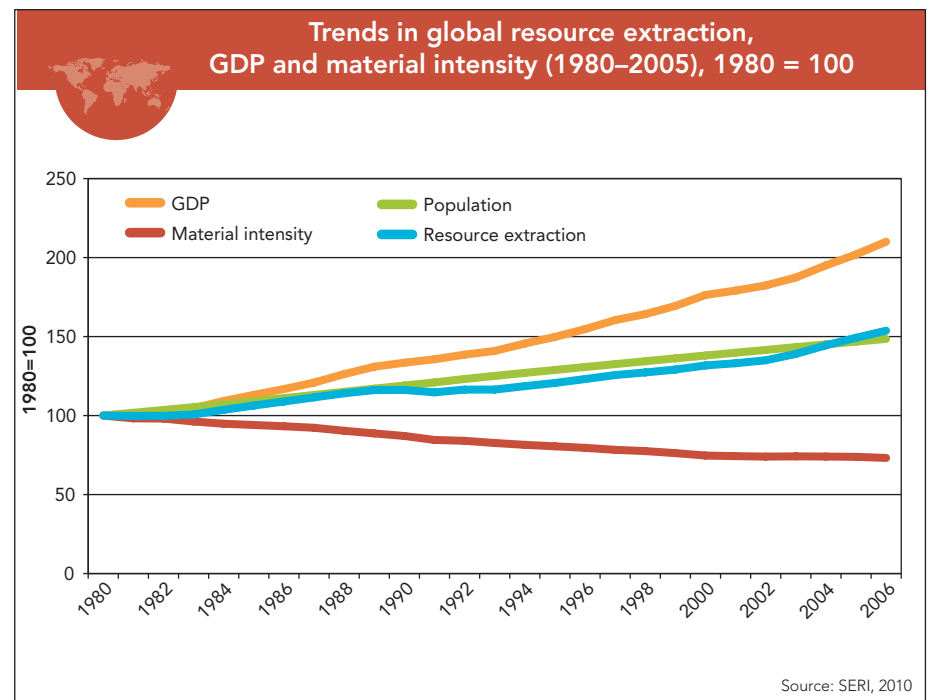
In the past half century, per capita use of mineral resources, including fossil fuels, has been increasing steeply. Technological innovation that has improved material and energy efficiency has been overwhelmed by the sheer increase in demand from rising incomes and populations.

Population growth accelerated first before slowing during the 20th century, with world population exceeding 6 billion by 2000. The period since World War II has been marked by a historically unprecedented rise in living standards and levels of consumption experienced by a growing number of countries.

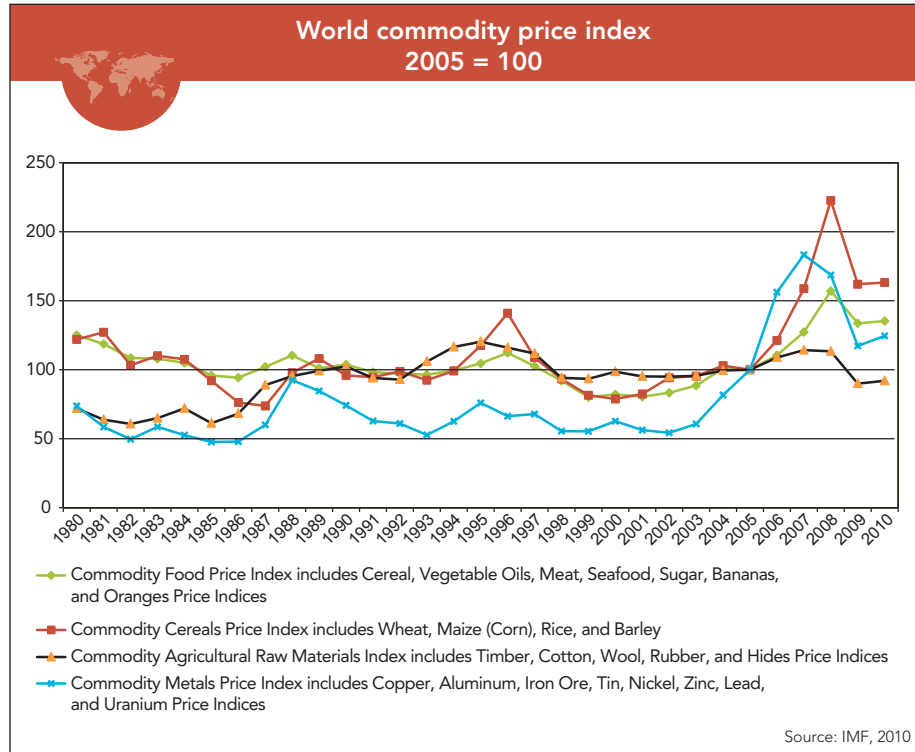
When broken down by region, industrialized countries, with 15% of the population, used 50% of the fossil energy, industrial minerals and metallic ores as of 2005. This is changing quickly, however. Between 1990 and 2006, total energy use in developing countries increased by 40% while in high-income OECD countries it increased by half as much.¹

Much of the world's population remains poor and the gap in living standards between rich and poor needs to be narrowed substantially, not least to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The development transition needs to occur even as consumption and production patterns are transformed in a decoupling transition. Living standards of the poor must rise even as humankind's ecological footprint shrinks.

Consumers in developed countries and wealthy consumers everywhere will need to take the lead in moving towards sustainable patterns of consumption. Production systems also need to move towards sustainable patterns of resource use, with reduced pollution and waste. Developed country enterprises can chart the way forward, supporting their suppliers and partners around the world with technology and know how.



The accelerating materials and fossil energy demand of the past decade-and-a-half has begun to be reflected in commodity prices. Before the recent recession, most were spiraling upward. While a boon for resource-rich economies, the prices rises have been a bane for many resource-poor countries, which have been particularly hard hit by high food prices.



“Fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development... Governments, relevant international organizations, the private sector and all major groups should play an active role in changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns.”

— Johannesburg Plan of Implementation 2002, III

