

All Change for Climate Change

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Commentary

Governments, corporations and individuals all need to take immediate action to help change the global economy toward a circular economy. A circular economy which uses fewer resources and based on renewable clean technologies to help limit global warming to 1.5 °C (Farhana, 2019).

The 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report warned that limiting global warming to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels would require current greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions to be cut in half by 2030. Yet actions by governments, corporations and individuals are lagging behind. Many countries are failing their obligations made under the 2015 Paris climate agreement (Nature Editorial, 2019). Even the International Maritime Organization, a United Nations agency set a 50% reduction target of GHG emissions for global shipping by 2050, but this falls short of the IPCC target by 20 years (Walker, 2019). The United Nations climate summit in New York this week (September 2019) needs to send a strong wake up call to the entire world for us all to change. Change makers like Greta Thunberg has already done that.

Individual actions to change consumer behaviour can play a major role to help reduce GHG emissions. Even reducing use of single-use plastics (a petroleum derivative) and incineration can help reduce GHG emissions. GHG emissions from plastics could reach 15% of the global carbon budget by 2050 if not curbed. In Europe, plastic production and incineration emits an estimated ~400 million tonnes of CO₂ per year (Avery-Gomm et al., 2019). Therefore, reducing single-use plastic use could curb GHG emissions.

Author statement

The author confirms that there are no known conflicts of interest associated with this commentary article.

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